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Kristeva: The Individual, the Symbolic and Feminist Readings of the Biblical Text

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to develop from Kristeva's account of time and semiotics the conditions of possibility for a new approach to interpreting the Bible. This will be set against the background of feminist biblical criticism, beginning from Esther Fuchs's assessment of deception. She bases her comparison on the concept of deceptiveness but I will argue, using Lacan, that the aporia of desire undermines this comparison. Through Kristeva's framework of the phases of feminism it will be shown that Fuchs's argument weakness lies in her presupposition of the determinate identities of men and women. By examining passages in Genesis it will be shown that such determined identities are also not easily found in the Hebrew Bible. Then by considering another feminist scholar, Alice Bach, it will be shown that overcoming identity requires a more nuanced approach. In the first version of "Women's Time" Kristeva suggests that identities could be overcome through moving towards the individual but this also operates in the same structure of identity. In fact Kristeva appears to recognize this problem as when she republishes the essay she considers a different way forward. It will be instead suggested that a type of feminism that recognizes its own weakness is needed. This will be used to interpret Proverbs 31 but in doing so it will become evident that this alone lacks the potency to overcome the diffuse nature of the symbolic.

ABSTRACT

INTRODUCTION

This paper will argue that Julia Kristeva's theory of semiotic/symbolic relation has deep reaching consequences for attempts at creative interpretations of literature.¹ It will be shown, by developing Kristeva's account of semiotics, that authority is incredulously used in the work of Ester Fuchs and Alice Bach. Esther Fuchs argues that "from Eve to Esther, from Rebekah to Ruth, the characterisation of women in the Hebrew Bible presents deceptiveness as an almost inescapable feature of femininity" ("Who Is Hiding the Truth?" 137). Her phrase "characterisation of women" is a concept adopted from literary criticism and she conceives a literary character as produced by the author. This will be challenged through Kristeva, who highlights the vulnerability of the concept of identity in "Women's Time." The weakness of a method presupposing identity, based on an essentialist notion of femininity, will be shown through re-examining the passages in the Book of Genesis used by Fuchs. The extent of the problem of identity includes the interpretation of Alice Bach, another feminist biblical scholar, who has an awareness of this problem. Her approach of rejecting identity fails because she does not recognize a similarly functioning determinacy in her own interpretation.

This problem will then be applied to Kristeva's own attempts at resolving the problem. The first resolution she proposes is to move towards recognizing individuality. However, as Kathy Ehrensperger has correctly observed, this approach falls into the same trap that it attempts to overcome. In fact, Kristeva seems to appreciate this, as she omits this section in the revised version of "Women's Time." Instead she concludes with a reflection on the possibility of a feminism that is aware of its own shortfalls. Her concluding reflection will be developed in parallel to her "Reading the Bible" to indicate how fantasy might be developed to provide a new way forward. However, this will not be sufficient to overcome the power of the symbolic.

¹ I would like to acknowledge the help of Catrin Williams and David Hazell for their comments and feedback in the development of this essay. An earlier version appeared in *The Student Researcher: Journal of Undergraduate Research* (University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Sept. 2011).

THE PROBLEM OF DESIRE

Ester Fuchs's perception of inequality in the Hebrew Bible is based on the inequality of the satisfaction of desire. She argues that women's deception in the Bible is mitigated by their lower status of power. The premise here is that desire can only be satisfied if someone has the power to achieve their "wishes" ("Who Is Hiding the Truth?" 138). Women in the Hebrew Bible are presented as deceivers through the literary devices of the author that, Fuchs claims, supported patriarchy within the author's surrounding culture. The Biblical narratives represent a contradiction; women are not given power due to their social standing, and yet, within the narrative, they are portrayed as wielding power. Their power must then arise from deceptive means and thus Fuchs argues that this deception balances the inherent oppression from their society ("Who Is Hiding the Truth?" 137).

She illustrates this through the story of Rebekah deceiving her husband Isaac, in order for her favourite son Jacob to receive the blessing rather than Esau, her eldest son (Genesis 27). If Rebekah had equal standing to Isaac, she could have achieved her goal through legitimate means without resorting to disguising Jacob to look like his brother Esau. The focus of Fuchs's interpretation is the worldly consequences of Rebekah's deception, in terms of whether men or women can achieve their desire. It follows that Rebekah's deception would produce a satisfactory conclusion for her, given that she achieves her desire for Jacob to receive the birthright.

However, Fuchs must assume that, behind the imbalance between men and women, is the principle that men can satisfy their desire through power. In contrast, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan shows that the fulfilment of desire is impossible because what is desired has already been lost. He situates the origin of desire in the child's break with the mother. When the child is thrown into the world, language stands between the child's needs and their fulfilment (Kesel 27). In order to express her desire in language, the child must be incorporated into the system of language, and she must accept the linguistic order. In language, the child must find satisfaction and so has to settle for a linguistic substitute. This is illustrated when Lacan considers the problem of the declaration: "*I have three brothers, Paul, Ernest and me*" (20, italics in original). The ambiguity of this is that each person can be called a brother and so it seems, by addition, that the total should be three. Instead the practice of omitting the subject in such reckoning produces an inconsistency. This inconsistency reveals that the child has to perform two functions as both subject and object, even though these are contradictory roles.

It also illustrates how the other's desire (as *objet petit a*) is a concern for the child. In language the child must understand itself as an object for

the other (I am his brother) and consequently the other is also understood as desiring. This separation between the other's expectation and primal experiences creates a division between the child and pleasure because the satisfaction is both subjective and objective (I require pleasure and I as his brother require pleasure). In this way Lacan (and following him, Kristeva) develop Freudian theory beyond its biological basis and instead integrate language as the basis for our experience.

Applying this to Israelite culture, Rebekah's actions symbolize a "return" to the Garden of Eden. At the beginning of the book of Genesis, humankind was created in a good world from which humankind was separated after rebelling against God (Genesis 2–3). The Garden represents a lost world in which pleasure was immediate but has now been lost. In the Lacanian framework, its significance is found in what it represents within the social structure. Mankind could never return to the Garden and so it is a symbol of the satisfaction of desire in the Biblical narrative. Jacob's birthright involved the promise of the land of plenitude, which symbolizes the lost Garden of Eden. Rebekah's ambition for her favourite son to receive the blessing is ultimately not satisfied because her desire is to be in the Garden and, as such, Jacob receives land as a substitute for returning to the Garden. Thus male characters also experience the loss of desire. Their desire is not only experienced subjectively but is also produced through the experience of being an object for the other.

Indeed Jacob's desire for the birthright is also the desire of his brother, Esau. The winning of the birthright produces the utterances—for Jacob, "I have the birthright," and for Esau, "my brother has the birthright." Jacob is both subject and object and so his satisfaction is not immediate but set in the face of a lack of desire. With or without deception, Rebekah's actions fail to overcome the problem of desire. In other words, the failure of Rebekah's deception is that she accepts the possibility of the fulfilment of desire rather than recognizing the negativity within desire itself (see Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* 127–32). This means Isaac does not possess the ability to satisfy his own desire, which makes the claim that Isaac does not need to deceive in order to get his wishes incoherent. It is a projection of the feminist reading of the story that Isaac dominates the story. Instead, the narrative is decentred, because there is no ultimate satisfaction of desire that can only be found in the Garden of Eden. Rebekah's desire is not only "woman's" desire, and it cannot ever be truly satisfied under the universal problem of temporality.

This is not to say that "men" and "women" have the same desires; only that humanity shares the separation from pleasure, which makes the satisfaction of desire impossible. Rebekah's desire can never be satisfied because her desire is misplaced. She focuses her desire on Jacob rather than

recognizing her unobtainable desire for the Garden. Therefore Fuchs does not recognize that, in either receiving or not receiving the blessing, there can be no ultimate satisfaction of desire.

JULIA KRISTEVA'S PHASES OF FEMINISM

In "Women's Time," Kristeva divides feminism into three phases.² These phases are developed from exploring the relationship between time and identity; "female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains *repetition* and *eternity* from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilisations" (Kristeva, "Women's Time" 16/205, italics in original).

"Repetition" is experienced in the passage of time. When one moment passes into the next, the moment is repeated; although, as illuminated by Henri Lefebvre, this does not mean that each moment is the same: "Not only does repetition not exclude differences, it also gives birth to them; it produces them" (Lefebvre 7). The difference produced by rhythm contrasts with the time of eternity, since the difference in repetition means that a particular occurrence cannot be reproduced. The repetition of the passing of time makes the original lost in the passage of the moment; as Heraclitus famously asked whether someone could ever step in the same river twice. Other visible examples of this can be found in the rhythmic structure of nature, such as the repetition of the sun rising and setting or the cycle of the seasons. Repetition would be eternal but for the interruption of death and thus repetition is finite.

The contrasting mode of time is eternity, which "has so little to do with linear time (which passes) that the very word 'temporality' hardly fits" (Kristeva, "Women's Time" 16/205). The time of eternity cannot be described as "temporal" because it is not the time of human experience. The time of human experience is defined by our finitude; we experience time through a beginning in birth and an end in death. Instead temporality is time as directly experienced by us with a beginning and an end. We cannot understand eternity because we have a beginning and an ending. The problem of eternal time meeting humanity is revealed in what Kristeva describes as the "media revolution" ("Women's Time" 18/206). The need for constant storage of information presupposes that experience can be

² This essay was originally published in French in 1979 in *Cahiers de recherche de sciences des textes et documents*. An updated version of this essay was then included in *Les Nouvelles maladies de l'âme*. Pagination will be in the first English translation followed by the version in *New Maladies of the Soul*. Each version has a subtly distinct tone, which will be noted when these differences interrupt my line of argument.

condensed and its presence maintained in, for example, the video recording or a cloning machine. Thus the modality of eternity supposes that everything can be sufficiently reproduced without loss, but it cannot account for the passage of time (repetition).

The first phase of feminism categorized by Kristeva was the political response to the oppression of women (“Women’s Time” 18–19/207–08). This movement is grounded in the passage of time through history (rhythmic time), but appropriates a universal category of “woman.” Here woman is an amalgamated identity that is applied to all women, in the belief that history would reach an end of equality through the passage of time. The movement of the suffragettes is the foremost example of this phase. The characteristic of this type was concern for the practical effects of oppression, which presupposed that, by addressing the symptom, the cause of women’s oppression would also be cured. However, the practical emphasis of this phase means that it would not be the primary category for feminist approaches to the Bible but could nevertheless show, in the style of Foucault, that feminism could be conceived otherwise.

Kristeva traces the second wave of feminism back to 1968. Feminists were more focused around this time on the psychological experiences of women and sought to challenge the domination of patriarchal symbols. In this generation “linear temporality has been almost totally refused, and as a consequence there has arisen an exacerbated distrust of the entire political dimension” (“Women’s Time” 19/208). Here she observes that in the face of the failure to achieve equality through particular practical movements, feminism attempted to address the issue at its roots in culture on the basis that only when the foundations of the current inequality are quashed will equality be achieved. The rejection of rhythmic time has to depend on a more concrete concept of identity, as identity is equivocated with a person’s being. This process incorporates reading historically significant texts from a “feminist” perspective in order to highlight women’s oppression.

History is reinterpreted through the identity of “woman” in order to highlight historical oppression. The historical re-reading approach that is the signature of this phase shares the feminist biblical criticism of Fuchs. This movement only projects one identity, of woman, and anything falling outside would be disregarded as not significant for progressing emancipation. The problem is that “woman” does not take account of differences within this identity, such as the identity of “mother.” Kristeva explains this through the relationship between the semiotic and symbolic, in which the semiotic is defined as the meta-grammatical effect of language and the symbolic is defined as the functioning of language within a system of grammar or rules. She claims that the symbolic is the attempt to determine

the biological order of things, although the essence of the biological is chaotic, or beyond determination (*Revolution* 17). In the face of this chaos we create symbols that grant us a certainty within order against the onset of chaos. The symbolic emerges from separation between the signifier and the signified. This is the process of *The Mirror Stage*, as developed by Lacan. The image is the signified which is incorporated by the ego overlapping the signifier of the subject (Kristeva, *Revolution* 46–51). Kristeva develops this, through Frege’s “denoting,” as an example of the symbolic, which produces certainty by not referring to any real object (*Revolution* 53). However, Kristeva objects to this system of denotation by arguing that it hides the fact that it is caught in tension between the signifier and signified. The notion of identity follows this structure, whereby it can only determine someone insofar as characteristics that do not fit into the identity are excluded.

This is exemplified in Fuchs’s attempt to redeem the character of Rebekah. She argues that the deception lies not in her character but elsewhere, that is, in the inequality between men and women in Israelite society. The presupposition of this approach is its conception of time, in that it is only possible to judge “deception” in historical texts by claiming an eternal, or transcendental, perspective. A judge has to step back from the immediate temporal rhythm and evaluate each side from a neutral position, with the concern not for the immediate restraint of abuse but with the balance of justice. These transcendental foundations suppress the semiotic dimension in language. When Fuchs attempts to resituate deception in inequality, she has to assume that it is the only stumbling block to desire. The problem of desire shows that her basis is not eternal, but totalized, because she does not consider the validity of desire itself.

Applied to feminism, temporality restricts the optimism of recognition, as succinctly put by Penelope Deutscher: “Feminism might have to renounce its confidence in progress and the supposition that history moves, all going well, from a less feminist past to a more feminist future” (48). On this basis, feminist interpretation of history, including the Bible, is undermined by the temporal positioning of interpretation. Kristeva describes the problem as a “radical *refusal* of subjective limitations imposed by this history’s time in the name of the irreducible difference” (“Women’s Time” 20, italics in original).³ This is also the case with Fuchs’s presupposition that men are fully satisfied in achieving their desire, whereas women are restrained by society. Time is universal to human experience and

³ This section is omitted from the later version of the essay and replaced by the rhetorical questions: “What socio-political processes or events have led to this mutation? What are its problems, its contributions, its limits?” (*New Maladies* 208).

so desire, as temporal, can never be fulfilled. For example, both men and women in Israelite culture were outside of Eden and desired to “return” to the garden. This is not a return as “turning back on oneself” but desire of being in the garden for the very first time (and impossible because of the difference produced by repetition).

IDENTITY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

The feminist approach adopted by Esther Fuchs would be justified if the Hebrew Bible could be shown to, as a whole, employ a determined identity of “woman.” Deceptiveness as a feature of femininity could then be determined, because the identification of femininity is an intrinsic part of the text itself. However, this section will contrast the presentation of “women” in the Book of Proverbs to the presentation of women in the examples used by Fuchs, in order to show that the Hebrew Bible cannot be so clearly characterized as representing “women” as deceptive. Feminist criticism will be, instead, reconstructed in the light of rhythmic temporality.

In the story of Isaac’s deception, there is no identification of “woman.” In Genesis 27 Rebekah is referred to either as Rebekah (vv. 5, 6, 15) or as Isaac’s mother (vv. 13–14). This suggests that she is depicted in the text as an individual character and not as a representative of all women. This description does not merely ignore Rebekah’s identity as “woman,” but instead defines how she should be characterized. The connection between “mother” and “Rebekah” emphasizes the relationship that is of importance for the narrative. This lends itself to Kristeva’s account, because Rebekah is described in terms of her motherhood, rather than in generalized terms as “woman.” The combination of “Rebekah” and “mother” establishes their combined significance for the framework of the narrative.

Fuchs also argues that the author uses different standards to judge the deceptions of men and women, thereby demonstrating that the author is producing a patriarchal text (“Who Is Hiding the Truth?” 143–44). Through the illustration of Potiphar’s wife, who seduces the young Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 39), Fuchs argues that monogamy applied only to the wife (“Who Is Hiding the Truth?” 139). The husband may seduce other maid-servants without recrimination, but if his wife were to have an affair it would not have been accepted. She argues that deception would not have been reported by the narrator had Potiphar deceived someone after seducing a maid-servant. The evidence for women’s oppression is found in the lack of the recording of male deception or seduction; a claim which she supports by citing Roland de Vaux.

However, Vaux does not explore the Israelite-Judaic context in quite such simplistic terms. He claims that, by the strict definition of the law, a man only commits adultery if the woman is married or engaged (see Deuteronomy 22:22–24). He also states that a “husband is exhorted to be faithful to his wife in [Proverbs] 5:15–19” (Vaux 37). The exhortation may not be a command in law but this does not reduce its effect. Instead, it indicates that the written law is not definitive. There is, as it were, an “unwritten” law to which a man is also subjected. This presents a conflicting set of demands, which is similar to the way the child must reconcile the inconsistency of being a subject and object (described above). The ambiguity between the mere statements of the law and other less formal expectations means that the structure of Israelite-Judaic culture is more complicated than assumed by Fuchs.⁴ She is not justified in the assumption that such culture was patriarchal because the difference between Proverbs and Deuteronomy leaves open the possibility that there may have been no unified position about the attitudes to women.

Another prominent feminist biblical scholar, Alice Bach, uses a different approach to this narrative of Potiphar’s wife. She employs a conception of gender identity that reflects Kristeva’s critique of identity: “The emphasis on the constructedness of gender that initially drew me to this investigation has now led me to recognize the fluidity of gender itself” (Bach 35). From this account of gender, Bach interprets biblical narrative in such a way that she emphasizes the narrator’s influence on the text. She argues that the narrator does not tell the story from the perspective of Potiphar’s wife, even though she is the central character (48). Although Bach displays an awareness of the ideology of the narrator embedded in the text, she does not overcome the inequality between men and women, but inverts the structure. This is evident in her description of how to approach the biblical narrative: “I can turn a deaf ear to the narrator’s voice. Then I substitute my own” (6). However, Kristeva’s emphasis on the semiotic means that the only way Bach could “substitute her own” would be to do so pre-linguistically. Yet this is impossible because she is from the first to the last moment analyzing a *text*.⁵ She does not have her “own voice” but one that is already incorporated into the multitude of voices, including

⁴ The presence of conflicting demands may in fact be a part of the structure required to maintain patriarchy. The appearance of more favourable standards could distract from the dominant oppressive structure and consequently such favourable standards are consistent with patriarchy. However, the present argument merely claims that there is a greater complexity that needs to be taken into account.

⁵ Similarly, Fuchs claims, against Umberto Eco, that she is concerned with the power relations rather than “mechanics” (“For I Have the Way of Women” 69). However, her approach is all too closely dependent upon the semiotic theory she claims to rise above.

the narrator's. Bach appears to move beyond identity by recognizing the "constructedness" of gender but when she "substitutes her own voice" she ignores this in her own interpretation. This highlights the nuance required in developing a response to the problem of identity.

THE FUTURE

The final phase of feminism that Kristeva sets out is a movement beyond the determinacy of identity in the first two phases of feminism. In the earliest version of "Women's Time" she describes this possibility as one that, instead of universalizing a particular perspective, calls us to recognize the "*singularity* of each person" (Kristeva, "Women's Time" 35, italics in original). The production of identity assimilates everything into categories that cannot fully represent each individual. However, Kathy Ehrensperger raises the objection against Kristeva that by appealing to the individual she is using a discourse of modernity (108–09).

Kristeva herself appears to recognize this problem in the later version of "Women's Time," in which the proposal of a movement towards individuality is omitted. Instead, she sees that sexual difference has become a less significant issue (*New Maladies* 222–23). The suggestion she makes as an envisioning of what the future could hold is for "an ethics aware of its own sacrificial order and thus retain[ing] part of the burden for each of its adherents" (*New Maladies* 223). This indicates that rather than a positive assertion of individuality the future might be more orientated through consciousness of limitation.

There is a similar line of argument developed by Kristeva in her essay "Reading the Bible," which appeared in the same volume. She argues that, when reading the Bible, we should not seek the definitive and objective interpretation but recognize how encountering the text reveals and develops our own perspective: "We should read the Bible one more time. To interpret it, of course, but also let it carve out a space for our own fantasies and interpretive delirium" (*New Maladies* 126). Kristeva's use of the term "fantasy" does not mean that we should just read the Bible any way we want. Rather, the concept of fantasy is defined within its psychoanalytic context. It is not something pejorative that should be overcome in place of reality but is part of our understanding of reality itself, as she states elsewhere: "We all have fantasies; whether seductive or terrifying, this is inevitable" (*Intimate Revolt* 63). Fantasy is part of our understanding, such that thinking "without fantasy" we would only be convincing ourselves that we had overcome fantasy; in the same way that the temporal is forgotten through the appropriation of the eternal. Thus, fantasy could be

reconceived positively, as Kristeva does through its etymology: “What is fantasy? The Greek root—*fae*, *faos*, *fos*—expresses the notion of light and thus the fact of coming to light, shining, appearing, presenting, presenting oneself, representing oneself” (*Intimate Revolt* 63). Hence, fantasy describes how something is illuminated in human understanding.

When we consider the deceptiveness of women in the Hebrew Bible, we should be aware of how our own nature affects our understanding of these ancient texts. We must interpret from our desire for equality and from our perception of oppression. This forms the basis for interpretation, because it reveals our “moment” in time. To recognize our interpretation as fantasy does not require that it should be rejected, but it challenges the injustice of oppression through a process that is itself vulnerable. Thus the *fantasy* of deceptiveness in the Hebrew Bible recognizes oppression without providing a solution based on a determination or certainty.

Against this point another of Ehrensperger’s objections against Kristeva comes into view. She argues that with no essential core to the subject, there is no grounding for action. The core to the subject describes something that provides a certainty from which actions can be grounded. Ehrensperger claims that Kristeva makes a determinate assertion about the absence of reality, in that the rejection of the subject asserts nothingness in its place (Ehrensperger 100). Without a “core to the subject” it seems that people cannot do anything, such as acting against injustice. The rejection of identity undermines any attempt to gain recognition for the oppression of women.

However, Kristeva indicates that she does not want to make any such move that removes all distinction within subjectivity: “I am not simply suggesting a very hypothetical bisexuality which, even if it existed, would only, in fact, be the aspiration toward the totality of one of the sexes and thus an effacing of difference” (“Women’s Time” 34). This means that the subject cannot be determined, whereas identity determines the subject and so does not truly reflect the individual. Repetition produces differences, while an identity reduces things to sameness. The indeterminacy of the subject is an effect of the production of differences through rhythmic time. Time dissolves the determination of identity so that it can then be said that there is no subject as contained in the identity of “woman.”

The persistent rejection of identity would not reject the practical impact of feminism, but reveals that any practical response is always incomplete. Instead the basis in rhythmic temporality requires that any particular position should be overcome. So, with respect to feminism, the question would become not whether to take action or not but how to reassess our position. This begs the question about what it means to read the Bible. It is not directly related to the emancipation of women but as Kristeva

observes in “Reading the Bible,” it nevertheless has a powerful influence (*New Maladies* 115–16).

Proverbs 31 could provide us with an example of how fantasy can overcome oppression. King Lemuel is told not to submit to women because they will destroy him (Proverbs 31:3). It is set within the circumstance for the king and so could be read in relation to male fantasy. The verse discusses women as perceived by a king. The importance of the fantasy is that it overcomes a spurious perspective of the infinite. By “giving strength” to women the king would give strength to the image of women that fills his own fantasy. Hence the description of “women” in Proverbs 31:3 can be read as not referring to all women, but describing the danger of projecting an identity. The use of identity in this passage does not reflect the understanding set out by Fuchs. In Proverbs 31, the identity is contingent and represents the limitation of human time. However, such a reading of this passage does not overcome the problem of the symbolic. The word “women” is not restricted to such qualified contexts but is also used in an unqualified way. Thus “women” bears both qualified and unqualified meanings. It therefore remains possible to read the verse both ways. The symbolic is not attached to any particular thing but “floats” above and the authority that the symbol has is not undermined by re-interpreting only one usage.

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CONCLUSION

When we approach the Bible we should recognize our finitude. Fuchs exemplified the problem of universalizing that offers a retrospective judgment of characterization in the Hebrew Bible. In this study her presupposition of identifying “women” has been shown as vulnerable to Kristeva’s emphasis on ambiguity. Her response was distinguished from Bach’s interpretation of women in the Hebrew Bible, which was shown to repeat the problem of oppression that she had attempted to overcome. Against Bach’s method our approach has not cast out identity but actively encouraged movement in identity through “fantasy.” Thus a new approach to interpreting the Hebrew Bible recognizing the problem of identity was developed in re-reading Proverbs 31. However, this approach is not the only way to read the passage and no matter how close reading we take we could never prevent someone from taking women here as a universal. Hence re-reading the Bible, to take new and creative interpretations, is an inherently problematic task. Kristeva’s proposal to allow the Bible to affect our “fantasies and interpretative delirium” also falls short. The tradition of biblical interpretation cannot be overcome in one movement. However, we

should be wary of this leading into a cynicism of accepting the traditional interpretation because this fails to grasp the ambivalence of the semiotic/symbolic bind. Instead, the Bible stands, as it were, *between* the resonance of communal language and the excitement of a new possibility.

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