"Drama" and "Performance" in Old Testament Research

A survey[1]

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1. Drama in the Old Testament?

Since ancient times, it has been proposed that there are texts in the Old Testament, which are to be understood as "dramas" or as "dramatic". The debate is ongoing. We begin with a survey of those books in the OT that were discussed in this respect, combined with selected exegetical works relevant for the debate (see the detailed evidence in the bibliography, section 1):

Song of Songs and the Book of Job are understood as dramatic texts since antiquity (Song of Songs: Origen, 1925, Delitzsch 1851, Schmökel 1956, Hopf 2014; Job: Theodore of Mopsuestia 1959, Meyer Kallen 1918, Schorlemmer 1983, Alonso-Schökel 1977, Klinger 2007).

More recently the speeches of the prophets are increasingly interpreted as dramas or dramatic texts, especially the books of Isaiah (Watts 2005, Eaton 1979, Baltzer 1999, Nitsche 2006, Berges 2008), Hosea (Wolff 1965, Utzschneider 2002), Micah (Utzschneider 1996 id., 2005 id., 2007a), Nahum (Dietrich 2014), Zephaniah (House 1988) and Malachi (Kessler 2009).

Other types of texts, especially Psalms (Mowinckel 1922; idem, 1932.. Idem, 1953 Gunkel 1933 Weiser 1953), Lamentations (Berges 2004 Koenen 2015) and the book of Proverbs (Schmitt 1993) can be added.

The narrative texts of the Old Testament have a considerable "dramatic" potential as well. However, this potential was not realized in dramas or dramatic texts until late- or postbiblical times. An early example is the "Exagoge" which dramatizes the Exodus story (see below 3). In the Middle Ages the so called "mystery plays" were composed, and in the early modern era the writing of Bible based plays was wide spread, at least in Catholic und Lutheran circles. Those Bible plays dramatized biblical narratives and their outstanding protagonists (Wasmuth 2007). Recently the Israeli theater scholar Shimon Levi (Levi 2000) focused on his exploration of the "Bible as theater" mainly on characters and plots of the biblical narratives. As we will see later (see section 4) the "Biblical story-telling" performs biblical narratives, but not the dramatic texts indicated above. (A complete overview of the dramatic reception of biblical narratives and other materials is lacking, as far as I know.)

In OT scholarship of the past one hundred years - and essentially in this time frame moves this article - the terms "drama" or "dramatic" are used in various senses depending on different presuppositions. Of course, the respective exegetes' experiences and preconceptions have influence on the debate, let alone the aversion against theater and drama in some Christian and Jewish traditions.

In the recent debate, ideas and insights from neighboring disciplines affect the debate, in particular from the classics, the Ancient Near Eastern studies, Egyptology and the "performance-" and theater studies (see. Below "4. The Performance of biblical texts ").

The multiple influences the OT studies were exposed to resulted in four ideal types of research. These idealized concepts provide both: they characterize certain Old Testament texts as dramas or as

dramatic, as well as the opposite. Usually not only one of these concepts is applied to each given text, but several ideas in different combinations. The four ideal types are the following: 1. Cultic Drama and Dramatic rituals (2.), The Greek Drama (3.), the Dramatic Text (4.), The Performance of Biblical Texts (5).

2. Cultic Drama and dramatic rituals

The ideal type of the "cultic drama" was developed at the beginning of the 20th century. It combines ritual, celebration and liturgy with dramatic performance. The idea of the "cultic drama" was influenced by the increasing knowledge of the ancient Near-Eastern world (cf. Jacobsen 1975; Pongratz-Leisten 1998) and the ancient Egyptian festival rituals (Duchain 1980 Utzschneider 2007c, 272 Note 11 with ref.).

In his "Psalmenstudien II" (1922) the Norwegian Old Testament scholar Sigmund Mowinckel (1884-1964) postulated an "enthronement festival of YHWH" related to the celebration of the New Year, which he described as "cultic drama". The appropriate evidence in the OT he found in the so called "enthronement psalms" (Ps 29; Ps 47; Ps 93; Ps 95-99) and combined it with an understanding of cult as a "creational drama" (Mowinckel 1953, 73f; cf. also Mowinckel 1932). In the celebrations of the New-year the life-giving forces of nature and the salvific force of the gods resp. of God are to be represented and re-created by mimetic repetition of basic mythical narratives or traditions of salvific history. In the Babylonian New Year, the dramatic celebration includes the recitation of the didactic poem >Enuma Elish< which envisions the struggle of the Babylonian city-God Marduk

against Tiamat, the primordial goddess of chaos (Pongratz- Leisten 1998, 295). Accordingly, in Egyptian cultic plays replay the primordial victory of the royal God Horus over the chaos god Seth. An instructive example is a "Horus Play", which is depicted in eleven reliefs in the Ptolemaic sanctuary of Edfu. It has been re-arranged as a (modern) cultic play by the British Egyptologist Herbert W. Fairman (Fairman 1974 ; Cf. Utzschneider 2007c, 271-273). Accordingly, the celebration of the New Year in Jerusalem dramatizes the victory of the kingdom of YHWH over his enemies and the following enthronement of YHWH. That "cultic drama" is to be understood as the "Sitz im Leben" or institutional point of reference of the enthronement psalms. However, these psalms show only fragmentary elements of the celebration postulated by Mowinckel, such as the formula "YHWH has become king!". There is no evidence for the Festival and its liturgy as a whole. Methodically Mowinckel proceeded in the tracks of genre criticism as established by his teacher Hermann Gunkel. However, Gunkel understood "the songs of Yahweh enthronement" as spiritual songs (Gunkel 1933 95). He had major reservations regarding Mowinckel's hypotheses (Gunkel 1933, 94-116). Nevertheless, Gunkel described the usage of other Psalms in terms of a drama, i.e. as performances in cultic and ritual contexts (For the category of "Performance / performance" see below 5). The "performance" of the hymns can be related to the celebration of sacrifices (Gunkel 1933, 59), they resound, when the congregation enters the sanctuary in "festive processions" and "in dance step". The Psalms of collective lamentations are performed namely to "fast days at the sanctuary" (cf. Gunkel 1933, 117s).

According to Artur Weiser (1893 - 1978) the "theophany–psalms" (Ps 18; Ps 77; Ps 50; Ps 68) were situated in dramatic representations in cultic contexts. He supposed that priests recited these psalms (cf. Ps. 81,6ff) accompanied by "dramatic ritual acts", such as "a cloud of smoke that ... symbolizes the presence of Yahweh", the "trumpet as an indication of the voice of JHWH "and "booming exultation … to echo the appearance of God" (Weiser 1953, 523; my translation). According to Weiser those dramatized appearances of God ("theophanies") reached back into the pre-state period when a "covenant cult" was established. The festal legend of this cult he found in the Sinai-texts (esp. Ex 19–20). However, this postulate is still less secure than Mowinckel's "enthronement festival" and was abandoned in the OT research.

Nevertheless, the dramatic character of the visual and aural implications in the texts which refer to the "cultic drama", cannot be ignored. Modern research is well aware of it. According to Martin Leuenberger, the concept of God's kingdom in individual psalms that "is still the best understood in the context of a pre-exilic autumn [i.e.: New Year] Festival, where they were a liturgically relevant and life-determining factor" (Leuenberger 2004, 226, my translation). Even if one does not follow the "hypertrophic bloating of the New Year Festival by Mowinckel", one will "basically hold on the hypothesis of such a festival, even if it can no longer be reconstructed in detail." (Leuenberger 2004, 226f).

Similarly, Erhard Gerstenberger judges the language of individual and collective psalms of lament as follows: "... it is not intended for solemn monologue lecture neither for private reading. Rather, it shows all the characteristics of the liturgical use and a dramatic structure with

changing votes, corresponding and contrasting form elements."
(Gerstenberger 2003 78, my translation).

The idea of dramatic performances of Old Testament texts in ritual and liturgical contexts has not remained confined to the Psalms. That idea was applied to other contexts as well. One of these contexts is prophecy.

In 1 Kings 22:10 –14 a dramatic ritual in the ancient Israelite prophecy is reported. The protagonists sit down near the city-gate of Samariah, the capital of the northern kingdom. This setting is not arbitrary. In antiquity, gates are numinous, ritually significant places, similar to sanctuaries. (The same is true for threshing floors. Cf. Hos 9:1) At such a gate the kings of Judah and Israel have settled and asked their prophets whether they could dare a campaign against the Arameans or not.

10 Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. 11 Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed." 12 All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king." 13 The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, "Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably." 14 But Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak." (NRSV)

The Kings attend the ritual, sitting on thrones and arrayed in ceremonial robes. One of the prophets occurs in a mask with horns

and performs a symbolic action, to which analogous power is ascribed; his colleagues speak the formulaic-liturgical phrase "YHWH will give it into the hand of the king", which signals to the kings that they may start their campaign. Today we would call such an event a "street performance".

Deutero-Isaiah is cultic in a certain sense (but rather different in respect of its literary character see below 3.). Klaus Baltzer has interpreted Isaiah 40-55 as a "Liturgical Drama" (Baltzer, 1999 48f). According to Baltzer the drama was performed during the festival of unleavened bread (Mazzot) in postexilic Jerusalem. "By the word 'liturgy', it should be made clear that the drama still was part of the worship ... The language follows in their formulas of liturgical tradition, as it is handed down to us in the Psalter. Liturgy and drama have in common that past, present and future are connected. "(Baltzer 1999, 48, my translation). In the wake of S. Mowinckel, John H. Eaton already has interpreted Second Isaiah as "Festal Drama" and connected it to the YHWH-king tradition and the Autumn Festival (Eaton 1979).

Regarding the book of Job, it has been proposed that we should understand it as a "para-ritual New Year drama" (Terrien 1969). That proposal is based on royal traits in the figure of Job on the one hand, and on creation motives in God's speeches (e.g. in Job 38–42) on the other. These evidences show, "that the poet of the book of Job had an intimate knowledge of the festival of New Year in the ancient near east" (cf. Terrien 1969, 231; my translation). Under the conditions of the exile, the Job-drama had been recited as a substitute for the New Year celebrations, once held in the defunct Temple of Salomon.

Likewise, Hartmut Schmökel, among others, determined the Song of Songs as cultic drama related to the "celebration of a ἱερὸς γάμος" (Schmökel 1956, 43). Such a "holy wedding" was part of the ancient near eastern Tammuz myths and rituals (Alster 1999, 828–843). According to this myth, the Song of Songs is re-arranged in three scenes with individual figures (priests and priestesses) and a men's and a women's choir (Schmökel 1956, 45-47). Most commentators, however, reject that interpretation (cf. Rudolph 1962, 90; Keel, 1986, 25). Based on ethnographic observations, Johann Gottfried Wetzstein pointed to parallels between the Song of Songs and the praises in a dramatic ritual of secular wedding ceremonies in Syria (Wetzstein 1873). This meets with the assessment in the preface of Origen's commentary on Song of Songs: "Epithalamium libellus hic, id est nuptiale carmen, dramatis in modum mihi videtur, a Salomone conscriptus ..." (An Epithalamium, a wedding song, it seems to me, is this little book, written by Solomon in the manner of a drama … ", Origen 1925, 61). However, Origen's allegorical interpretation equates the groom with the "Word of God", the bride with the "soul" or the "Church" - and thus the Song of Song depicts a very special kind of sacred wedding.

The codex Sinaiticus and other Septuagint manuscripts explicitly assign changing parts of the Song of Songs to the "groom" or the bride" respectively. (Hopf 2014, 305-320).

That, by no means, complete overview shows that the "drama" in the cultic contexts can take many forms, in respect of the literarily form, they can occur as short ritual formulas, as "lyrical" song-texts or liturgies up to comprehensive and highly poetic works. In that variety, the larger texts primarily found most interesting. Some scholars

argued that the classical Greek drama could be a reasonable explanatory model.

3. The Greek Drama

The Greek Drama, especially the Attic tragedy of the 5th century BCE, for many scholars provides decisive criteria for both: judging and interpreting biblical texts as dramas or dramatic or simply to reject such an interpretation. Indeed the Greek tragedy has very clear contours of form as well as of content and inner sequence, especially in the systematizing and didactic presentation of Aristotle's Poetics (Aristotle 1994) and modern textbooks (see for the following Latacz 2003, 65-77).

Pivotal constituents of form are the change of parts performed by the choir and parts spoken by individual actors, the dialogue between the choir resp. choir leader and individual actors. The Greek classical drama is structured is a tripartite division, which contents the following elements: 1. The Prologue which is completed by the entrance of the choir (Parodos). 2. Five "epeisodia", each of them completed by a choral piece. (The epeisodia correspond approximately to the acts or scenes in modern theatrical terminology). 3. The Exodos. The internal sequence and the flow of the dynamics of the tragedy are determined by a positive, exciting storyline. Its "plot" is running in three main stages: Desis, Metabasis (pathos, peripeteia, Anagnoresis) and Lysis.

The idea of such a sequence is behind many critical objections to the dramatic interpretation of Old Testament texts. One example is a remark of Wilhelm Rudolph on dramatic interpretations of the Song of

Songs: He wanted to bring "the whole dramatic spook put an end" and pointed out: "A drama must have a progress and a goal, and in a love story ... could this his goal just that ... He and She find together after all. "(Rudolph, 1962, 97, my translation).

Latacz, a classical scholar, refers to certain basic conditions, to which the Greek tragedy and its performance are linked. The tragedy is linked, inter alia, to the place of a "theater", literally a "show place" ("stationarity" Latacz 2004, 19), it requires certain means concerning the stage architecture and the ensemble ("Mittelgebundenheit"; "means bondage" Latacz 2003, 26f). Finally, the Greek tragedy is linked to specific occasions. In Athens, tragedies were written and listed exclusively for theater competitions on the occasion of two Athenian Dionysos festivals, the "Lenaea" in January and "Great Dionysia" in late March / early April (Latacz 2003 22). The latter basic condition puts the Greek tragedy, at least in principle, in the proximity of a cultic drama.

In the Old Testament and in ancient Israel there are no places and means, which had been indispensable for the Greek tragedy. There is no whatsoever evidence for theaters (in the classical sense) in ancient Israel "up to the 1st century BC". Then they occur "in large numbers" (Lang 2001, 826).

So, it seems to many observers "that neither the Bible nor the Talmudic world contains material which may be described in any way as a 'theater' or as 'drama' in Greek ancient or modern sense." (Morgenstern, 2009, 67;. similar Sowden 1971 Sp 1049; Zakovitch 2004 38; Wilks 2003).

To such critical voices in opposition are exegetes who find significant parallels between Biblical speech-texts, notably the Book of Job, (see a

detailed survey of research at Klinger 2007 18-48) and prophetic speeches (Utzschneider 2007a) on the one hand, and the ideal type of the Greek Drama on the other. Observations concerning the shape, plot and its "flow of dynamics" are cited. Even direct knowledge of Greek drama is sometimes assumed.

Claiming an affinity of the book of Job to dramatic role models and forms of Greco-Hellenistic realm has a long tradition. Theodore of Mopsuestia, a Greek church-father of the 4th and 5th century C.E., observed a close similarity of the Book of Job to Greek drama, so that he suggested to remove it from the canon.

Even in recent times scholars point to numerous similarities concerning the plot but also individual formulations. This is ascribed to close contacts with the Greek drama, especially with the tragedy "Prometheus Bound" by Aeschylus (Slotki, 1927-28; Murray, 1968; see also Klinger. 2007, 41-45).

Recently, Bernhard Klinger has interpreted the Book of Job consistently according to the model of Attic tragedy. He finds numerous common constituents of form (Klinger 2007 57-67), such as the speech forms of Rhesis (= longer speech) and monody (a longer song, esp. lament). He divides the text into an Introduction (proem) with prologue and Parodos (Hi 1.1 to 3.26), a main part with three Epeisodia and the conclusion (Exodos). He finds the dynamics of "desis", "peripety" (Job 28!) and "lysis" (see Klinger 2007, 127). However, the choir is missing. Concerning basic features of content, the Drama of Job and Greek tragedy models share the "myth of the human being", who accuses the deity for his personal suffering and asks for the reason of his suffering " (Klinger 2007, 120, my translation). The question of the possibility of performance Klinger

answers as follows: "With the adoption of a certain affinity to the Greek tragedies" was "the Book of Job in the final text is be read understood d as a drama …Whether or not it gains expressiveness, if it is performed, can, show only a staging (Klinger 2007, 333f). So, in Klinger's view the book of Job first of all is a drama to be read and recited (see. Below 4.).

This does not mean, however, that it would be inconceivable as a listed item. Luis Alonso-Schökel has proposed an "imaginative" staging of the Book of Job that brings to bear the presence of God in the prologue and his silent presence until his spectacular appearance at the end. „... we can imagine a stage with a second floor ... In the upper realm the prologue in heaven unfolds... here God is seated and continues to observe without being seen or heard by Job until the final act...“ (Alonso- Schökel 1977, 46f). This setting would not only envision a basic feature of the Book of Job, the tension between Job and the (mostly absent) God. It also would correspond to the construction of the Attic tragedy stage; on the roof of stage-house, the "Theo-logeion", gods could arise and speak (Latacz 2003, 27). We will come back later to the importance of imagination for playwriting.

The Greek ideal type plays a significant role for the dramatic interpretation of prophetic texts as well. This is especially true for Klaus Baltzer's exegesis of Deutero-Isaiah. He decides to define the genre of drama in the OT according to the Attic drama, because it is "a paradigm outside the AT" (Baltzer 1999, 35). Further it seems important to him "that chronologically ... Deutero-Isaiah and the classical period of Greek drama are not so far apart" (Baltzer 1999, 35). Literary points of comparison between Attic Drama and Second Isaiah

are "the frame with prologue and epilogue, and the division into individual acts and scenes" (Baltzer 1999, 36). In the Attic drama choral songs separate the epeisodia. This goes with the "hymns" in Second Isaiah which close major parts of the text. (Baltzer 1999, 39 and 43, footnote 94).

Stefan A. Nitsche finds in the so-called Isaiah Apocalypse (Isa 24-26) a choir, representing the inhabitants of Zion / Jerusalem, as well as a choir leader (Nitsche 2006, 131).

The commentary written by John D. W. Watts (Watts 2005) takes the entire book of Isaiah to be a vision, "suited to the artificial setting of a stage (Watts, 2005, XLV). The protagonists of the 12-part drama were YHWH and his helpers "Heaven and Earth". The plot basically follows the historical line of the Israelite history from monarchy to the Persian period until the "age to come", which is the topic of last act in Isaiah 63-66. The reference to the Greek ideal type is relatively loose and is based on the plot: ". The vision is ... a tragedy, for there is no happy ending for the people" (Watts, 2005, li). Paul R. House's interpretation of the book of Zephaniah is much more close to the pattern of the attic tragedy. "... a close reading of Zephaniah indicates it displays several traits of classical Greek drama: It is structured by alternating speeches between characters, a plot construction around distinct conflict and resolution, a set of developing characters, and a dramatic point of view. So Zephaniah observes the three unities of drama. The unity of place, unity of action and unity of time ... Thus by all classical way of defining drama, Zephaniah is a drama "(House 1988, 106). Particularly close to the Greek ideal type is a certain text that is outside of the Old Testament, but probably still within the time-span of its origin. It was written "in the period from the 2nd half of the 3rd

until the beginning of the 1st century. Chr." (Vogt, 1983, 116): The "Exagoge", composed by a certain Ezekiel from Alexandria, called "Ezekiel, the Tragedian". It presupposes the Exodus story from the immigration of the Jacob family (Ex 1) into Egypt until the beginning of wandering in the wilderness (Ex 15,22). Instead of the narrative text, pure figure speeches occur. Further characters, not occuring in the biblical exodus story, are introduced, e.g. a brother of Zipporah called Chum or the Phoenix. Action represented on stage is told by characters. Thus, Moses tells in a lengthy prologue the beginning of the Exodus story, and the story of his own childhood (line 1-57 Vogt 1983 121-133). The Red Sea event (ex 14) is reported by a messenger (line 193ff). This literary technique of "teichoscopia" resp. messenger-report can be found in the Attic tragedies as well (Nitsche 2006 123-130). It is suggested that the "Exagoge" was organized along the lines of the Greek tragedies in five acts. The plots of ancient Near Eastern and Egyptian cult dramas and also of Greek dramas are derived from epics or myths (cf. Flashar, 2000, 18). Likewise, the Exagoge is based on the LXX-version of the Exodus narrative.

The "Exagoge" witnesses the cultural relationship between the Jewish and the Greek-Hellenistic world. With high probability it was written in Alexandria, which harbored a great Jewish "Politeuma". It also has been an important theater city (Pfrommer 1999, 70f). The famous Alexandrian library passed down and processed classical Greek literature. Against this background the assumption is plausible that Ezekiel had "mainly [written] for Greek-speaking Jews." (Vogt, 1983, 117). With the transformation of the exodus narrative into a dramatic play he wanted to provide an alternative to Greek tragedies for his Jewish fellow-citizens".

The play is passed down (almost) exclusively in quotations in "Präparationes Evangelicae" (chapters 28 and 29) of the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (beginning of the 4th century CE), which in turn are based on excerpts from the Greek writer Alexander Polyhistor (1st century BCE.). Eusebius explicitly refers to the excerpts as a "δράμα" (prep. IX, 29.14). He quotes it in order to show that the figures of Jewish history are well known in the educated Greek world. Inversely Greek culture has found its way into the Old Testament and Jewish culture in postexilic times (cf. Kaiser 2003; Klinger 2007 74-83). To close up this section:

The ideal type of Greek drama provides not exact, yet sufficiently significant points of comparison with the dramatic texts in the Old Testament as Second Isaiah, Job and Song of Songs. The comparison, however, lets questions open and raises new ones (cf. the differentiated and critical considerations to Job of Dell, 2007 11-18). Concerning the book of Job, the relation to the "parallel" traditions in in ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature need further discussion. Possibly they are formally and thematically much closer to the biblical Job than the Greek dramas (see Uehlinger of 2007.).

As an open question remains how biblical texts are performed (the equivalent German term "Aufführung" is already found in Gunkel 1932 59), which are supposed to be "dramatic". As already pointed out, no theaters existed in Israel until the first century BCE. But: Are "performances" of dramatic biblical texts bound to the Greek or Roman type of theater culture (see 5. below)?

A new, much less discussed problem is how the "drama" of different dramatic texts, from smaller rituals to the great poetic text units, are

comparable. In other words, is there a sort of lowest common literary denominator for all kinds of dramatic texts? (See next section)

4. The dramatic text

Following Aristotle's Poetics, there are six elements "which must have every tragedy." These elements "are myth (story), ethe (characters; singular: Ethos), lexis (speech, language), dianoia (idea, intention), opsis (scenery) and melopoiía (vocals, music)." (Quote Asmuth 1994 , 3;. cf. Aristotle, 1994, 1450A). According to Bernhard Asmuth's handbook of dramatic art the three most important elements are: myth, lexis and opsis " (Asmuth 1994, 4). In the experience of the author these three elements are sufficient as working criteria for determining a text as dramatic or performative. (cf. Utzschneider 2007a; Utzschneider, 2005; Nitsche 2006; Hopf 2014 each with examples).

The **Lexis** or **characters' speech** (cf. Utzschneider 2007a, 198-205) is marked and structured by addresses, by changes of speaking persons or persons addressed.

The figure's speeches form the so-called "main text"; "additional texts" (Asmuth: "Nebentexte;" cf. Utzschneider, 2007a, 198-200) describe the scene or give hints to the performance of speech games ("stage directions"). Except for the headlines such "stage directions" are largely absent in the present editions of biblical texts. However, it is likely that changes of speakers in ancient manuscripts had been marked by means of "text graphic", like free line endings, spatia, points, Paragraphoi. This can be demonstrated in ancient Greek manuscripts (Lowe 1962; Nitsche 2006, 52f) and in Qumran-Texts as

shown in detail by Stefan A. Nitsche (2006, especially 135-141) at the Qumran manuscript 1QIsa[a] for Isaiah 13-23 and 24-27. In line with this text-designs are the assignments of speakers in the Septuagint manuscripts of the Song of Songs (cf. for complete documentation Hopf 2014, 305-320). In the standard text-editions the speaking and mentioned figures or groups of figures are marked by explicitly mentioned names or functions. However, the assignment of speeches to certain speakers is not always certain (see Nitsche 2006, 61-66). Analysis of speeches, speaker and speaker's changes ("Lexis") are the basis for segmentation of the speeches in their smallest units, which are referred to by the term "entry".

The notion of "entries" already appears in Hans Walter Wolff's commentary on Hosea in the term "Auftrittsskizze" (approximately: "sketch of entry", Wolff 1965, XXIVf). Wolff determined the "entries" in a way that is quite similar to that outlined above as analysis of "Lexis". In his view they "were made immediately after the proclamation of operation". So, his "entries are rather "kerygmatic units" (Wolff, 1965, XXV) than literary "playwriting".

The "**Opsis**" of dramatic speeches depends on references to the constellation and the appearance of the speaking persons, which include a basic imagination of the scenery. This can be called "implicit staging instructions" (Pfister, 2001, 37) or "Wortkulissen" ("word-scenes", Asmuth, 1994, 51f; Pfister, 2001, 351). Such "word scenes" can be derived from different repertoires of images and stand in different relations to the text and its recipient. The easiest way to build a "word scene", is that the speakers describe themselves or their situation. An example is Songs 1,16b17. As part of a dialogue between

man and woman both speak: "Our couch is green, the beams of our houses are cedars, and our roof tiles are cypresses." This evokes an idyllic forest scene, in which both commune with one another. In the context of the Song of Songs, the scene has overtones. The "Green couch" (resp. the house in which it is situated) is in contrast to the Royal Palace, in which the foregoing scene plays (see Hopf 2014, 14 118). "Word scenes" may also evoke cultic settings such as in Ps 24,7.9 "Arise, O ye gates, your heads,/ rise, you ancient doors, / that the King of glory may come." The address to the gates circumscribes the place and the action going on on the place: a ritual procession that envisions the entering of YHWH into his temple. A similar "cult dramatic" situation is conceived in Ps 46:6: "God has gone up, / YHWH with the sound of a trumpet.". The listeners or readers can feel to be directly involved in these scenes, but it can also be imagined in a greater temporal distance. The image of the "ancient gates" is not simply a literary replica of the real temple architecture of the Zion sanctuary. However cultic reality and the mythical idea of the everlasting heavenly sanctuary are combined (Jeremias 1987 59-73). The pictorial reservoirs of dramatic texts often include embossed pictorial representations of the cultic symbol system. One example is the destructive theophany in the Prologue of Micah (Mic 1,2-4). The appearance of God is announced to be imminent. The traditional audio-visual side effects such as fires and earthquakes are merely hinted at, which is sufficient for readers or listeners to get the whole picture repertoire of theophany and visualizes the usual function of theophany: the power of YHWH against the enemies of Israel (cf. Utzschneider 2005, 34). In Micah 1 however, the following speech shows that this appearance of God is directed against Samaria and

Jerusalem, the capitals of the Israelite states. Thus, the expectations of listeners and readers are thwarted. Such alienation of mythical and ritual images is not rarely encountered precisely in prophecy texts. First of all they a sign of poetic transformation (cf.. Utzschneider / Nitsche 2014 125-130184). As to the theology they critically reflect the ambiguity of cultic rituals dramas as well as of their theological assumptions (Utzschneider, 2007c, 290-296). Dramatic texts can do both: They may merely presuppose and envision ritualistic contents and they may reflect them critical manner and intention. Both are not easily distinguished.

The **myth** or **plot** of the Greek drama is set in its internal sequence and the flow of its dynamics, while respecting the units of place, time and action. This is often regarded as "benchmark" for the question of whether biblical texts are dramatic or not. But must this be the case? OT research has elaborated totally different kinds of "plots" for prophetic texts. It is repeatedly and rightly assured that the twelve minor prophets follow a historic plot, which leads from the successive disasters of the two kingdoms to the restitution of the Temple of Jerusalem, accompanied by eschatological perspectives into the distant future of the kingdom of God (cf. e.g. Zechariah 14). Another possibility is to build a plot based on the biography of the prophet. Or plots can be termed structurally, e.g. by structuring the books according to the salvation-disaster scheme (Utzschneider 2007a, 211-214). For the Song of Songs Matthias Hopf has worked out a plot depending on and centered around the characters (Hopf 2014, 294). The same may be true for the narrative of Saul and David.

In short, the question of the plot of dramatic texts should be kept open and is to decide for any text anew. As far as we can see, there

are story-based and historicizing plots, there are structural and figure-centric plots and last but not least plots can be shaped by ritual processes as e.g. by the fast ceremonies as in Joel 1–2.

A fundamental feature of dramatic speeches and a criterion of demarcation against narrative texts is the absence of literary instance of an implicit, "omniscient narrator" who presents and sometimes comments the course of action "par derrière", from a viewpoint outside the action and with the benefit of hindsight, which makes him "omniscient". In dramatic texts there is - as a rule - only an "internal Point of View ". That is, the perspective on the action is determined by one (or more) of the characters *in* the text. The listeners or readers have to adopt these internal points of view (cf. Utzschneider 2007a, 214). This may be the point of the prophet, but it may also be the point of view of Israel or the nations.

This may also lead to "clashes" between different time systems within the respective dramatic text or between the time systems of the text on the one and the readers on the other side. E.g. the Poem Mic 4.8 – 5.3 depicts the capture of Jerusalem and the deportation of its inhabitants by the Babylonians as imminent future. For the listener or reader of the exilic and post-exilic period (and for us as recent readers) this event is more or less far away in the past. So, what future is in the text is something like a "remembered future" for the reader or listener (cf. Utzschneider, 2007a, 216f; Utzschneider, 2007b, 254-268).

In OT research this understanding of the dramatic text is just beginning to be discussed. Initially skeptical, then clearly negative was the reaction of Odil Hannes Steck (cf. Steck 1996 50f, note 69; Steck 2001 159f, NB 81st.). He held the category drama "for… historically inappropriate". Uwe Becker commented the approach cautiously but

positively (Becker 2001, 44). The comments of Annemarieke van der Woude mainly refer to Klaus Baltzer's thesis of Isaiah 40-55 as "Liturgical Drama" as well to the works of Henk Leene and Helmut Utzschneider. Van der Woude strictly advocates to differentiate between drama and dramatic text. Drama requires a plurality of media (van der Woude 2005, 160) as especially Manfred Pfister (Pfister, 2001, 24-27) has pointed out, to which van der Woude relates. Drama is not just the dramatic text; music, stage design and props must be added to make the text be a drama (cf. Van der Woude 2005, 170). Dramatic texts are "performative in nature" (van der Woude, 2005, 160), they have "performative moments" (van der Woude, 2005, 169), an "orientation towards presentation". A director "can feel challenged to perform a text with dramatic traits in a plurimedial way" (van der Woude 2005 169). In short: a dramatic text is a drama only if it is performed.

5. The performance of biblical texts

The performance and feasibility are the "big question" for dramatic texts and "the drama". But what is a "performance"? For many "drama" means that a more or less classic dramatic text is brought to the stage. This idea also influenced the judgment about the dramatic character of biblical texts (cf. Utzschneider, 2007a, 205f). Approximately since the 1960's a new perspective was opened by a discourse which attracts more and more academic circles, initially linguistics (John L. Austin), then theater studies (Richard Schechner, Erika Fischer-Lichte) and cultural anthropology (Victor Turner) followed. Finally, it found entrance also into theology as well (for the

Old Testament exegesis see Hardmeier 2005 and there especially 291-313; for the New Testament Oestreich 2012, Strecker 2013.): the discourse on performativity resp. theatricality. In everyday language, "performances" usually happen in theatres or theatre-like places. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, a German scholar of theatre studies, performances take place when people as actors or spectators (the assignment can change) "in a bodily co-presence" gather at a certain time at a certain place and share a common situation (cf. Fischer-Lichte, 2004, 11). This definition opens up a wide field of situations and circumstances that can be referred to as "performance" or "performative". Performances in this sense are not just the typical theatrical events such as plays, operas or ballets, but e.g. also parades, Corpus Christi processions or presentations. Even everyday situations such as receptions may be performances or develop as such, if the participants behave or feel as actors and / or spectators. In cultural studies certain patterns of social behavior in borderline situations, especially in conflicts can be understood as dramatic rituals or "social dramas" (Turner 2009 95-139). Victor Turner built bridges between the dramas in the sense of aesthetic, theatrical events and dramatic rituals (see. To top 2.). There is "possibly in all societies a mutual, perhaps dialectical relationship between social dramas and cultural forms of representation. Life is as much an imitation of art as vice versa."(Turner 2009, 114; see also Schechner 1987).

Pivotal for the concept of performativity are eventness and physicalness. The text, which has to be staged, be interpreted in staging and then just performed, is not a undispensible condition for performativity, but event and actors. Texts and utterances can play a

role in performances or not. Spoken text is only one of the means of representation in performance.

Fixed (written or oral) texts can be part of performances, e.g. as libretti in operas, as dramatic texts in plays, liturgical formulas and sermons in services. We will call a text "performative", if it mirrors or simulates a performance regardless whether the performance is real or fictional, regardless also whether the given text is performed or not. Erika Fischer-Lichte calls performativity in fixed texts "strukturelle Performativität" (structural performativity) in contrast to "verkörperte Performativität" (embodied performativity) (cf. Fischer-Lichte 2013, 140–145). The "stage" on which structural performativity takes place as performance is first and foremost the imagination of hearers and readers. The borders between structural and embodied performativity are not always are very sharp. If a given text is just recited or read aloud, the reciting or reading person embodies it.

In the dramatic texts of the OT the two options of "embodied" and "structural performativity" are realized – on the one hand as recitation and on the other as reading dramas (closet dramas). One of the two or both options together are for the performance of dramatic texts in the Old Testament assumed (e.g. Isaiah: van der Woude, 2005 170; for the Qumran version of Isaiah 24-27: Nitsche 2006 275; for Job: Schorlemmer 1983 111-114; Klinger 2007 83). Even Aristotle has already reckoned with the two options and equated them with the theatrical performances: " The plot ought to be so constructed that, even without the aid of the eye, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place. (Aristotle, 1994, 1453b) "and: "... the mere reading can indeed show of what nature it [scil. the drama] is. "(Aristotle 1994, 1462a).

For the recitation of dramatic texts of the Old Testament, there is very concrete evidence. As already mentioned Stefan A. Nitsche has referred to the "text graphic" of the great Isaiah scroll from Qumran: "Even if the text graphic would already make alone in itself sense, so there are a number of indications that make it most likely..., that these arrangements in the text offer not only aids for reading but also for recitation in the public lectures. ... "(Nitsche 2006, 275). In the Mishnah, it is reported that the high priest was not allowed to sleep inthe night before the Day of Atonement. To keep him awake, he recites the Book of Job, or it is recited before him (cf. Joma 1.6; text and translation by Krupp 2003. See Schorlemmer 1983 11-114).

This fits well to a new view of the relationship between oral and written traditions of the Old and New Testaments. For the Old Testament David M. Carr's monograph "Writing on the Tablet of the Heart. Contributed Origins of Scripture and Literature " 2005 is a major contribution. For the education systems in the ancient world including the Israel, Carr has worked out, that written texts had the function to support the oral transmission. The "normal", at least preferred medium in which the texts of the later Old Testament were present in Israel, was not the written text, but the oral presentation, the "embodied Text". These recitations should not be imagined as mere acoustic reproduction of the written wording. Memorization and recitation were supported by music and performed as singing (Carr, 2005 189). A plurimedial mode of "performance" was the norm, indeed for all types text – dramatic and narrative.

On the reassessment of orality is also based the so-called "Performance Criticism", a discourse, especially among New Testament scholars in the US which understands itself as an "Emerging

Methodology" (Rhoads, 2006). The (rote) presentation of the texts opens a new approach: "The experience of translating, memorizing, and performing these [scil. biblical] works has placed me in a fresh medium an entirely different relationship with these texts then that of a silent reader... " (Rhoads 2006, 120). As a "method of research" performance opens the dimensions of meaning experimentally: "By performing – taking the roles of characters, moving in imagination from place to place, interacting between one character and another, recounting the narrative world from the narrators perspective and standards of judging – the Interpreter/performer must make judgments about the potential meanings and rhetorical impacts of a composition in order to play a line at all."(Rhoads, 2006, 173). Imagination which is excited by the written text, but also limited, plays a crucial role in the performative act of silent reading as well. It is excited by the written text, but also limited. The characters' speech envisions the characters as well as the "opsis" of the setting, and the "myth" (Plot) creates an event. For the reading subject, this is a "complex cognitive, affective and imaginative energetic event in a liminal situation" (Fischer-Lichte 2013, 143). Alonso-Schökel has described in his "Dramatic Reading of the Book of Job," how a drama can rise in imaginative reading (Vgl. oben). He concludes by saying: „I would not want my suggestions to be used in any way to diminish this rich and magnificent book." In other words: There a many ways to stage a drama be reading it. Or: Every performance is unique.

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