FEATURES OF ARCHAIC BIBLICAL HEBREW AND THE LINGUISTIC DATING DEBATE[*]

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A review of *Dating Archaic Biblical Poetry. Critique of the Linguistic Arguments*. By Robyn C. Vern. PHSC 10. Pp. xviii + 282. Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2011. Cloth, $145.30.

1. OVERVIEW

As is well known to readers of this journal, some scholars have recently claimed that biblical texts cannot be dated on the basis of their linguistic features. The core of their claims is collected in *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*.[1] This book primarily challenges the linguistic distinction between Classical or Standard Biblical Hebrew and Late Biblical Hebrew, which a number of prominent scholars, such as Robert Polzin, Avi Hurvitz, and Jan Joosten have advocated. The crux of their argument is that linguistic differences between texts can be attributed to non-historical factors, such as differences of style and dialect.

Recently, Robyn Vern has published another book based on a dissertation supervised by Ian Young denying the possibility of linguistic dating, this time concentrating specifically on the alleged linguistic distinction between archaic poetry and standard poetry. She offers arguments against the methodology used for linguistic dating and eventually concludes that style is a more likely explanation for the difference between "archaic" and "standard poetry." While she deals with a different genre and time frame than Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd do, she suggests that her conclusions, namely that dating is untenable, are representative of the methodology as a whole. In the following we will review and evaluate Vern's arguments. We will then suggest a number of features which we believe are characteristic of archaic poetry. The methodology underlying linguistic dating will not be discussed

here at length since it has already been elaborated in many places, such as Hurvitz's 2006 article, a work not quoted in the book under review.[2]

The first part of Vern's book is an elaborate refutation of Robertson's 1972 book[3] and the second is a lengthy review of three linguistic features: the case system, the 3mp verbal prefix in *t-*, and the 3fs verbal suffix in *-at*. The book concludes with an analysis of these three features and with a more general methodological conclusion. In the first part of her book, Vern sets out to prove that Robertson's 1972 study, based on his 1966 Yale dissertation, is at best inconclusive. It is worth asking at the outset why a forty year old book would need such extensive examination when more up-to-date studies stand unchallenged and unquoted? Vern claims that Robertson is regarded "as the most outstanding work in this area" and that he is cited uncritically by many (p. 1). This is not the case, however. Watson, for example, discusses dating poetry and offers numerous works which he considers authoritative; he only mentions Robertson in passing.[4] Many others do not mention Robertson at all, and some are critical of his methodology while still offering evidence supporting his conclusions.[5] To be perfectly clear, we do not consider Robertson's work to be inherently flawed or subpar; indeed, it is an impressively erudite endeavor. It is, however, outdated. Attacking Robertson, a book which was at the forefront of scholarship when it came out but is rarely used or mentioned today in the literature outside of Young, is essentially tilting at windmills. Thus, even if Vern does have some good points in her discussion of his work, they are over forty years too late. Nonetheless, we find her discussion methodologically and logically flawed and therefore in need of comment.

Our criticism concentrates on two aspects: methodological criticism and critical evaluation of the evidence.

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[2] Although Hurvitz deals with Late Biblical Hebrew, the methodology is applicable elsewhere. A. Hurvitz, "The Recent Debate on Late Biblical Hebrew: Solid Data, Experts' Opinions, and Inconclusive Arguments," *HS* 47 (2006): 191–210.

[3] D. A. Robertson, *Linguistic Evidence in Dating Early Hebrew Poetry* (SBLDS 3; Montana: University of Montana Press, 1972).

[4] W. G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), pp. 88, 244.

[5] See, for example, Y. Bloch, "The Prefixed Perfective and the Dating of Early Hebrew Poetry: A Reevaluation," *VT* 59 (2009): 34–70. See also Sh. Morag, "רוקדי קדמות: עיונים לשוניים במשלי בלעם" ("Layers of Antiquity": Some Linguistic Observations on the Oracles of Balaam), *Tarbiz* 50 (1981): 1–24 (especially pp. 3–6), who criticizes Robertson as well as other followers of Albright for neglecting to seriously discuss the lexicon.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Lack of Scholarly Consensus

In a number of places, Vern argues that since there is no scholarly consensus on a certain issue, no conclusion can be reached. She also concludes that biblical texts cannot be dated linguistically (pp. 14, 15, 16, etc.), since there is no consensus on the results of linguistic dating. For example, the dating of Psalm 78 has been hotly debated and widely divergent dates have been proposed for this text (p. 61). This, according to Vern, goes against "Robertson's hypothesis," although she has not shown that any of the scholars she cites use linguistic dating or are even aware of Robertson's hypothesis. Her discussion of the dating of Exodus 15 (pp. 33–34) is also telling. Vern notes that different scholars have suggested different dates for the Crossing of the Sea (the event, not the text). The variety of opinions leads her to conclude that Robertson's dating of the Song of the Sea is problematic.[6]

There is almost no area in biblical studies that is not debated at some level. But the existence of scholarly debate, whether heated or subdued, is not a good reason to dismiss an entire methodology. More problematic, however, is Vern's acceptance of all opinions as equally valid with no attempt to explore them further. On page 21, for example, she concludes: "[s]ince these positions cannot all be valid, any conclusion remains highly speculative." She does not, however, say which one *is* valid and on what basis. Concerning Exodus 15, if she does not think that the Exodus is a historical event, then dating a text on the basis of the historical event of Exodus should not be an acceptable method for her. Her position remains unclear, because she never examines any of the scholarly claims she quotes (see also p. 233). There is no way that all positions are acceptable, unless you deliberately choose not to deal with them critically. Such an approach runs counter to the critical tradition. Some claims are not supported by facts, some are tenuous and should be exposed as such and others are reasonable. Debates are the nature of scholarship, but a serious scholar can and should distinguish between valid and invalid arguments when making a case. Noting the existence of a controversy is not an argument.

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[6] A similar line of reasoning is used throughout I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts*. See J. Joosten, review of I. Young, R. Rezetko, and M. Ehrensvärd, *Linguistic Dating of Biblical Texts: An Introduction to Approaches and Problems*, *Babel und Bibel* 6 (2012): 535–542 for a criticism of the point there.

As a side note, we should note that Vern accepts Young's approach without criticism, and without acknowledging that his is a minority opinion and has been extensively criticised. She quotes him repeatedly as a proof that archaisms cannot be used to show that a certain text is old or that archaisms are merely stylistic or dialectal variants (e.g., pp. 26, 224, etc.). For some reason, the debate between Young and his critics does not prompt her to claim that no conclusion can be made.

2.2. Straw Man

Vern makes Robertson a cornerstone of the linguistic dating approach, so much so that she concludes that if his arguments are flawed or his conclusions are overstated, the entire methodology falls with him. On the first page of her book, she delineates her study in relation to Robertson's thus: "[i]t highlights the inadequacies of the hypothesis and his methodology and, *as a consequence*, shows that linguistic evidence is not an appropriate tool for dating some of the poems of the ABH corpus to the late second or early first millennia BCE" (p. 1, emphasis added). This is indeed her approach throughout the book. For example, she reviews Robertson's discussion of Judges 5, which she considers flawed, and concludes: "[t]his re-affirms the argument for this thesis that the use of linguistic data is not an objective tool for dating biblical texts" (p. 63, and see her conclusion to the book on p. 229). The question of whether Robertson's dating and methodology are correct and the question of whether biblical texts can be dated linguistically should be kept apart. Vern has every right to criticize Robertson, but that does not mean that all linguistic arguments are invalid. His failure is not a failure of the methodology.

Ultimately, Vern has selected Roberston as a straw man, who is easy for her to argue against, rather than dealing with the substantive arguments against her approach. For comparison, she only quotes Avi Hurvitz—who is a major and highly influential advocate of linguistic dating—seven times in the entire book. She fails to cite Jan Joosten, Robert Polzin, and Mark Rooker altogether.[7] The problem of selective bibliography is clear elsewhere

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[7] J. Joosten, "The Distinction between Classical and Late Biblical Hebrew as Reflected in Syntax," *HS* 46 (2005): 327–339; R. Polzin, *Late Biblical Hebrew: Toward an Historical Typology of Biblical Hebrew Prose* (Missoula: Scholars, 1976); M. F. Rooker, "The Diachronic Study of Biblical Hebrew," *JNSL* 14 (1988): 199–214; M. F. Rooker, *Biblical Hebrew in Transition: The Language of the Book of Ezekiel* (Worcester: Sheffield, 1990).

as well. When discussing the verbal form she quotes Rainey[8] and Niccacci,[9] but omits a massive body of literature on the Hebrew verb by John Huehnergard, Jan Joosten, Ed Greenstein, Tania Notarius, and others.[10]

Arguing against a straw man and citing favorable literature instead of coping with real facts and solid arguments is misleading and certainly does not advance the debate. Serious arguments have been made in favor of linguistic dating and they should be confronted.

2.3. Questionable Definitions

Throughout the book, Vern uses inverted commas to mark Robertson's use of the word "early" in "early poetry" (p. 2, n. 4). She then offers her own definition for the word "archaic" (equivalent to Robertson's "early"): "'archaic' poetry refers to poetry with an *archaic linguistic style* which is not necessarily linked to a specific time period" (p. 38, emphasis added). This is a classic example of circular definition: Vern defines "archaic" with the word "archaic." Furthermore, Vern claims that we cannot tell what is archaic, because we do not have second millennium attestation of Hebrew (on this see more below), so it is unclear what makes "archaic style" better attested than "archaic language." What Vern may mean is that archaic poetry is a style of poetry which is characterized by deliberately utilizing non-standard linguistic features, but this is never clearly articulated.

Given that her argument in the book is that Archaic Biblical Hebrew is a poetic style (p. 7), this definition makes the whole book redundant. Archaic poetry is—according to this definition—a style with no historical association *by definition*. If Vern is interested in proving that linguistic dating is invalid, she needs to do so in neutral terms, or use definitions which are commonly accepted. Otherwise we run the risk that each scholar will devise his or her own set of definitions which render them irrefutable. After all, what is to stop us from deciding that archaic poetry is by definition poetry which was composed in the second millennium B.C.E.?

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[8] A. F. Rainey, "The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation in the Light of Amarna Canaanite," *HS* 27 (1986): 35–42.

[9] A. Niccacci, "The Biblical Hebrew Verbal System in Poetry," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), pp. 247–268.

[10] J. Huehnergard, "The Early Hebrew Prefix-Conjugations," *HS* 29 (1988): 19–23; J. Joosten, "The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAH* 2.2 (1989): 128–159; J. Joosten, "The Long Form of the Prefixed Conjugation Referring to the Past in Biblical Hebrew Prose," *HS* 40 (1999): 5–26; E. Greenstein, " On the Prefixed Preterite in Biblical Hebrew," *HS* 29 (1988): 7–17; T. Notarius, "The System of Verbal Tenses in Archaic and Classical Biblical Poetry" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2007).

Also vulnerable is Vern's list of features. For example, she notes three features, which according to her are "generally accepted features of biblical poetry, as distinct from prose" (p. 37): presence of archaic linguistic features, restriction of the use of certain linguistic features, and free use of tense. She does not cite any references in support of this list, nor are we aware of any scholar of biblical poetry who would subscribe to this characterization. In fact, poetry is distinguished from prose not so much by its language but by its *use* of language. For more recent studies about what distinguishes biblical poetry, we refer the reader to Kugel, Fokkelman, and Alter.[11] It also appears that Vern chose these features to coincide with her conception of "archaic poetry" and thus further her argument. With these features, she can make the claim that "poetry takes full advantage of the first and third of these features" (p. 37), that is, using archaic features is a deliberate choice by the poet. Hurvitz and Joosten, by contrast, assume that speakers use features available in their language without intentionally trying to subvert them.[12]

2.4. Historical Comparative Linguistics

When discussing the history of Hebrew morphological and syntactic features, Vern only uses data from Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite. This is, of course, a reasonable choice for someone concentrating on style, but if she is evaluating linguistic claims, she should apply the principles of the historical-comparative method. Some of her claims display inadequate understanding of historical linguistics. She notes, for example, that there are many forms in the Bible which differ from similar forms in Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite, since they "changed over time." She then adds that: "the phrase 'over time' remains vague due to lack of sufficient reliable evidence" (p. 18). In a similar vein, when discussing the past tense usage of the Hebrew *yiqtol* form, which Robertson has claimed is related to a similar function in Ugaritic, she concludes: "[t]his hypothetical, diachronic development is extremely tenuous, especially in the absence of Hebrew data reliably attested prior to the eighth century" (p. 47). According to Vern, therefore, one can only do historical linguistics, if all the evidence is attested (i.e., do synchronic descriptive linguistics). Yet in the absence of a complete

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[11] J. P. Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001). J. L. Kugel, *The Idea of Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985).
[12] A. Hurvitz, "The Recent Debate"; J. Joosten, "The Distinction."

record, historical linguists look for reliable and relevant *comparative* evidence. In the case of short imperfect *yiqtol*, there is a lot of evidence that it was originally a preterite in other Central Semitic languages. The Arabic jussive (short imperfect) *yaktub*, for example, can be used as a preterite after the negation *lam*, instead of the more standard negation of the perfect, *mā kataba*. Amarna Canaanite shows an equivalent jussive/preterite function for this form, as does Hebrew.[13] As for Ugaritic, Hackett has convincingly shown that there too, this form is attested in poetry with a preterite function.[14] This evidence is hardly "tenuous"; in fact it is very strong.

Vern can, if she wants, criticize the historical-comparative method and make an argument that it is flawed or unusable, but she cannot accept it and at the same time claim that comparative evidence is inadmissible (p. 57). She seems to think that the absence of second millennium Hebrew evidence is an insurmountable problem, but it is not. It *does* create more difficulties. But if the historical method can be successfully applied to Amazonian and Austronesian languages, for which we do not have historical records, it can be applied to a relatively well-preserved sub-group, like Canaanite.

One of Vern's main problems is her use of the word "archaic." According to her, archaisms "are rare morphological forms" (p. 230). Most of the scholarly world, however, understands archaisms as forms which were once part of a language's linguistic system but have since been replaced or disappeared. In other words, archaisms are features typical of an earlier form of a language.[15] The alleged rarity of these forms is a direct consequence of their obsolescence, but it is not a characteristic according to which we measure archaism.

3. EVIDENCE

In the second part of her book, Vern's discussion is intended to suggest a set of archaic linguistic features which likely existed in the second millennium and should, therefore, be attested in second millennium Hebrew (p. 79). For each of the three features she examines, the case system, the 3mp *t*-verbal prefix, and fs *–at* suffix, she reviews the evidence in Ugaritic and

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[13] A. F. Rainey, "The Ancient Hebrew Prefix Conjugation."

[14] J. A. Hackett, "*Yaqtul* and an Ugaritic Incantation Text," in *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday* (ed. R. Hasselbach and N. Pat-El; Chicago: The Oriental Institute Press, 2012), pp. 111–117.

[15] L. Campbell and M. J. Mixco, *A Glossary of Historical Linguistics* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2007), p. 15.

Amarna Canaanite, concludes that the feature is present in these two languages and, therefore, should be present in Hebrew and then shows that it is in fact not present in Hebrew. Here too, some methodological issues should be noted at the outset.

Even closely related languages do not change in the same direction, nor at the same speed. Languages may even go through similar changes, but at completely different periods in their history; this is called "the actuation problem" in historical linguistics.[16] If languages changed in identical speed and direction, they would never split from each other to become separate linguistic entities. Vern assumes that since second millennium Ugaritic has a complete case system, then second millennium Hebrew should have one too. For example, she claims: "[a]s the case system is undoubtedly in operation in Ugaritic, then it is argued that in all probability, case endings could be expected in the 'early' Hebrew poetic corpus in terms of Robertson's assumptions" (p. 88; see also pp. 89, 108, and 122 for similar claims). Similarly, when discussing the 3fs suffix *–at*, she claims: "if some poems from the ABH poetic corpus and Robertson's 'early' corpus are of second millennium provenance, then we expect the primitive 3fs morpheme *-at* to be in evidence" (p. 219). This is a non sequitur. Contemporaneous languages do not necessarily share all their features. Seventh century C.E. Arabic had a case system. Do we assume, therefore, that Aramaic also had a case system at that time? Linguistic features are not typical of a *period*; they are typical of a language, or group of languages at a particular period.

The treatment of case in Amarna is, therefore, highly problematic. Here too, even if we accept Vern's conclusion that case in Amarna is a Canaanite feature and not Akkadian (on this see below), it is unclear why this implies that Hebrew has case too. Phoenician, a Canaanite language closely related to Hebrew, probably had a reduced but functional case system by the mid-ninth century B.C.E. The genitive case was preserved up to the late eighth century.[17] While both Hebrew and Phoenician clearly inherited a case system from their ancestor, Hebrew lost its case system much faster and earlier than Phoenician. Hence, the evidence of case in Amarna and Ugaritic proves only that some second millennium languages had a case system; it does not prove, however, that second millennium Hebrew had, or should

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[16] U. Weinreich, W. Labov, and M. I. Herzog, "Empirical Foundations for a Theory of Language Change," in *Directions for Historical Linguistics* (ed. W. P. Lehmann. and Y. Malkiel; Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 102. Strangely, Vern acknowledges this (p. 111), although it clearly contradicts her claims.

[17] R. Hasselbach, "Phoenician Case in Typological Context," in *Linguistic Studies in Phoenician* (ed. R. D. Holmstedt and A. Schade; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), pp. 196–222.

have had, a case system. No one disputes the lack of case in Biblical Hebrew of any stage. Vern's insistence that Hebrew must have had a case system in the twelfth century is questionable.

Similar arguments apply to Vern's discussion of the 3fs *–at*. As Blau has shown, the loss of final feminine *–t* in Northwest Semitic languages was uneven.[18] This ending was lost in Biblical Hebrew in all environments (**katabat > kātb-ā* [she wrote]; **malkat- > malk-ā* [a queen]). In Phoenician, the change **-at > -a* happened only on the perfect (*šmˁ* [she heard]; *mlk-t* [a queen]) while in Aramaic the same change happened only in the nominal system (Old Aramaic *hw-t* [she was]; *qry-h* [a city]). Different languages lost the suffix at different times and at different speed. Its loss is not even identical within a single linguistic system, as the Phoenician and Aramaic examples indicate. With this variation, it is unclear why Vern expects twelfth century Hebrew to exhibit a regular use of *–at* on the perfect. It is quite likely that this suffix was lost before our earliest records. Here too, Vern's claim that Hebrew had a linguistic system identical to Ugaritic and Amarna is erroneous.

In chapters 12–14, Vern examines the evidence for the 3mp verbal prefix *t-* in Ugaritic, Amarna Canaanite, and Biblical Hebrew and draws two conclusions: 1) Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite used this prefix exclusively; and 2) Archaic Biblical Hebrew did not use this prefix and, therefore, cannot be dated to the second millennium. Unfortunately, this feature is irrelevant to the dating of Archaic Biblical Hebrew. Of the five potential, non-emended examples, none appear in the archaic poetry; emended examples do occur in Deut 33:3 and Ps 68:3, 14, but as Vern rightly points out, they are not probative for linguistic dating. Furthermore, the *t-* prefix is not an archaism, but rather a linguistic innovation unique to Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite. Vern concedes as much on page 217 when she states: "This does not demonstrate that ABH poetry cannot be early since the 3mp y- preformative is considered to be Proto-Semitic" (p. 217).

Even if the 3mp *t-* prefix were relevant to the dating of Archaic Biblical Hebrew, Vern's linguistic argumentation in these chapters is faulty. She reasons: "If there is sustainable evidence that there are second millennium remnants of the 3mp t- preformative, these poetic texts may be considered of second millennium typology with regard to this particular linguistic feature" (p. 203). But the notion of a "second millennium typology" is flawed and

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[18] J. Blau, "Hebrew and North West Semitic: Reflections on the Classification of the Semitic Languages," *HAR* 2 (1978): 21–44.

serves only to advance her argument. As mentioned above, different languages develop differently, and in this case, Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite happened to develop a 3mp *t-* verbal prefix independently, while Hebrew did not.[19] It is a coincidence that both languages are attested in the second millennium and certainly does not imply that other second millennium Semitic languages had or should have had similar features. Languages do not change at fixed intervals. Akkadian—to cite a concrete example—is attested throughout the second millennium but never develops a 3mp *t-* prefix in this period (cf. 3mp *iprusū* [they divided]). Furthermore, Vern's appeal to "second millennium typology" conceals an unlikely historical scenario. According to her logic, the Proto-Semitic 3mp *y-* prefix became *t-* in the second millennium, only to reappear miraculously and without a surviving antecedent in first millennium languages like Biblical Hebrew. A more likely scenario is that the *y-* prefix was retained in most languages, but shifted to *t-* in Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite due to internal developments.

It is unclear why Vern tries to eliminate any evidence of the *y-* prefix in Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite. At this point, most scholars agree that the usual 3mp verbal prefix in Ugaritic and Armarna Canaanite was *t-*.[20] The possible retention of the *y-* prefix as an archaism does not affect her argument unless she wants to challenge the possibility of linguistic dating for Ugaritic as well. Maybe she does. On page 200, she takes Tropper to task for citing the "hypothesized use of the 3mp y- preformative in proto-West-Semitic" as evidence for a similar form in Ugaritic poetry. While it is true that there are no documents in Proto-Semitic, we can be sure that the 3mp prefix was *y-* on the basis of Akkadian (*iprusū < *yaprusū*), Ethiopic (*yəqtəlu*), Arabic (*yaqtulū*), Aramaic (*yiqtulū*), Hebrew (*yiktəbū*), and others. Vern's suspicion of reconstructed forms is unwarranted.

Vern's method of argumentation in chapters 12–14 amounts to scholarship by committee. For each example, she cites every available translation and then argues her point on the basis of these translations. Only rarely does she analyze the data herself. Translations of Semitic into European

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[19] The reason scholars assume parallel development here is that the linguistic affiliation of Amarna is otherwise closer to Hebrew than to Ugaritic. Furthermore, this particular feature is also attested in texts from Mari (from the *šakkanakku* period) and in Eblaite, but not in Akkadian. The emergence of the feature at various periods and in various branches supports a parallel development scenario. Vern should have at least mentioned that this feature is attested in East Semitic, otherwise her discussion implies that it developed only in Ugaritic and Amarna; this implication may serve to support her point but it is false.

[20] S. Izre'el, "Early Northwest Semitic 3rd pl m Prefix: The Evidence of the Amarna Letters," *UF* 19 (1987): 79–90; R. Hasselbach, "The Markers of Person, Gender, and Number in the Prefixes of G-Preformative Conjugations in Semitic," *JAOS* 124.1 (2004): 23–35.

languages—it should be pointed out—are no substitute for raw data and often cannot capture the nuances of the source language.

Although, as argued above, it does not matter for this debate whether Amarna and Ugaritic had any of the features Vern discusses, we would like to note a few points where Vern's discussion is inadequate or inaccurate. The question whether case in Amarna is an Akkadian feature or a Canaanite one still remains unresolved, but it certainly deserves a more careful treatment than what Vern affords it. She dismisses Izre'el's conclusion that the case system is Akkadian, because he is "imprecise" and "lacks quantified data" (pp. 100–101). She does not, however, cite his 2005 book, which argues this point in detail. As he points out, the case endings in Akkadian and proto-Canaanite look identical, except for the masculine plural where Canaanite has a final –*ma* and Akkadian does not. He then shows that plural forms in Amarna lack the Canaanite ending –*ma* (compare for example *šamū* [sky], with the expected Canaanite **šamūma*). He, therefore, claims that the masculine plural forms reflect an Akkadian inflection, not a Canaanite one. Since it would not be logical for only the masculine plural forms to be Akkadian in an otherwise Canaanite paradigm, he concludes that the whole system is Akkadian.[21] There certainly may be reasons to disagree with Izre'el, but lack of quantitative data is not one of them.[22]

Vern also claims that the use of the *nota accusativi* in poetic texts is a strong indication that the case system is lost (pp. 107, 111). We do not dispute that the case system is lost in Hebrew, as the absence of case endings clearly indicates, but rather that direct object markers and case are mutually exclusive. Quranic Arabic, for example, has both: ʾ*iyyā-ka naʿabud* (we will worship you [ms]). A similar marker is also attested in Ethiopic, where a reduced case system is attested.

Vern does not discuss or address the genetic relationship between the various Semitic languages she discusses. But scattered comments indicate that her grasp of the family relations between the languages she discusses is rather tenuous. Sometimes she rejects the idea that Ugaritic is the ancestor of Hebrew, or even Canaanite (pp. 86, 90), but sometimes she accepts it (p. 238). By now, most scholars agree that Ugaritic is not the predecessor of

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[21] S. Izre'el, *Canaano-Akkadian* (2nd ed.; München: Lincom Europa, 2005), p. 16. S. Izre'el, "Canaano-Akkadian: Linguistics and Sociolinguistics," in *Language and Nature: Papers Presented to John Huehnergard on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday* (ed. R. Hasselbach and N. Pat-El; Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2012), pp. 179–180.

[22] Vern seems to imply that Izre'el's findings are a result of incorrect readings of the forms and mentions Knudzon and Böhl as examples. Since both of these works were published over a hundred years ago, we can safely assume that Izre'el, one of the foremost specialists on Amarna, is well aware of them.

Hebrew or Canaanite.[23] Vern further claims that the relationship of what she calls "proto-Hebrew" to Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite is "unsubstantiated" (p. 240). This is simply absurd and could only be claimed by someone who is unfamiliar with the basic literature on Semitic classification.[24] Vern's ignorance of the genetic map of the Semitic languages is quite evident when she fails to identify the source of several features. Some examples are the case system (Semitic, not West-Semitic as Vern claims); perfect 1cs suffix –*ti* (Canaanite, not West-Semitic). The 3fs perfect suffix –*at* is called Semitic (pp. 219, 222, 226) and West Semitic (pp. 221, 222) in various parts of the book.

Finally, after attempting to prove that a small selection of archaic features is not found in archaic biblical poetry, Vern concludes by claiming that the differences between archaic and standard poetry are stylistic. Unfortunately, she never provides evidence to support this claim. Of course, she offers hints and suggestions (pp. 225, 231–232), but nothing ever coalesces into a sustained discussion. Throughout the book, Vern chastises Robertson for the hypothetical nature of his suggested dating, while offering vague statements such as: "[t]he poem may have been composed, copied or edited in such a way that the texts appear old" (p. 64), or "[m]any possible intervening variables may have brought about changes in the literary language" (p. 233). In various other places (e.g., p. 238) she promises to present evidence that style rather than historical evidence is at play but does not follow through. In fact, Vern clearly states that there is no evidence to substantiate her claims: "this cannot be proven because of the lack of availability of attested early Hebrew evidence" (p. 236). Nevertheless, her immediate conclusion is: "[t]o assume that these few forms in archaic poetry had a necessary chronological relationship to their appearance in the second millennium sources is purely speculative" (p. 236). In other words, according to Vern herself, there is no

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[23] J. Huehnergard, "Historical Phonology and the Hebrew Piel," in *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (ed. W. R. Bodine; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), p. 218. J. Huehnergard, "What is Aramaic?" *Aram* 7 (1998): 265.

[24] For the major contributions in the debate, see R. M. Voigt, "The Classification of Central Semitic," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32.1 (1987): 1–21; J. Huehnergard, "Remarks on the Classification of the Northwest Semitic Languages," in *The Balaam Text from Deir ʿAlla Re-Evaluated* (ed. J. Hoftijzer and G. van der Kooij; Leiden: Brill, 1991), pp. 282–293; A. Faber, "Genetic Subgrouping of the Semitic Languages," in *The Semitic Languages* (ed. R. Hetzron; New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 3–15; J. Huehnergard, "Features of Central Semitic," in *Biblical and Oriental Essays in Memory of William L. Moran* (ed. A. Gianto; Rome: Pontificium Insitutum Biblicum, 2005), pp. 155–203; A. D. Rubin, "The Subgrouping of the Semitic Languages," *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2.1 (2008): 79–102; J. Huehnergard and A. D. Rubin, "Phyla and Waves: Models of Classification of the Semitic Languages," in *The Semitic Languages: An International Handbook* (ed. S. Weninger; Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011), pp. 259–278.

evidence that archaic forms are stylistic, while there is some limited evidence that they are historically early. Yet Vern concludes that style makes more sense. In the end, her investigation of a forty year old book and three linguistic features leads her to declare: "[i]t is now indisputably evident that linguistic evidence which involves archaisms or rare forms is not a reliable tool for dating ABH poetry" (p. 236).

Unfortunately, Vern has failed in making her point on a methodological and factual basis. Her failure to comprehend and apply the principles of the comparative historical method has led her to the erroneous assumption that different languages develop in identical ways. She bases her entire research on Ugaritic and Amarna Canaanite features which are lacking in Hebrew as a proof that no Hebrew text is earlier than Standard Biblical Hebrew. Furthermore, she seems unaware that it is possible to study the diachrony of a language without having all the evidence available. Not only do we have extensive comparative material, we can also utilize internal reconstruction quite well.[25] The massive tomes on African, American, and Austronesian historical linguistics are a monument to the success of historical linguistics.[26] It is unclear why she rejects this methodology when it comes to Hebrew.

Except for vigorous attempts to deny the possibility of dating Biblical texts, Young and his followers offer very little. Like Young, Rezetko, and Ehrensvärd, Vern dedicates hundreds of pages to linguistic features, but just a few to the possibility of dialectal and stylistic differentiation with no references and no evidence. If Vern has another explanation for archaic features in poetry, she should have argued this point more comprehensively. When all the facts are in the open, a real debate can begin. Currently, critics of linguistic dating do not offer a better solution and—even more seriously—fail to respond to legitimate and detailed criticism. In this sense, the failures of Vern's book are typical: inadequate understanding of the criticized methodology, tendency to attack a straw man instead of dealing with the relevant literature, factual and logical errors, and vague and nondescript alternative proposals.

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[25] J. Huehnergard, "Historical Phonology," pp. 209–215.

[26] See, for example, G. J. Dimmendaal, *Historical Linguistics and the Comparative Study of African Languages* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2011); L. Campbell, *American Indian Languages: The Historical Linguistics of Native America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); and P. Bellwood, J. J. Fox and D. Tryon, *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (Canberra: Australian National University E Press, 2006).

4. DATING ARCHAIC BIBLICAL POETRY: A RE-EVALUATION

In order to further refute Vern's claims by countering her limited selection of features, we would like to offer an alternative set of features which mark the so-called archaic biblical poetry as older than the rest of the Bible. Our corpus includes the following texts: Genesis 49, Exodus 15, the poetic sections of Numbers 23 and 24, Deuteronomy 32 and 33, Judges 5, 2 Samuel 22, and Psalms 18 and 68. We suggest that there are features in this corpus which are ancient retentions from an older phase of the language and which were discarded or supplemented before the time of Standard Biblical Hebrew. These features are: the use of the inherited relative pronoun, the absence of appositional relative clauses, the regular use of the 3fp perfect *qatalō(h)*, and the definite article. We do not try to date these poems exactly, but instead suggest that this corpus is earlier than Standard Biblical Hebrew.

Of course, there have been other studies dedicated to the linguistic characterization of archaic biblical poetry. Most prominently, the verbal system has been extensively examined. Bloch and Notarius discuss a number of relevant aspects of the verbal system, and their conclusions point to a diachronic distinction between Archaic and Standard Biblical Hebrew.[27] Notarius, for example, has demonstrated that the predicative active participle is not found in the archaic corpus and is, therefore, a likely innovation in a later stage of the language.[28] This paper is based on her dissertation which investigates the language of biblical poetry from a variety of angles, some "stylistic" and some purely linguistic.[29] She further suggests that the reflex of **yaqtulu* is used as a present progressive in archaic texts, following its original function.[30] Morag discussed a number of lexical features in Numbers 23 and 24 and has shown that there is an unusual convergence of rare and hapax lexical items in these chapters which cannot be explained except as an inheritance from an archaic, presumably original, layer of this poem.[31] These works are not cited in the book under review. Our proposals below are an addition to the literature on the topic.

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[27] Y. Bloch, "The Prefixed Perfective"; Y. Bloch, "The Prefixed Perfective in the Construction אז יקטל and Its Later Replacement by the Long Prefixed Verbal Form: A Syntactic and Text-Critical Analysis," *JNSL* 36 (2010): 49–74; T. Notarius, "The Active Predicative Participle in Archaic and Classical Biblical Poetry: A Typological and Historical Investigation," *ANES* 47 (2010): 240–268; T. Notarius, "The Archaic System of Verbal Tenses in 'Archaic' Biblical Poetry," in *Diachrony in Biblical Hebrew* (ed. C. L. Miller-Naudé and Z. Zevit; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2012).

[28] T. Notarius, "The Active Predicative Participle," p. 243.

[29] T. Notarius, *The System of Verbal Tenses*.

[30] T. Notarius, "The Archaic System of Verbal Tenses."

[31] S. Morag, "'Layers of Antiquity,'" see especially the summary table on pp. 23–24.

4.1. Relative Pronoun

The Semitic languages use a relative pronoun which inflects for gender-number-case in agreement with its head noun. While the full inflection is lost in most branches, it is reconstructible on the basis of relics, the paradigm of the relative pronoun in Old Akkadian, and the paradigm of the demonstrative pronoun in Classical Arabic. A reconstruction is provided below:

	masc. sg.	fem. sg.
nom.	*ðū*	*ðātu*
gen.	*ðī*	*ðāti*
acc.	*ðā*	*Ðāta*

	masc. du.	fem. du.
nom.	*ðawā*	*ð(aw)ātā*
obl.	*ðaway*	*ð(aw)ātay*

	masc. pl.	fem. pl.
nom.	*ðawū / ʾulū*	*ðawāti / ʾulātu*
obl.	*ðawī / ʾulī*	*ðawāti / ʾulāti*

Table 1: Proto-West Semitic *$ðū$ [32]

The Canaanite languages replaced the Proto-Semitic pronoun with a particle of nominal origin, אֲשֶׁר. The older Semitic form is still used as a proximal demonstrative; however, some relics of its former function are still scattered throughout the Bible. The nominative reflex זוּ (< *$ðū$) appears fifteen times in the Bible: three times in the Archaic poetry (Exod 15:13, 16; Ps 68:28), once in Habbakuk (1:11), twice in Second Isaiah (Isa 42:24; 43:21), and an additional nine times in the Psalms (9:16; 10:2; 12:8; 17:9; 31:5; 32:8; 62:12; 142:4; 143:8). The demostrative זֶה is used as a relative pronoun eight times (Exod 13:8; Ps 74:2; 78:54; 104:8, 26; Prov 23:22; Job 15:17; 19:19), probably reflecting the old genitive form *ðī*. It is also used to form nominalizations in the expression זֶה סִינַי [the one of Sinai], found in Judg 5:5 and Ps 68:9. The rare form זוֹ (< *$ðā$) is used as a relative once in Ps 132:12.

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[32] Adapted from J. Huehnergard, "On the Etymology of the Hebrew Relative *šɛ*-," in *Biblical Hebrew in Its Northwest Semitic Setting: Typological and Historical Perspectives* (ed. S. E. Fassberg and A. Hurvitz; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006), p. 112.

These relics cluster in the archaic poems out of proportion with their size. If the inherited relative were evenly distributed throughout the Bible, then we would expect at most a single occurrence in our corpus.[33] Even more importantly, the two examples in Psalm 68 are correctly inflected for case, which effectively disappeared in the nominal system with the loss of final short vowels, but may have persisted longer in the pronominal system. The genitive form זֶה is used in verse 9 in apposition to אֱלֹהִים, which would have originally stood in the genitive as the object of the preposition מִפְּנֵי. The pre-Masoretic Hebrew of this section would be vocalized: *mippnay ʾilōhīm zī sīnay*. The nominative form *zû* is used in verse 29 in apposition to the vocative אֱלֹהִים.[34] The pre-Masoretic Hebrew of this section would be vocalized: *ʾilōhīm zū paʿaltā lanū*. Except for the doublet of Ps 68:9 in Judg 5:5, none of the other relics of *ðū* are correctly inflected for case, even in Exodus 15. This suggests that the case distinction in the relative pronouns collapsed during the period archaic poetry was being written.

The inherited relative occurs in the archaic poetry at the expense of its nominal successor אֲשֶׁר. The form אֲשֶׁר only appears six times in the archaic biblical poetry. Of these, two instances appear in a later, prose superscription (Num 24:4; Ps 18:1) and one seems to have retained its earlier meaning as a spatial noun: בַּאֲשֶׁר כָּרַע שָׁם נָפַל שָׁדוּד (Judg 5:27; In the place that he sank, there he fell dead). In later poetic works, by contrast, אֲשֶׁר appears more frequently. In the Psalms, for example, אֲשֶׁר occurs approximately once every twenty-four verses; in the archaic poetry this figure drops to once every one hundred verses.[35] Taken together, the evidence suggests that the archaic poems were written before the demise of the case system in the pronouns and before the loss of the relative *zū* in favor of אֲשֶׁר.

4.2. Relatives Strategies

The Semitic languages have two main strategies to mark relatives: via a relative pronoun, whose nominal head is in the absolute, or through marking

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[33] There are approximately 9,862 poetic verses and 26 relics of *ðū* in the Hebrew Bible. Our corpus consists of 308 verses, so if the inherited relative were evenly distributed throughout the Bible, there should be 308 x (26/9,862) or .81 examples in the archaic poems. For ease of calculation, we estimated the size of the poetic corpus using Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Songs, Qoheleth, Lamentations, Job 3:2–42:6, and the minor prophets excluding Jonah. The rest of the Bible does contain some additional poetic sections, but these passages are about as long as the prose sections of Jeremiah.

[34] This reading ignores the *atnach* under אֱלֹהִים, but אֱלֹהִים is the only logical antecedent of זוּ.

[35] אֲשֶׁר occurs 99 times in the poetic portions of Psalms and there are approximately 2400 verses in the book of Psalms (excluding Psalms 18 and 68 and the prose headings to individual Psalms); 99/2400 ≈ 1/24. But in 308 verses of archaic poetry, אֲשֶׁר occurs only three times; 3/308 ≈ 1/100.

the relative as dependent on its head noun ("construct") with no pronoun. This set is best preserved in Akkadian:

Šarru-kīn … šu   Enlil māḫir-am   lā   iddin-u-šum
Sargon…   rel.nom.ms Enlil rival-acc   neg   give.pret.3ms-sub-to him
   Sargon, king of the land, to whom Enlil has given no rival[36]

qišt-ī   šarr-um   ana   rēd-îm   iddin-u
gift-gen.cnst   king-nom   to   soldier-gen   give.pret.3ms-sub
   The gift the king gave the soldier[37]

Both of these patterns are attested in the Bible, with some changes. First, the relative pronoun has been replaced by a particle of nominal origin which does not reflect agreement with the head noun; second, the construct strategy is less preferred and as a result is relatively rare, compared to the pronoun strategy:

Construct: וְהַבָּא אֶל־הַבַּיִת כָּל־יְמֵי הִסְגִּיר אֹתוֹ

   wə-hab-bā   *ʾel hab-bayit kol **yəmê**   hisgîr   ʾot-ô*
   and-def-coming   to def-house all **days.cnst** shut.pf.3ms acc-him
   Whoever enters the house during the days it was shut (Lev 14:46)

Pronoun: אֶמְחֶה אֶת־הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָאתִי

   ʾemḥe   *ʾet hā- ʾādām **ʾăšer** bārā ʾtî*
   erase.pf.1cs acc def-man   **rel** creat.1cs
   I will wipe out the man I have created (Gen 6:7).

In a third type of relative, the relative clause is appositional to the head noun. This type is known as juxtaposition: אַשְׁרֵי הַגּוֹי אֲשֶׁר־יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהָיו הָעָם בָּחַר לְנַחֲלָה לוֹ (Ps 33:12; Blessed is the nation whose God is YHWH and the people whom he has chosen as his abode). Despite claims that this is a common Semitic feature,[38] Na'ama Pat-El has recently shown that this type is only attested in languages which developed a definite article.[39] Because nominals with a definite article cannot take a construct state, Pat-El sug-

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[36] The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods 2.1.1.6.
[37] G. Buccellati, *A Structural Grammar of Babylonian* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1996), p. 489.
[38] C. Brockelman, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen* (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1908–1913), 2:553, and quoted by many thereafter.
[39] N. Pat-El, "The Morphosyntax of Nominal Antecedents in Semitic" (paper presented at the North American Conference on Afroasiatic Linguistics, Rutgers, New Jersey, February 18–19, 2012).

gested that juxtaposition is a secondary development in some Central Semitic languages. If this is true, one expects juxtaposition with definite heads to be represented in Classical Biblical Hebrew more than in Archaic Hebrew since the definite article is used less frequently in Archaic Hebrew. In fact, there are no examples of definite heads followed by a juxtaposed relative in our archaic corpus. The only possible example of a juxtaposed relative does not involve a definite article: מִקְּדָשׁ אֲדֹנָי כּוֹנְנוּ יָדֶיךָ (Exod 15:17; The temple of our lord your hands have constructed). Thus, while Standard Hebrew uses three relative strategies, only the oldest two are attested in the archaic corpus, which suggests that the poems in the archaic corpus were written after the development and spread of the appositional strategy.

4.3. 3fp Perfect

As is well known, Biblical Hebrew lacks a 3fp perfect form; the inherited 3mp form has been generalized to cover both genders. This is a strange state of affairs. Almost all of the other Semitic languages have a separate 3fp form including Akkadian *parsā*, Ethiopic *qatalā*, and Aramaic *qatalā*. These forms all go back to the Proto-Semitic predicative construction *qatvlā*, which provided the morphological material for the perfect conjugation in West Semitic.

What happened to the inherited 3fp perfect in Hebrew? We argue that it actually survives as a regular form in the archaic poetry and as a relic in Standard Biblical Hebrew under the guise of the 3fs form, with which it was indistinguishable in the consonantal orthography of early Hebrew.[40] We also suggest that the inherited 3fp perfect *qatalā* became *qataló* due to the Canaanite shift and merged over time with the 3mp perfect *qatalū*. The reason for this change is likely phonological. The sounds *ó* and *ū* differ only in the degree of tongue retraction and it is probable that *ó* developed a back allophone around back consonants, such as *k* and *g*. Most of the attested relics of the 3fp perfect form mentioned below occur in roots that end in a front consonant.

Even though the 3fp perfect eventually merged with the 3mp perfect in all environments, it was written in the consonantal script like the 3fs perfect since *hē* was used as an early vowel letter for final *ó*. This orthographic convention most likely developed from the 3ms possessive suffix on singular

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[40] H. S. Nyberg, *Hebreisk Grammatik* (Uppsala: H. Geber, 1952), §§ 35c, 36u, 37i points out that the 3fp perfect in *–ā* is occasionally found in the *ketiv*. W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), § 44m is less sure on this point.

nouns. What started off as *malkᵥhu* became *malkuhu* due to vowel har-
mony and then *malkuh* with the loss of final short vowels. The form
malkuh, in turn, shifted to *malkōh* under the stress and finally *malkō(h)*
with elision of the final *h*.[41] Relics of this older orthography are scattered
throughout the Bible, occuring fourteen times in the Pentateuch and forty
times in other books.[42] But this spelling was not limited to the 3ms posses-
sive suffix; it soon spread to words that did not contain an etymological *hēh*.
The particles פֹּה and כֹּה, for example, are written with a final *hēh* but have
cognates in other Semitic languages that lack *h*.[43] Final *hēh* also represents *ō*
in the infinitive absolute of certain III-y verbs such as רָאֹה where it is not
etymological.[44]

By the time an oral tradition of vocalization developed—perhaps as early
as the Second Temple period—the *qatalō(h)* form had long since disap-
peared from the language as a productive form. As a result, its tradents
reinterpreted these forms as 3fs, 3ms, or even 3mp depending on context.

Relics of the 3fp perfect form are scattered throughout the Bible in both
poetry and prose. In twenty-one cases, a feminine plural subject appears with
a feminine—or in the case of III-y verbs masculine—singular perfect (see
Table 2). Of these, the four examples in Joshua probably represent incon-
gruence with the copular verb הָיָה with the 3ms form being used as the de-
fault form. Such constructions are well attested in other Semitic languages
like Arabic.[45] The rest are likely relics of the 3fp form. In Deut 21:7 and Isa
1:6, the relevant forms occur alongside or in parallel with 3mp verbs sug-
gesting that a plural verb is needed. The use of the 3ms form with III-y verbs
as in Deut 32:27 and Ps 68:14 shows that we are not dealing with a simple
case of numerical incongruence. As Levi points out, feminine plural subjects
rarely govern masculine singular verbs with the exception of הָיָה.[46] Thus,

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[41] J. Blau, *Phonology and Morphology of Biblical Hebrew: An Introduction* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient
West Semitic 2; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2010), § 4.2.3.4.1 and H. Bauer and P. Leander, *Historische
Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache des alten Testaments* (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1922), §29l offer a
different explanation for this phenomenon: /-ahu/ contracts to /-ō/ following *h*-syncope.

[42] W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, §91e; F. I. Anderson and A.
D. Forbes, *Spelling in the Hebrew Bible* (Rome: The Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986), p. 67. This spelling
is standard in Hebrew inscriptions from the First Temple period.

[43] Hebrew פֹּה is cognate with Amarna Canaanite *pū*, Ugaritic *p*, and Punic *pho*. Hebrew כֹּה, on the other
hand, is cognate with Amarna Canaanite *kā*, Amharic *ka* and with Aramaic <kʾ> and Phonecian-Punic
<kʾ>, both spelled with a final *aleph*.

[44] W. Gesenius, E. Kautzsch, and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, § 75n.

[45] For example, *ʾa-walaw **kāna** ʾābāʾu-hum lā yaʿqilūna* (Qurān, 2:170) (Even though their fathers
understood nothing?), where the auxiliary verb *kāna* is 3ms although the subject is animate and plural.

[46] J. Levi, *Die Inkongruenz im biblischen Hebräisch* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1987), p. 154.

there is a good chance that these forms represent underlying *qalō(h)* < *qalayā, which could not be confused with the 3fs perfect <QLT(H)>.

The distribution of the *qatalō(h)* form has implications for the dating of the archaic poetry. A full nineteen–or if the examples from Joshua are omitted—twenty-four percent of all examples occur in our corpus. If this feature were distributed equally throughout the entire Bible, then we would expect at most one example in a corpus of this size.[47] Even more importantly, this pattern is consistent throughout the archaic poetry; feminine plural subjects never govern a 3mp perfect. This suggests that the 3fp perfect *qatalō(h)* was a regular feature within our corpus, but had become a relic by the time of Standard Biblical Hebrew. It then all but disappeared after the exile with the exception of a single example in Neh 13:10.[48]

Verse	Hebrew Text
Gen 49:22	בָּנוֹת צָעֲדָה עֲלֵי־שׁוּר
	vines marching over the wall
Deut 21:7	יָדֵינוּ לֹא שָׁפְכָה [שָׁפְכוּ] אֶת־הַדָּם הַזֶּה וְעֵינֵינוּ לֹא רָאוּ
	our hands have not spilled this blood and our eyes have not seen
Deut 32:27	פֶּן־יֹאמְרוּ יָדֵינוּ רָמָה
	lest they say, "Our hands our high!"
Josh 15:4	וְהָיָה תֹּצְאוֹת הַגְּבוּל יָמָּה
	and the borders of the territory are at the sea
Josh 18:12	וְהָיָה תֹּצְאֹתָיו מִדְבָּרָה בֵּית אָוֶן
	and its borders are in the wilderness of Beth Aven
Josh 18:14	וְהָיָה תֹצְאֹתָיו אֶל־קִרְיַת־בַּעַל
	and its borders are in Kiriath-Baal

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[47] 308 verses of archaic poetry x (21 examples of *qatalō(h)*/ 23,213 verses in the Hebrew Bible) = .28. If we restrict the calculation to poetic verses, this figure rises to 308 verses of archaic poetry x (13 examples of *qatalō(h)* in poetry/ 9,862 poetic verses in the Hebrew Bible) = .41.

[48] This form is conspicuously late and may, therefore, be susceptible to a different explanation.

Josh 18:19	וְהָיָה תֹצְאוֹתָיו [תֹּצְאוֹת] הַגְּבוּל אֶל־לְשׁוֹן יָם־הַמֶּלַח צָפוֹנָה אֶל־קְצֵה הַיַּרְדֵּן and the borders of the territory are at the bay of the Dead Sea to the north at the outlet of the Jordan
1 Sam 4:15	וְעֵינָיו קָמָה his eyes were blind (lit. stood)
1 Kgs 22:49	נִשְׁבְּרָה אֳנִיּוֹת בְּעֶצְיוֹן גָּבֶר the ships were wrecked in Ezion-Geber
Isa 1:6	פֶּצַע וְחַבּוּרָה וּמַכָּה טְרִיָּה לֹא־זֹרוּ וְלֹא חֻבָּשׁוּ וְלֹא רֻכְּכָה בַּשָּׁמֶן bruise, sore, and fresh wound—they have not been drained, or bound up, or softened with oil
Jer 48:41 [twice]	נִלְכְּדָה הַקְּרִיּוֹת וְהַמְּצָדוֹת נִתְפָּשָׂה the cities will be conquered and the fortresses will be seized
Jer 51:29	קָמָה עַל־בָּבֶל מַחְשְׁבוֹת יְהוָה YHWH's plans against Babylon stand
Jer 51:56	חִתְּתָה קַשְּׁתוֹתָם their bows are broken
Ezek 26:2 [twice]	יַעַן אֲשֶׁר־אָמְרָה צֹר עַל־יְרוּשָׁלַ͏ִם הֶאָח נִשְׁבְּרָה דַּלְתוֹת הָעַמִּים נָסֵבָּה אֵלָי אִמָּלְאָה הָחֳרָבָה because Tyre said to Israel, "Aha, the doors of the peoples are broken, they have come around to me, I shall be sated now that it is wasted
Ps 18:35	מְלַמֵּד יָדַי לַמִּלְחָמָה וְנִחֲתָה קֶשֶׁת־נְחוּשָׁה זְרוֹעֹתָי he trains my hands for war and my arms bend a bronze bow
Ps 68:14	כַּנְפֵי יוֹנָה נֶחְפָּה בַכֶּסֶף וְאֶבְרוֹתֶיהָ בִּירַקְרַק חָרוּץ the wings of the dove are covered in silver and its pinions in greenish gold

Ps 73:2	כְּאַיִן שֻׁפְּכָה אֲשֻׁרָי
	my steps were poured out as nothing
Job 16:16	פָּנַי חֳמַרְמְרָה מִנִּי־בֶכִי
	my face is red from weeping
Neh 13:10	מְנָיוֹת הַלְוִיִּם לֹא נִתָּנָה
	the portions of the Levites were not given

Table 2: The 3fp *qatalō(h)* Perfect

4.4. Definite Article

The definite article is a late innovation in some Central Semitic languages.[49] Lambdin has noted that in earlier Northwestern texts, the syntax of the article is different than its syntax in later texts.[50] He suggested that syntax reflects the beginning of the article and potentially reveals its origin. He noted, for example, that in Aramaic and Phoenician definite nouns are almost always modified. The rarity of the definite article in archaic biblical texts is well known and has been noted, for example, by Cross and Freedman. They claim that the article is not used as a rule in archaic poetry and go as far as to omit instances of the article in those places where it does occur.[51] While perhaps such extreme emendations are unwarranted, the ratio of definite nouns to indefinite ones is low. In our corpus, there are 589 absolute nouns, where an article can morphologically and syntactically occur (i.e., construct nouns and nouns with possessive suffixes have been excluded), and yet only 45 of them are formally definite (7.64%). For comparison's sake, any section of Psalms (for example 1–31) with a similar number of absolute nouns, yielded at least 10% definite nouns. A similar number of absolute nouns in a prose text (e.g., Genesis 6–15), yielded over 50%. This, of course, indicates that genre is at play, but also that there is a diachronic aspect to the difference between archaic and standard poetry.

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[49] J. Huehnergard, "Features of Central Semitic," pp. 185–186.

[50] T. Lambdin, "The Junctural Origin of the West Semitic Definite Article," in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright* (ed. H. Goedicke; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1971), pp. 315–333.

[51] F. M. Cross and D. N. Freedman, *Studies in Ancient Yahwistic Poetry* (The Biblical Resource Series 1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 19.

Some nouns, which are clearly definite, appear as indefinite in archaic poetry. This is clear especially in recurrent references to Israel as עָם (Exod 15:13; Num 23:9; Deut 33:5, 21; Judg 5:2, etc.).

4.5. Conclusion

The features discussed above are exclusive to the corpus under discussion and are earlier than the corresponding features in Standard Biblical Hebrew. Poets are known to employ archaic language, but there is no other way to account for the clustering of these features in these poems and not others except to conclude that they are earlier than other biblical texts. The argument that dating is substantiated on the basis of bundles of linguistic features was advocated by Avi Hutvitz. His methodology, which we accept, makes assigning a relative date to a text more difficult, yet much more robust. These features, as well as others treated by Bloch and Notarius among others, do not point to a specific date. They do, however, indicate that the set of poems branded "archaic poetry" was written prior to the composition of the narrative texts and poems which comprise most of the Hebrew Bible. Their specific date is a matter of conjecture. One day it may be possible to correlate events within the archaic poetry (such as the Israelite-Midianite alliance described in Judges 5) with archaeological evidence (e.g., the stratigraphy of "Midianite" pottery from the land of Israel), but at the moment this is unfeasible.

The relative dating of the archaic corpus does not hinge on a single feature, but on cumulative evidence. The fact that a large set of features, which are known to be early and are missing from Standard Hebrew, occur in the corpus, is indicative of their early origin.

5. FINAL WORDS

As Hurvitz and others have consistently argued, it is always possible for a later author to co-opt and employ an early feature, but much more difficult—if not impossible—for an earlier author to use a late innovation. Thus, the use of innovations for dating, which has been used successfully to separate Late Hebrew from Standard Hebrew, cannot be applied to premonarchic texts. This renders the dating of Archaic Biblical Hebrew less secure than the dating of other layers. The project Robertson undertook was never repeated not because Robertson is the final word on the topic, but because it is more difficult to identify archaic features than innovative features.

Section 4 above, alongside the literature mentioned therein, suggests a few new ideas.

The debate over linguistic dating is at an impasse, yet shows no signs of abating. This is not due to an unsolvable dispute or a lack of relevant evidence, but rather a matter of two approaches completely at odds. While the arguments put forward by Young and his followers were worth addressing, we believe they have been adequately confronted and, to a large extent resolved. Linguistic dating is based on substantial evidence, and its proponents are generally cautious in their claims. Its detractors, on the other hand, continue to repeat their allegations as if no counter-arguments have ever been offered. Despite an abundance of articles and books on the topic, scholarly dialogue is absent. This is not how one furthers the pursuit of knowledge.

A re-evaluation of the linguistic features underlying our understanding of the stratification of Hebrew is welcome and encouraged. But in order to progress our collective understanding, any attempt to look at the complex situation in the Bible must be well-informed. The book under review fails both to evaluate the majority position on the issue and to formulate and corroborate an alternative.