

Canadian Readings of Jewish History

Canadian Readings of Jewish History:

*From Knowledge to
Interpretive Transmission*

Edited by

Daniel Maoz and Esti Mayer

**Cambridge
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Publishing**



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To Laura,
in whose eyes I see
all that I am
and all that I hope to be.

To my mother,
Rivka Mayer.
Long may she live.

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PREFACE

DANIEL MAOZ

It is a joyful task to write a preface because it means that the long hours, the weeks and months, and even the years of labour have ended and now it is time to reflect on how we arrived at where we are and who made it possible along the way.

To express gratitude feels in some ways inadequate but to not express gratitude would be churlish. Suffice it to say that the people who carried the project along, both named and unnamed in this brief prelude, know that they were essential to various stages of *Canadian Readings of Jewish History: From Knowledge to Interpretive Transmission*. Whether by consultation or proof-reading or moral support, the following people have left their mark on this volume in making it better than it otherwise would have been.

I begin with my co-editor, Esti Mayer. A relatively recent member of the respected group of scholars who have earned the doctorate through deep and profound philosophical academic engagement, Dr. Mayer has proven to be the perfect co-editor for a volume that engages critical literary analysis centrally. When searching for an appropriate co-editor, I consulted a number of my esteemed colleagues and Dr. Mayer's name came up more than once based on her sharp intellect, keen critical mind, and notable facility with contemporary critical sources. When approaching her, I needed to spend little time exploring the fit. An apt Yiddish word came to mind at the time and has resonated ever since: *Bashert*. That it was somehow destiny for Esti Mayer to work on this project is, in my mind, indisputable. Evidenced by the contents of this volume, I believe my evaluation is validated.

I am equally indebted to the founding past President of the Canadian Society for Jewish Studies (CSJS), Dr. Ira Robinson, who – in coordination with executive members of CSJS – encouraged my involvement in establishing this series of studies at its every stage, from initial call for papers to seeing this project to its conclusion. He generously conferred on me his *kavod*.

Not all of the enclosed contributions are Canadian Society for Jewish Studies (CSJS) conference papers, although many of the contributors of this volume engaged in their research with a view to presenting their findings at

an annual CSJS conference. All papers were duly vetted beforehand by executive members of CSJS and were engaged in critical discussion of their findings by the same executive members and other attendees at these conferences. Final double-blind vetting of subsequent proposals elevated already carefully scrutinized research. This volume reflects an ongoing literary tradition born within CSJS' eighteen-year-old history – the society's literary arm, so to speak. *From Knowledge to Interpretive Transmission: Critical (Canadian) Readings of Jewish History and Thought* (Maoz and Mayer, eds., 2022) has become the third publication in what is now a regularly documented historical capsule of Jewish studies in Canada, preceded by *From Antiquity to the Postmodern World: Contemporary Jewish Studies in Canada* (Maoz and Gondos, eds., 2011) and *From Something to Nothing: Jewish Mysticism in Contemporary Canadian Jewish Studies* (Fox, Maoz, and Meacham, eds., 2019), and all published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Any volume containing multi-language, multi-directional alphabetic, multi-formatting writings encounter unique editorial challenges. Every effort has been made to present an error-free manuscript to the publisher. However, the editors alone bear responsibility for all formatting errors and other extant solecisms.

In returning to the fact that a work of this magnitude relies on a community of specializations and specialists, I extend gratitude to Leah Kalvari for reading the entire text before agreeing to write a Foreword that so succinctly summarizes the gift of this volume for all its readers.

Over the past three years, Laura Stoutenburg answered the call many times to proofread text, contribute more appropriate language, and clarify wording that would otherwise mire readers in confounding phraseology. For this, I am most appreciative. And above all I want to acknowledge her kind willingness during the birthing of this volume to let me be more distracted and absent-minded than the partner she married over thirty-five years ago.

The cover image is the artistic work of my co-editor, Esti Mayer. Her brilliance in scholarship is matched and exceeded by her creative genius, her art recognized and celebrated internationally. As I said earlier, Esti is the perfect co-editor for this particular scholarly work, a person who engaged in its heart and soul.

Finally, Cambridge Scholars Publishing deserves high praise. It has been wonderful to work with Adam Rummens, such a genial Commissioning Editor, who, along with his typesetter, design team, and other CSP specialists, relieved me of concern over how the final product would come to pass. Without naming them, each deserves heartfelt thanks.

FOREWORD

LEAH KALVARI

Canadian Readings of Jewish History: From Knowledge to Interpretive Transmission is situated across multiple forms of knowledge and takes cognisance of how the imposition of culturally constructed, historical meanings into our current landscape has the ability to silence certain identities, or alternatively privilege other identities. This is not a book to simply read, but to journey in self- reflection. As I reflected on the text of this powerful read, I understood more clearly why my mentor and teacher, Dr Maoz, took on this inspiring project with Dr. Mayer. In my deep discussions with Dr Maoz, he seemed to resonate with multiple co-existing forms of knowledge, and in so doing seems to have a unique ability to embody diversity.

When Professor Maoz asked me to write this foreword my initial thought was “why me?”

After reading these critically relevant, engaging chapters I began to place my own unique meanings onto the text. My idiosyncratic interpretations were co-constructed through a whole array of intersecting identities. I inhabit multiple worlds, and live quite comfortably with apparent contradictions, where a range of subjective realities, epistemologies, and intersectional ways of being unfold. I am an observant Jewish woman, a wife, and mother; a social worker that advocates for diverse lifestyles around sexuality, multi-faith communities, and disability; an advocate around Orthodox Jewish women navigating intimate partner violence; and I clinically supervise psychotherapy practitioners from intersectional communities, as well as offer psychotherapy services to multi-faith, and diverse life-style clients.

Some may ask the question, “How is it possible for one to inhabit and engage authentically with those “outsiders” who inhabit forms of knowledge, and ways of being that in their essence contradict ones own?” It is possible that the answer lies deeply rooted in dismantling the discourse of the dialectic. It is not in a vacuum that knowledge with its attached meanings creates the notion of “otherness,” whilst simultaneously creating the notion of “sameness.” The reader should embark on this dismantling

process as they reflect on the book's historical ideas, and related structural realities that have come into being, and how their historicity has benefited certain identities, whilst simultaneously disadvantaging others.

Reading these chapters may be described as akin to a genealogical embodied journey in that it elucidates how our historical context, through the entangled process of language, culture, knowledge, pedagogy, and power, has created and perpetuated the oppression of marginalised identities throughout history. This powerful read is in essence a social justice initiative in that it shines a spotlight on elitist forms of knowledge, and their attached privileged protectors.

The reader should consciously and purposefully reflect on their own pre-conceived meanings and culturally inherent notions while reading these pages; and in so doing open a third space where new forms of knowledge that may transcend time and space can evolve into endless possibilities. It is these possibilities of expanding the nuanced meanings of evolving knowledge, fluid lifestyles, and of a dynamic connection to humanity and G-d, which make this book contextually relevant in our diverse landscape.

The post-modern lens in this book un-situates philosophies which have traditionally been unknowingly situated, and, in so doing, propels the reader to re-interpret discourse and recreate taken-for-granted "universal truths." The very notion that history may in fact be unreliable can possibly place the reader in an unsettling space, having to recreate new epistemologies. However, it is this exact unfamiliar state of being that can propel the reader to move from re-interpreting theoretical constructs towards their application in praxis. The reader will become aware of the dangers involved in an invisibility of decentralised power, and thereby consciously begin a process of observing the covert, insidious, and systemic oppression playing out through knowledge, language, text, pedagogy, and within religious structures. This book is not only an intellectual endeavour or a critical analysis of theoretical constructs as they relate to knowledge application, but more importantly it is a constant reminder to always interrogate what we have come to take for granted; and in so doing these pages should inspire the reader to redress social injustice and embark on a process of healing humanity in their every day lived experience.

INTRODUCTION

ESTI MAYER

The primary methodology chosen for this volume is Critical Discourse Analysis, given its historically situated engagement with texts that were written by competing socio-religious groups vying for ascendancy and authority over time. It is an exploration of the ontological uses of language that have shaped Jewish reality and Jewish identity. This volume represents the fruit of research initiated by Canadian scholars of Jewish Studies, works that have been presented at CSJS conferences. Through their work, our scholars are participating in the scholarly dialogue with scholars of the past, present, and future, in Canada and beyond. It is indeed a great honour and responsibility of Jewish historians to seek to collaboratively deepen our understanding of Jewish life. We adopt a skeptical epistemological approach to the body of work before us, as we lay another brick in the wall of the tower of knowledge.

Discourse theory derives from linguistic methodology applied to the humanities, tracing back to influential thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is founded on the premise that far from merely being a neutral medium of communication, language is a structuring agent which reflects and represents social realities, and that simultaneously, language use constructs and constitutes these realities. Discourse theory focuses on social construction and exchange of meaning through texts, whereas texts can be written, spoken, gestural, semiotic, image cultural artifacts. Discourses have functional and structural properties, such as systems of categorization and interpretive schema that influence cognition, perception, and action within communities of shared textual discourses. Discourses are social phenomena that in turn impact people and their social interactions.

Critical discourse analysis looks at the integration of knowledge, action, and identity. It also studies the distribution of social goods in a society, such as social status, money/resource allocation, and acceptance of dominant elites' leadership by the subordinate strata of the social group. Leadership cannot be imposed without a social contract that ratifies its constituted governance. Discourse analysis can illuminate issues regarding the allocation

of social goods. It asks and seeks to answer such questions as: Who is saying what? To whom? What is being said? What are the motives behind these utterances? How do these affect the way people act and feel? Who is “in”? Who is “out”? It is important to note that the direction of influence between discourse and social practices is a two-way street, as each influences the other. Discourse can help construct a social reality that is taken for granted, a social reality that advantages some participants at the expense of others. Recognition is consequential, whereas “making visible and recognizable who we are and what we are doing, always involves a great deal more than ‘just language.’”¹

This volume presents a selection of inquiries into and analysis of discrete or isolated texts. Although each study can stand alone in terms of the specific text under consideration, all the essays here respond to widely shared ways of thinking and talking about Jewish Studies, and to the influence of these texts on reality and social practices the texts enact. The dominant assumptions of Jewish people became inscribed as the character of the community and on its disposition toward time, space, and meaning. Rabbinic texts may be viewed as comprising a single literary continuum, rather than a series of independent texts that emerged from a common “soup” of sources. They constitute a single textual tradition, a singular fabric of interwoven knowledge, that has been redacted, annotated, and studied continuously since antiquity and continues to be thus developed and repeatedly challenged to this day, its meaning shifting with the sands of time. Asserting that rabbis have “always” been central and materially important to the correct ritual practice affirms rabbinic authority to uphold traditions. The crafted memory of the past provided the rabbis with roots in antiquity, thus claiming that in the post-destruction period rabbinic ruling must be followed.² Ways of reading and understanding scripture were developed as law making had to adjust to new socio-political and religious realities. Rabbinic discourse in general was transformed into an ethos, a binding and collectively shared fundamental character or spirit of Jewish culture. It undergirds the scaffold of traditional life with a normative set of beliefs, customs, and practices of individuals within a society. Discourses under study here became the site of meeting between past and present, between the dominant social strata and their subordinate strata, in relation to a religious truth. We therefore maintain that discourse theory can help shed light on the role that language and language use play on Jewish social structures and practices, together with political and economic factors.

¹ James Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, p. 51.

² Naftali Cohn, *The Memory of the Temple and the Making of the Rabbis*, pp. 41-43, 56-58.

People's concepts of the world they live and act within contribute to the reproduction and transformation of reality. Social phenomena are socially constructed, and texts are therefore linguistic and semiotic elements that shape and are shaped by social events. Texts are sets of statements that bring social objects into reality. These texts can be isolated analytically to study the webs of relations between discourse and other elements of the social environment. Texts here are regarded as manifestations of discourse, whereas they reflect the interaction of social structures and social practices.³

Critical discourse analysis is not algorithmic. There is no set of rules or procedures that can be followed in order to obtain guaranteed results. Strategies must continually adapt, be flexible, to apply to specific problems and contexts of study. There is not, as Michel Foucault states, "a seamless narrative with which we can decipher underlying history,"⁴ there is no grand narrative, no seamless account of the past, and indeed there is no account that has reached us of the temple rituals that we can categorically define as an accurate depiction of reality. Critical discourse analysis is based on the analyst's prefiguration of how "language, contexts, and interactions world in general and in the specific context being analyzed... (it concerns) theoretical entit(ies)."⁵ The validity of one's analysis depends on how transcripts work together with the elements of analysis to create a plausible description of historical social contexts and of the ideological contests animated by long ago actors. Validity is not a denominator that reflects "reality" in a simple way. The use of language to interpret the world renders it socially meaningful. And critical discourse analysis is itself an interpretation of the interpretive work that people had in the past made in historical contexts that continuously changed. Validity is therefore not a "once and for all" solution to the vexing unknowability of history. The critical discourse analysis presented here is, inherently and inevitably, open to further dispute, as other analysis, discussions, and challenges to the work.⁶

Meaning is not merely apprehended through grammar. Meaning can be apprehended through analysis of the webs of signification drawn from utterances that are socially embedded and enacted. They are the products of historical disputes between and among different discourses.⁷ It is important

³ D. Mumby and R. Clair, 'Organizational Discourse,' in: T. A. van Dijk, ed., *Discourse as Social Interaction: Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, Vol. 2, p. 181.

⁴ Sara Mills, *Discourse* 23 (citing Michel Foucault).

⁵ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, p. 136.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 72-75.

to study each discourse on its own, as it evolved through and over time, but it is equally important and significant to study the interactive characteristics of and clashes between discourses. These tools of inquiry are, as James Paul Gee says, “thinking devices that can guide us to ask certain sorts of questions, when we are studying oral and textual language artefacts.”⁸ We ask what social languages are involved. We ask which socially situated identities are enacted by these languages. We ask what discourse or discourses are involved, and whether and how they interact. We ask what sorts of relationships are involved between the discourses, and what conversations are relevant to the understanding of this linguistic sparring. Which conversations are relevant to understanding texts, and to what conversations do they contribute? We finally ask how intertextuality operates in the text, and what function it has in defining the socially constructed webs of significance, power, and authority.⁹

The use of language varieties serves to privilege ideas. Discourse can embody perspectives and values and interests of privileged segments of society who exert influence on the articulation of discourse. As van Dijk states that discourse theory “focuses on the ways ...[texts] enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power and dominance in society.”¹⁰ Thus, the distribution of social goods is at the heart of critical discourse theory. Social good can be defined as anything a person or a group in society strives for, wants, and values, things like status, respect, money, influence, and political power.¹¹

Language is used to convey a particular perspective on the nature of the social goods and their distribution among socially significant actors. “Social goods are potentially at stake any time we speak or write in a way that states or implies that something or someone is... “good,” or “acceptable (or the opposite), in some fashion (that is) important to some group in society or society as a whole. (The) perspective on the distribution of social good (may be defined) as politics.”¹² Narratives reveal the underpinning of this perspective, whereas they define who is worthy of leadership, who is authoritative, who is the “right” and who is the “wrong” type of leader. Social goods are the politics of who gets what in terms of status, power, and acceptance.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁰ T. van Dijk, “Critical Discourse Analysis,” in: D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, and H. E. Hamilton, eds., *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, p. 353.

¹¹ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, p. 233.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 35.

The ontological uses of language define the things in life that many of the constituents of the social group agree are significant, important, and central to communal life and its longevity. Language signals how to view the significant things once language had rendered them important. As Gee states: “We use language to render certain things connected or relevant (or not) to other things.”¹³ Language is recognized as the mechanism for enacting new leaders, specifying their new roles and responsibilities; language also enacted new identities for the people themselves, so as to preserve the social cohesion and communal life, as God’s people who live in light of the Torah, with personal and communal avenues to the Divine. Jewish elites choreographed socially recognized and culturally supported practices, that involve sequencing or combining actions in certain specific and meaningful ways.¹⁴

These elements require elites to design their pedagogical endeavours around what they perceive to be the recipients’ interests as they align with elite interests and serve them. They must give consideration for the recipients’ ability to assimilate articles of speech. The positional design of these articles guides the recipients to be, to think, to feel, and to behave in specific ways, and thus assume a particular identity that would lead to specific beliefs and actions. Past speakers, as well as contemporary thinkers and writers have sought to persuade, motivate, even manipulate their readers and listeners, to foster their own ideas about the social and religious definition of Jewish life. Utterances must be constructed so that the relevant, salient messages would be actively promoted and clearly apprehended.¹⁵ Each textual account has to impress upon the community that the account is authoritative and therefore its authors merit the position of leadership.

To enact identities, people have to talk the right talk, to walk the right walk, behave as if they believe and value the right things, and wear the right things at the right time and the right place. Identity is a performance. Like all performances, it will not work unless at least some people recognize what you are and what you are doing in your performance... the actors and the audience both need to know who the actors are supposed to be, what they are supposed to be doing, and what it all portends.¹⁶

History, like reality, is socially constructed. He who controls the past, controls the future. And he who controls the future lays claim to religious,

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, p. 32.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

¹⁶ Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis*, p. 24.

social, and political authority in the present time as well. Therefore, segments in society that have access to the means of cultural production shape the dominant discourse according to their interests and perspectives, giving rise to educational discourses, religious discourses, media discourses, and political discourses.¹⁷

Members of the subordinate social groups may often internalize the ideas embedded in the dominant discourses, even when these ideas do not align with their own interests. For instance, if the social environment in which the studied texts were formulated was patriarchal, the way people talked about gender, enacted, and perpetuated the attendant practices, is patriarchal. Thus, the wider notion of language as a vehicle for enacting the identity of leadership must consider the people, objects, values, times, and places that convey and negotiate contextual elite claims.

Critical discourse analysis seeks to discover in texts the embedded beliefs and values comprising a particular worldview and ideology. According to Roger Fowler, “Discourse is speech or writing seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values, and categories that it embodies ... (which) constitute a way of looking at the world, an organization or representation of experience ... (whereas) the source of these representations is the communicative context within which the discourse is embedded.”¹⁸

Employing a methodology of discourse theory, scholars aim to describe the socio-political power relations between various segments of Jewish society and Jewish social structures, and to glean some information regarding Jewish history. The power contest between the elites and subordinate segments of Jewish society can disclose new aspects of the cultural and religious diversity of Jewish responses to foundational Jewish texts as Jews define, redefine, and enact Jewish identity. Discourse defines the contours of power relations between the producer disseminators of the narrative and the consumer recipients thereof. The dissemination of texts often requires translation, to mediate knowledge.

Discourse, explains Michel Foucault, is a device that enables people to bear up against events. Discourse is what enables people to face reality, as its primary claim is to be true and rational.¹⁹ Discourse, in other words, is the “equipment we need in order to confront the future”²⁰ by defining control and mastery over the representation of the past according to the

¹⁷ N. Phillips and C. Hardy, *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, p. 15.

¹⁸ Mills, *Discourse*, 5 (citing Roger Fowler); Jeremy Hawthorn, *A Concise Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*, p. 48.

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, p. 99.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

political-religious aims of Jewish elites over time. The voice of the master, in other words, is the voice of truth and therefore must be obeyed,²¹ not only as regards daily and festival rituals and worship, but in every aspect of religious life. Power relations define the strategies of situatedness, and perforce define potential disagreement with the reigning discourse as resistance, as negative and subversive anti-establishment and anti-normative allegations.²² So, we ask which texts did Jewish elites favour and which did they ignore? What were some other texts that did not attract elite attention and why? What can we learn from the types of sources and from the preponderance of some over others?

Governed by its own rules and structures, and with its own method of using words that presume authority and authenticity, the texts studied here examine the use of language systematically, with specific effect on the way identity and ideology are encoded, thereby reflecting the power relations that shaped the production and reception of these discourses. Why does it all matter? Because we are all affected by discourse, as Louis Althusser explains in his concept of interpellation: "Individuals are called upon by texts to recognize themselves as particular types of individuals,"²³ and we, as scholars of Jewish history, can learn a great deal about those individuals through the texts they produced, valued, read and preserved over time. Commentary, according to Foucault, is a process by which books are kept in circulation;²⁴ it is important to preserve the variability of historic Jewish traditions, and furthermore, through critical analysis, to keep discourses from fading into the margins of contemporary scholarship, because of their inherent epistemological merit.

Our book is divided into six sections in which the salient characteristics of discourse theory are discussed. It all revolves around the matter of *Knowledge*, the fundamental social artifact that is communicated by authorized elites, to elucidate, perpetuate, and elaborate on traditional and cultural information that is central to group identity and the identity of individuals within. *Language* is the means of communication, not merely as a device, but as a shaping, transformational agent that constitutes social institutions. Language defines and imposes culturally constructed meaning, in order to constitute social and structural reality. *Texts* are what we refer to as the composite informational artifacts that preserve and communicate knowledge, organized as aural, oral, visual, and gestural bits of memory to be transmitted to consumers of this accrued wisdom. The act of transmission

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

²³ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 39.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62 (on Foucault).

is defined as *Pedagogy*, the educational endeavour, which is fraught with power relations, and is the engine of social identity. Language, identity, and knowledge are constituted differently for males and females. In other words, knowledge, and the social goods it forms and distributes are gendered artifacts. Over time, the rabbinic discourse was privileged in terms of its presumed authenticity and relation to the truth, while other discourses were subjugated, marginalized, and excluded. Feminist approaches to the study of Jewish texts are considered in our section on *Différence*, leading to the last section of this book called *Interpretation*. We approach interpretation and translation as hermeneutic endeavours that result in the performance of ontological variables over time.

Each discourse examined here makes statements that bear truth claims ratified by knowledge,²⁵ and each side in the dialogue claims this truth to be validated by authority.²⁶ One has to try to hear the echoes of the voices that have been effaced through the contestation of power, and one cannot accept at face value the dominant message alone,²⁷ because the surface of discourse is not the sum-total of statements on a particular situation. Knowledge is the product of a process through which truth, power, understanding, and authority are constituted by dialogical power relations.

Defining the past in effect defines present and future power relations. This book, therefore, is an invitation to consider Jewish Studies through the lens of discourse theory. The dynamic process of constructing lived Jewish experience, in conjunction with the adaptability of Jewish identity, is, we believe, critically relevant to the ongoing conversation between past, present, and future scholars. We hope this collaborative effort will contribute materially to the never-ending process of creating and transmitting knowledge in the academic field and in the lived reality of Jewish life.

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²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7 (citing Mikhail Bakhtin).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 55 (citing Foucault).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 107-108 (citing Dipesh Chakrabarty and Gayatri Spivak).

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PART I



KNOWLEDGE



If a different knowledge, then a knowledge of different matters.
—Plato, *Ion*

PREVIEW

Knowledge is information. It must be communicated and shared in order to exist as an artifact. Who are the authorized purveyors of knowledge? What types of knowledge are there, who decides what is worthy to be shared, and how is this knowledge shared? How are diverse types of knowledge privileged over others? From traditional and cultural knowledge, through textual authority, to the process of privileging specific artifacts over others, and all the way to artificial intelligence, this section examines the devices that create, store, and communicate knowledge through a political process of distributing social goods over time.

For Plato, discernment of kinds of knowledge, separates and distinguishes rather than unifies and homogenizes both the purveyor and the domain of said knowledge. Resting on our Platonic understanding, we now take for granted that the differentiation of knowledge aligns with the differentiation of domain. Based on the ubiquity of knowledge,¹ Foucault initiated and popularized the dismantling of all philosophies of history that had based themselves on single ideas and constructed past realities (e.g., Marx; Hegel), and history came to be understood as a mode of knowledge that perpetuated a method of repression.² Foucault posited that history, based as it has been on conjecture and the stories it perpetuated about the past, is unreliable and is fast disappearing from the postmodern world Foucault helped to define. With the passing of historical import, he focused on the emergent understanding that knowledge is a power conduit for every domain of thought and speech. As an upshot, the emergent focus of cultural studies no longer depends on a body of texts from the past and, instead, it attends to the ongoing and ever-changing landscape of socio-cultural reality.³

¹ Notwithstanding and in contrast to that of his contemporaries of the *Annales* school that included Braudel, Ariès, and Leroi-Ladurie, as well as the direct focus on more local knowledge championed by Geertz, though Foucault to some degree shared with the *Annales* an emphasis on social history in contrast to political history (“le pouvoir sans le roi” – see Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité I. La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, 1976, 120).

² Foucault, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1977, 162-63.

³ On cultural power, see Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, 6; on early influences on post-colonial

Each chapter in this anthology may be read as a discrete unit that conveys historical value, or with a view to understanding it in terms of “knowledge as power” as a post-modern construct. It may serve us well to refresh our sense of Foucault at the outset of reading the chapters in this section, to understand, in a postmodern manner and with greater cognizance and clarity, the power that ideas (i.e. knowledge) that these chapters embody and advance.

(T)he objective is to analyze a certain form of knowledge ..., not in terms of repression or law, but in terms of power... It seems to me that power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization ...(It is a) process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them... thus forming a chain or a system ... [characterized by] the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies... (Power) is the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable. The omnipresence of power ... is produced from one moment to the next, at every point [and] ... in every relation ... Power is everywhere... because it comes from everywhere. And “Power,” insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the over-all effect that emerges from all these mobilities ... (it) rests on each of them and seeks ... to arrest their movement... (Power) is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategic situation in a particular society.⁴

The section comprises four chapters that examine various aspects and applications of theoretical constructs as they pertain to the politics of knowledge and address the transformation of the vehicles of knowledge, given the social transformations of authorized elites. The four chapters of this section deal with the content and performance of ontological variability over time.

The first chapter in this section addresses the transformation of the vehicles of knowledge, given the social transformations of authorized elites. Mayer and Orner examine patterns of source utilization in Yosse ben

cultural theory, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994; and Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*. New York: Random House, 1978.

⁴ Foucault, *op. cit.*

Yosse's Piyyut and read it as a complex creative act the liturgist employed, to communicate sub-textual meaning that pertains to power relations within the Jewish community of Byzantine Palestine. The authors study citation as a political device which is quantitatively studied here, revealing oft hidden networks of knowledge. Citations from the Hebrew Bible imbue the text with uncontested authority, thus Yosse ben Yosse, a scion of the High Priest lineage, was able to imbue his poetry, his textual transmission vehicle of choice, with coded textual references that deal with a yearning for the return of the biblical distribution of socio-political goods, whereas the priestly caste crowns the performance and substance of leadership. Mayer and Orner compare two systems of politically motivated textual knowledge, to discern and reveal the power relations embedded in these texts.

The second chapter deals with translation as a cross cultural linguistic key to wells of knowledge that had been inaccessible to new audiences, across gender-based borderlines. Translation paves the way for new modalities of interpretive hermeneutical instruments, creating new knowledge and sharing it with new audiences. Gender-related issues of acculturation are key factors in the formation, preservation, and transmission of knowledge over time. Maoz examines the impact of gender on the politics of knowledge and analyzes Aggadic texts and then intercultural communication in the form of their translation. Because a Target Text cannot reflect zero degrees of difference from the Source Text, and given the elastic, mutable nature of Aggadic text itself (as opposed to the immutable, precise contours of Halachic texts), translators employ interpretive literary hermeneutics that adapt the Target Text to the interests of the Target Readers. This is a politically driven act, which affords wider access to Aggadic texts. Maoz addresses the gender divide, conceptualized as a potent instrument of cultural formation and points to the paradoxical hindering effect on the creation and transmission of knowledge.

The third chapter studies knowledge as a concept encapsulates multiple varieties, which serve as a foundation upon which social groups organize as distinct entities. The survival of the Lemba People of southern Africa depends on effective and uninterrupted communication of age-old wisdom, which constitute the scaffold upon which ontological markers can be rebuilt from generation to generation. The Lemba People claim descent from Jewish ancestors and indeed, DNA tests have corroborated links to Semitic, possibly Kohanic origins. Beattie points out the biological determinism which stand in contrast to Halachic parameters. He further notes that urbanization poses compounded ontological challenges to the Lemba People's cultural heritage. Effective, tenacious, and constant transmission of their Judaizing tradition, as this study suggests, is a matter of survival for

this ethno-religious group. Indeed, their survival as a unique entity hinges on the cultural imperative to share knowledge from generation to generation, and to preserve its essence and adapt it to new socio-cultural realities over time. Finally in this section, Fishbane discusses the way Judaism constructs its present from the bricks of the past. Remembering a deceased person through private or public ritual, weaves the deceased into the future of the community, transmitting knowledge and preserving the ontological backbone of the community. In the process of communicating knowledge, new iterations of discrete units of information are created. Remembering and enacting the past is an act of creative innovation that seeks to simultaneously remember the past and, through performance of ritual, make it relevant to the present, only to become the base upon which future knowledge will be constructed.

CHAPTER ONE

MACHINE LEARNING AND *PIYYUT*: A COMPARATIVE QUANTITATIVE EXAMINATION OF YOSSE BEN YOSSE'S SOURCE UTILIZATION

ESTI MAYER AND PAUL ORNER

Introduction

Yosse ben Yosse was a fifth century liturgical poet who lived in Byzantine Palestine. He wrote religious poetry (called piyyut) in archaic Hebrew, drawing texts from the Hebrew Bible, combining them, and turning them into word-mosaics. He was a scion of the priestly caste, which stood in opposition to the new and rising rabbinic movement. Both groups vied for political and socio-religious control of Jewish life after the destruction of the Second Temple. Our paper presents the first quantitative analysis of the biblical sources the poet used. This indeed is the first time that Hebrew liturgy has been coded for quantitative analysis. Knowing something about the sources Yosse ben Yosse favoured can help scholars draft the association maps extracted from the biblical sources, allowing them to better understand the worldview that animated this unique historical figure. We developed a statistical assay that compared these sources to those employed by a later liturgical poet named Yannai, who lived in the same region in the sixth century. Our findings point to a distinctive “fingerprint” of source utilization by the two liturgical poets, pointing to interesting avenues for future study.

Yosse ben Yosse, the fifth century paytan, or liturgical poet,¹ wrote in a style we can imagine as a mosaic of biblical verses. The couplets of each line, or each strophe, of each statement can be traced to specific verses in

¹ Aharon Mirsky, *Yosse ben Yosse Poems* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Keter, 1991) 7-12.