Frame-Narrative and Composition in the Book of Qohelet*

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Qohelet is, of course, wisdom literature. What has been less well recognized is that *Qohelet*,[1] like some other wisdom books, is also narration: It tells something that happened to someone. I would like to take some first steps in the investigation of the literary characteristics of *Qohelet* as narrative: Who is speaking (the question of *voice*), how do the voices speak, and how do they relate to each other? I will argue that the *Book of Qohelet* is to be taken as a whole, as a single, well-integrated composition, the product not of editorship but of authorship, which uses interplay of voice as a deliberate literary device for rhetorical and artistic purposes.[2]

A. The Identity and Function of the Epilogist

There is more than one voice speaking in the *Book of Qohelet*. The overwhelmingly predominant voice is, of course, Qohelet's, and the main task of *Qohelet*-exegesis is to examine that voice. But there is another voice to be heard in the book, though certain presuppositions of modern biblical

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The following works are referred to by name of author only:

G. A. Barton, *Ecclesiastes* (*ICC*; Edinburgh, 1908).
A. Barucq, *Ecclésiaste* (Paris, 1968).
Fr. Delitzsch, *Koheleth* (Leipzig, 1875).
Fr. Ellermeier, *Qohelet*, I,1 (Hertzberg, 1967).
K. Galling, *Prediger Salomo* (*HAT* I, 18; ^{1}1940, ^{2}1969. Unless otherwise noted all references are to the second edition).
H. L. Ginsberg, קהלת (Tel Aviv-Jerusalem, 1961).
C. D. Ginsburg, *Coheleth* (1861; reprinted by KTAV, New York, 1970).
R. Gordis, *Koheleth–The Man and His World* (New York, 1955, 1968).
H.-W. Hertzberg, *Der Prediger* (*KAT* N.F. XVII, 4; Gütersloh, ^{2}1963).
O. Loretz, *Qohelet und der alte Orient* (Freiburg, 1964).
A. H. McNeile, *An Introduction to Ecclesiastes* (Cambridge, 1904).
W. Zimmerli, *Das Buch des Predigers Salomo* (*ATD* XVI; Göttingen, 1962).

(1) It is necessary to distinguish between Qohelet (the man) and *Qohelet* (the book) no less than between Job and *Job*, Daniel and *Daniel*. The importance of this generally neglected distinction will become clear in the course of this study.

(2) This thesis is not meant to exclude the possibility of minor revisions and glosses by later writers in a finished, unified composition.

scholarship have kept it from being listened to carefully enough. This is the voice we hear speaking, first of all, in the phrase *ʾāmar (haq)qōhelet*, in 1:2, 7:27,[3] and 12:8. Whose voice is it? Careful examination of this question will involve us in some of the fundamental issues of the book's composition.

Is this voice Qohelet's, the speaker of the monologue, here referring to himself in the third-person? While such a change of person is possible, is it likely? Are we *supposed* here to hear Qohelet speaking about himself?

Modern commentators have generally, and I believe correctly, heard another voice speaking these words. For one thing, elsewhere Qohelet does not use the third-person of himself; that is to say, alteration of voice[4] does not seem to be a deliberate stylistic device in Qohelet's speech. Even if we allow the third-person in 1:2 as a self-introduction, such a switch of voice would be quite useless in 7:27 and 12:8.

It is not only the change of voice but the way the voices interact in 7:27 that indicates that another person is speaking in these verses. 7:27 reads: ראה זה מצאתי אמר הקהלת אחת לאחת למצא חשבון "'See, this I have found,' said Qohelet, 'adding one to one to arrive at a total.'" We have here a third-person quoting-phrase in the middle of a first-person sentence, separating the verb and its modifier. While one *can* speak of himself in the third-person, it is unlikely he would do so in the middle of a first-person sentence, whereas a writer quoting someone else may put a *verbum dicendi* wherever he wishes within the quotation. *ʾāmar haqqōhelet* are not Qohelet's words in 7:27 and therefore probably not in 1:2 and 12:8 either.[5]

(3) MT אמרה קהלת is unquestionably to be divided אמר הקהלת as in 12:8. I will henceforth assume the latter reading.

(4) These verses and the epilogue are the only changes of voice in the book. The use of the second-person does not change the voice, since it is the same "I" that is speaking. Only the change to "he" changes the voice, since it implies that Qohelet is being spoken about, looked at, from the outside.

(5) Ellermeier (pp. 93–103) argues that 1:2 is to be taken as a whole and understood as spoken by someone else besides Qohelet. While I agree that the verse cannot be distributed among different "hands," I can not accept his interpretation of this key verse. He argues that the superlative *hābēl hābālîm* must be understood as an iterative, since there can be no degrees of *hebel*; thus: "'הבל', immer wieder 'הבל' hat Qohelet gesagt, 'הבל', immer wieder 'הבל', 'alles ist 'הבל'." But Ellermeier brings no other examples of a superlative in the sense of an iterative (it would be more accurate to say a superlative construction that makes an associated verb iterative), and it is hard to see how a superlative noun could have that function. Furthermore, contrary to Ellermeier (p. 99), degrees of *hebel* are quite possible. If *hebel* means "absurd" (thus Barucq), the world as a whole may be the most absurd thing of all, an absurdity even in comparison with all particular absurdities, just as *šᵉmêy haššāmayim* (Deut. 10:14 *et al.*) are heavens not only with respect to the earth, but even with respect to other, lower, heavens.

Many commentators have connected the speaker of these three phrases with the speaker of the epilogue.[6] This is reasonable, since if we hear Qohelet spoken about at the beginning, middle, and end of his words as well as afterwards in a postscript, it is natural to hear the same voice in all these places. This voice speaks about Qohelet's words in the epilogue, while in 1:2, 7:27 and 12:8 it quotes them. Modern scholars have almost all recognized that Qohelet did not write the epilogue. 12:9–14 does not purport to be by Qohelet. It speaks *about* him, looking back on him as a figure in the past and expressing admiration for him together with certain reservations about his opinions and activity. 12:9–14 is certainly not spoken by Qohelet.

But just who is speaking when Qohelet is spoken about? Scholars have been rather quick to enroll the epilogist in the army of editors that populated postexilic Judea. But do we see signs of editing in *Qohelet*, and can the speaker of the epilogue be called an editor? These questions require us to look more closely at the meaning of editorship.

There are three types of editors to be considered as possibilities here, ranging along the scale of scope of involvement in the formation of the finished book: (1) a passive editor, (2) a rearranger, and (3) a compiler and arranger of small units.

1. A passive editor who received a finished book and only inserted *ʾāmar (haq)qōhelet* in three verses and attached a title (1:1) and an epilogue. This is the type of editor whose existence Gordis considers possible (p. 73), though not necessary (chap. IX, n. 17). Barton (p. 44) assigns these "editorial words and sentences" (i.e., the third-person passages) to various "editors," to whom he also ascribes a number of glosses throughout the book. While Barton does not argue for the "integrity" of the book as Gordis does, his notion of editorial function is similar in that he envisions a completed *Book of Qohelet*, written by Qohelet, to which a later writer (or writers) added certain words and sentences without affecting the work's basic structure and composition. The more extensive activity that Barton attributes to the editor is glossing, rather than editing. The *editorial* activity is still superficial, being a matter of additions and insertions rather than of combining and rearranging materials.

However, the epilogist (by which I mean the voice heard in 1:2, 7:27, 12:8 and 12:9–14, leaving open the question of 1:1[7]) was more intimately

(6) Or epilogues. Some scholars believe they can discern two or three epilogues; e.g., Zimmerli divides: 9–11/12–14; Hertzberg divides: 9–11/12/13–14.

(7) I tend to agree with Ellermeier (p. 95) that the original title was *dibrêy qōhelet*, the rest of the verse being a gloss identifying Qohelet with Solomon. Qohelet assumes the role of

involved with the actual words of Qohelet than the above picture would imply. Whether or not the book had a title before the presumed editor got to it (1:1 or just *dibrêy qōhelet*), the phrase *ʾāmar qōhelet* is unlikely to have been inserted in 1:2 by a later hand. If there was a title there would have been no need to insert the phrase. An author might identify the speaker however often he wishes, but an editor would interrupt the author's words to do so only if he felt a lack of clarity. But after 1:1 it is quite clear who is speaking. On the other hand, if there was no title, we cannot imagine that the book once began without *ʾāmar qōhelet*, i.e., that those words are an editor's addition. 1:2 (and thus 12:8) must be taken as a whole, written at one time. But again, the most telling verse is 7:27, for we cannot imagine someone taking a completed book and inserting a *verbum dicendi* in the middle of a first-person sentence (. . . ראה זה מצאתי אחת לאחת). That is to say, whoever is responsible for *ʾāmar haqqōhelet* in 7:27 is far more active than a mere phrase-inserter. He is active on the level of the composition of individual sentences.

Nor does the epilogue present itself simply as an addition to a completed book. The epilogue opens with ויתר שהיה קהלת "And furthermore, Qohelet was . . ." (12:9).[8] It begins with a phrase of continuation, as if someone had been speaking and is following up with a few words of summary retrospect. In 12:12 the speaker suddenly addresses *bʿnî* "my son." This address creates an *epic situation* (the setting, implied or explicit, in which a first-person narrator is speaking[9]), one familiar to the ancient reader — the father-son instruction situation of all didactic wisdom literature. Why would an editor whose editorial activity was restricted to insertion of phrases and addition of an epilogue create for himself a fictitious epic situation?

2. An editor-rearranger. The above considerations argue also against the assumption of an editor whose activity consisted mainly in rearranging material in an already existing book. O. Loretz attempts to reveal this sort of editorial activity.[10] But the activity of the author of the third-person

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king in 1:12 only for his experiment with wisdom (1:12–18) and pleasure (2:1–11), then drops the pose. The epilogist does not seem to regard Qohelet as a king. The king fiction is a rhetorical device, not an attempt to assert Solomonic authorship for the whole book; see Gordis, pp. 40 f. 1:1 in its present form, on the other hand, attributes the whole book to Solomon.

(8) For exegesis of the epilogue see below, pp. 96–99.

(9) B. Romberg, *Studies in the Narrative Technique of the First-Person Novel* (Lund, 1962), pp. 33–38.

(10) Loretz (pp. 136–144) ascribes 1:1–3, 12:8, 12:9–14, and the phrase *ʾāmar haqqōhelet* in 7:27 to an editor, as well as the supposed displacement of 1:4–11. As for 7:27 we may ask

voice goes deeper than mere rearrangement. This voice's appearance in the middle of the sentence in 1:2, 12:8 and especially 7:27 shows activity at the level of sentence formation. Also the epilogue's epic situation and its continuity with the foregoing suggest that the speaker has a more integral relation to the words of Qohelet than just mechanical addition and occasional rearrangement.

Beyond these considerations, we may ask by what criteria we can discover editorial rearrangement of a previously completed book. Loretz uses the criterion of logical order. He envisions a book that once consisted of 1:4–12:7 but began with the self-presentation of 1:12. He argues: "Dies [1:12] ist der gegebene Anfang eines Buches, in dem ein König auftritt. Die handelnde und sprechende Person hat sich zu Beginn vorzustellen" (p. 144). He compares the use of self-presentation as the opening formula in other, quite different, genres — Babylonian and West Semitic royal inscriptions and divine revelations (e.g., Gen. 28:13, Exod. 20:2).[11] In other words, 1:12 logically belongs first, so the disturbance in the logical order must be ascribed to an editor. But I expect that the assumption that editors are more likely than authors to be responsible for disturbance of order would find more support among authors than among editors. People in the latter camp might wish to argue that signs of *logical* order (especially in a book that rarely makes use of logical order as a structuring principle) are most likely editorial improvements.[12] Why not say that the poem on aging and death in 12:1–7 owes its *appropriate* placement to an editor? Illogical order is not evidence for editorship. At any rate, in the absence of clear-cut structural principles (of the sort we have, say, in *Job*) it is hard to say what violates the original structure. Beyond that, if we insist that authors and not editors are to be thanked for appropriate placement of material, we may observe that 1:4–11 is a very suitable introduction to

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why an editor would insert a *verbum dicendi* into an already existing sentence somewhere in the middle of the book. And if the phrase is not an addition there, there is no reason to see it as an addition elsewhere. There is no evidence that all of 1:1–3 is a secondary addition. Certainly if we do not accept Loretz' rearrangement we must assume that the book originally began with at least some of the introductory material of 1:1–3.

(11) Loretz, p. 144, notes 40–41. While comparison between works of different genres is quite legitimate and often helpful in exemplification and clarification, and while a work in one genre may incorporate elements of another genre, we cannot derive *rules* from one genre and make a work from another conform to them. *Qohelet* uses some formulas from royal pronouncements but is not one itself.

(12) For an example of a readiness to assume editorial incompetency see Barton, p. 44: "The words 'says Qoheleth' interrupt the rhythm in 1:2 and 12:8, while in 7:27 they actually interrupt a discourse in the first person; we conclude, therefore, that they are probably editorial." But interruption of rhythm and first-person discourse in itself, whether or not it is felt as a flaw, is not a sign of editorial interference.

the book. This passage tells how the universe in general operates; then the focus narrows to the individual dilemma in 1:12. There is no reason to attribute the present order to editorial rearrangement.[13]

3. Editor as compiler and arranger (and not just rearranger). Ellermeier is the only scholar to attempt a thorough investigation of precisely what the hypothetical editor did. His theory of the book's composition requires careful critique, since it is a possible explanation of the relation of the third-person voice to Qohelet's words. Ellermeier sees the book as compiled by a redactor (Qoh^{R1}) who wrote 1:1a (*dibrêy qōhelet*), 1:2-3, 12:8, and 12:9–12. This editor had before him 56 small, independent units (meshalim) which he joined on the basis of "thematische Begriffe" and "Stichwörter" (pp. 122 ff.). (In addition there was a second redactor, Qoh^{R2}, who was responsible for 12:13 f. and some glossing.) But are there really indications of such fundamental redaction within the book itself?

a) The first problem is whether it is possible for us to distinguish the supposedly independent original units which the editor collected. It is very doubtful that we can do so, and Ellermeier's tabulation of the unit divisions proposed by nine commentators (pp. 131 ff.) shows that the dividing lines are anything but obvious. Ellermeier's own division is not convincing. The tabulation of formal characteristics he offers cannot be used as evidence for the division of units, because, as he himself says, the analysis of the formal characteristics of the Gattungen did not precede the unit division but proceeded side by side with the delineation of the units (p. 48), so that the characteristics have no independent status as evidence for unit divisions. And furthermore, as he notes, the units cannot be marked off by formal characteristics alone; the author's intention must also be taken into account. This circularity is perhaps unavoidable. The only way to break it would be to bring clear-cut principles for Gattung-structure from other books of the same genre, but this cannot be done in the case of *Qohelet*. Alternatively, if the results showed considerable regularity in the formal structure of the units we could say that the regularity of the patterns in itself confirmed the accuracy of the unit division. But Ellermeier's 56 units show no such regularity. In other words, Ellermeier has not succeeded in marking off units with any more certainty than other commentators, most of whom delineate units on the basis of their impressions of what verses seem to belong together. Certainly Ellermeier's unit

(13) Of course an editor may rearrange an author's original order for his own purposes, but unless we can discern the editor's activity by some other criteria and discover his purpose in making the changes, we cannot a priori attribute apparent disorder to him.

division does not enable us to draw distinctions between Qohelet's activity and the supposed editor's.

b) Another difficulty with Ellermeier's approach is determining whether the "thematische Begriffe" and "Stichwörter" join units or are internal to them; if the latter, they cannot be taken as signs of the presumed editor's activity rather than the author's. For example, what grounds are there to assume that 2:18-19 and 2:20–23 are two independent units which an editor joined because they contain the "thematische Begriff" ושנאתי אני (2:18) and וסבותי אני ליאש את לבי (2:20)?[14] Even if we grant that the two phrases are similar enough to be called a single "thematischer Begriff" (in itself far from obvious), why see in their proximity the work of an editor? 2:18-19 and 2:20–23 together form a single unit leading to one point: Toil is useless because a stranger might inherit its fruit. In vss. 18 f. Qohelet speaks of the futility of his own toil, in 20–23 he speaks about its futility in general. The composition of 2:18–23 is so close-knit that it is more likely authorial than editorial. Similarly, how can we say that 4:17-5:8 is composed of five independent units joined editorially because they contain "Warnung und אל"? 5:1–6, at least, is on one subject: the danger of excessive speech, rash vows in particular. Certainly the connection between 5:4 and 5:5 is as integral as could be: Do not renege on payment of vows (vs. 4) because (*kî*) that will anger God and cause you damage (vs. 5). The connection is not merely formal. In the absence of definitive unit division or unambiguous formal rules (which we do not have, see above, remark a), the connectives may be regarded as internal to the units and therefore not indicators of editorial activity.

c) There is a third objection to the hypothesis of active editorship. To the extent that we do find connections, formal or contentual, between distinct units, how do we know that an editor and not the author is responsible for making the connections? If the author is responsible, the previous independence or non-independence of the units is no more relevant to understanding the finished work than are the rough drafts of what you are now reading, which were also at one point made up of separate "units." While I agree with Ellermeier that in 1:2 and elsewhere we can hear another voice speaking besides Qohelet's, I see no evidence that that voice belongs to an editor who arranged numerous units he received from Qohelet.[15] (Furthermore the method of transmission from

(14) Thus Ellermeier, p. 123.

(15) Ellermeier's contention that not the author but a later editor (Qoh^{R_1}) is responsible for the composition of the book is based on a very forced interpretation of 1:2 (see above, n. 5). Furthermore the fact that except in 1:2 and 12:8 the *hebel* judgment is always used in a concrete situation, never abstractly and universally (Ellermeier, p. 99, Galling, p. 84), does

Qohelet to the hypothetical editor is unclear. It seems unlikely that Qohelet passed on numerous scraps of parchment, each one with a different mashal.)[16]

d) Beyond the above considerations, which cast doubt on the possibility of discerning editorial, as opposed to authorial, activity in the composition of the book, there is one argument that weighs heavily in favor of composition by a single author. Qohelet's words are presented not as a collection of separate reflections and sentences but as a single search, whose goal is set forth clearly in 1:13 ("I set my mind to investigating and exploring in wisdom whatever has been done under the heavens . . .") and whose presence shapes our perception of the whole book. There are about 50 phrases of search and observation throughout the book: דברתי אני עם לבי לאמור "I spoke with my heart saying" (1:16), ושבתי אני ואראה "I next saw"[17] (4:1,7), וראיתי אני "I saw" (4:4) and the like. These phrases provide a matrix that unites the disparate observations that Qohelet reports. These phrases, which cannot be separated from the sentences they introduce, have meaning only in the context of a single search by one man. They would be quite meaningless within independent meshalim. Consider such phrases as ופניתי אני לראות "I turned to observe" (2:12), כל זה נסיתי בחכמה "All this I tried in wisdom" (7:23), שבתי וראה "I next saw" (9:11), גם זה ראיתי "This too I saw" (9:13). What meaning would such phrases have at the beginning of independent "Einzelschriftstücke," where Ellermeier's analysis would place them? These phrases can hardly be attributed to an editor. They show that the words of Qohelet were formulated as part of a single, overall investigation, not as separate reflections and sentences. They are evidence for authorship, not editorship. Or, putting it another way, whoever wrote these phrases is the true author of *Qohelet*, even if he utilized older material in the composition of his book.

Whose, then, is the voice we hear speaking about Qohelet in 1:2, 7:27, 12:8 and in the epilogue if it does not belong to Qohelet himself or to an editor and yet is intimately interwoven with Qohelet's words, so that it cannot be extricated as mere insertions and additions? Here we should

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not show that these verses come from a different hand. It is most suitable for Qohelet's monologue to open and close with a universal judgment.

(16) Ellermeier thinks in terms of written transmission of Qohelet's teachings on separate pieces of writing-material (p. 103). Not every short saying appeared on a separate piece (p. 109), yet even a unit the size of 7:1–14 did not appear on a single piece of writing-material (p. 110).

(17) ŠWB here and in 9:11 serves as an adverb showing the next stage in a process rather than repeated action, cf. 2 Chr. 19:4, 23:15, Isa. 6:13, Jer. 18:4. On this use of ŠWB see W. Holladay, *The Root Šubh in the OT* (Leyden, 1958), pp. 69 f.

not ask what Qohelet or an editor *could* have written, but rather—what are the literary implications of the words? What are we *meant* to hear in the third-person sections? If the epilogue and the other third-person phrases are integrally connected with Qohelet's words, just what is the connection?

I believe the questions raised can best be answered by the following understanding of that voice and its relation to Qohelet: That certain words are in a different voice does not mean that they are by a different hand. As Franz Delitzsch observed, "Nirgends tritt uns eine Nöthigung entgegen, den Verf. und den Epilogisten für verschieden zu halten" (p. 414).[18] I suggest that all of 1:2–12:14 is by the same hand—not that the epilogue is by Qohelet, but that *Qohelet* is "by" the epilogist. In other words, the speaker we hear from time to time in the background saying "Qohelet said"—who comes to the fore only in the epilogue as he summarizes Qohelet's activities and teachings and takes a certain stand on them, whose "I" we hear just once in the suffix of *b'nî* in 12:12—this speaker is the teller of the tale, the external narrator of the "story" of Qohelet. That is to say, the epic situation of the third-person voice in the epilogue and elsewhere is that of a man who is looking back and telling his son the story of the ancient wise-man Qohelet, passing on to him words he knew Qohelet to have said, appreciatively but cautiously evaluating his work in retrospect. Virtually all the "story" he tells is a quotation of the words of the wise-man he is telling about. This speaker, whom I will call the *frame-narrator*, keeps himself well in the background, but he does not make himself disappear. He presents himself not as the creator of Qohelet's words but as their transmitter.

The *Book of Qohelet*, therefore, is built on successive levels, each with a perspective that encompasses the next:

Level 1. The frame-narrator, who tells about

Level 2a. Qohelet-the-reporter, the narrating "I," who speaks from the vantage point of old age and looks back on

Level 2b. Qohelet-the-seeker, the experiencing "I," the younger Qohelet who made the fruitless investigation introduced in 1:12 f.

(18) Delitzsch argued unity of authorship on grounds of similarities in style and ideas between the body of the book and the epilogue. The argument from style has some weight, though one could explain stylistic similarities as just indicating the same period and literary environment (thus Gordis). The argument from similarity of ideas is not valid because (1) two different people can share the same ideas and (2) although the epilogist does not contradict Qohelet he does set a distance between himself and Qohelet, and his tone and emphasis are different enough that we cannot say the *same* ideas are expressed (see below, pp. 99 ff.).

Levels 1 and 2 are different persons; levels 2a and 2b are different perspectives of one person.

The use of an anonymous third-person retrospective frame-narrative encompassing a first-person narrative or monologue has several parallels in ancient literature, particularly in Egypt, the homeland of narrative technique, but also in Israel. Examples of this technique are found in various genres, including wisdom literature.

The Instruction for Kagemeni.[19] Only the final portion of the text is preserved, but that is enough to show the overall design: In the body of the book the old vizier, the father of Kagemeni, speaks to his children words of advice, which he writes in a book. The epilogue speaks about the vizier in retrospect and tells how his son benefited from his father's counsels and became vizier himself. The narrative frame, which surrounds and presents the words of the main character, thus looks back upon him as a figure in the past and evaluates his work.

The Prophecy of Neferti,[20] written in the reign of Amenemhet I (12th dynasty), begins with a frame-narrative cast in the reign of Snefru (4th dynasty), which looks back on the ancient sage Neferti and introduces his words in an attitude of esteem. From the point of view of the speaker of the frame-narrative, Neferti and his words lie well in the past. The work is of course fictional, a prophecy *ex eventu* of the "future" triumph of Amenemhet I.

The Complaint of Ipuwer.[21] The introduction is lost, but it must have given the setting that is implied in the ending of the work, which refers to Ipuwer in retrospect: "What Ipuwer said when he answered the Majesty of the All-Lord" (15,5). The introduction must have told how Ipuwer (like Neferti) was called to address the king. The body of the work contains Ipuwer's words of lament about the breakdown of the social order, though his "I" occurs only occasionally (6,5; 6,8; 12,6). The speech of Ipuwer, which is the main part of the book, is thus presented within the framework of an anonymous narrator who looks back on the sage, quotes him, and speaks about him.

Onchsheshonqy[22] opens with a frame-narrative explaining how Onch-

(19) Pap. Prisse, 1–2; trans. W. K. Simpson, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt* (New Haven, 1972), pp. 177–179; M. Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, vol. I (Los Angeles, 1973), pp. 59–61.

(20) Pap. Leningrad 1116B; trans. W. Faulkner in Simpson, *op. cit.*, pp. 234–240; Lichtheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 139–145.

(21) Pap. Leyden 344 recto; trans. Faulkner in Simpson, *op. cit.*, pp. 210–229; Lichtheim, *op. cit.*, pp. 149–163.

(22) S. R. K. Glanville, *The Instructions of ʿOnchsheshonqy* (Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the British Museum, vol. III; London, 1955).

sheshonqy came to write his Instruction on ostraca while in prison. Onchsheshonqy's words — the body of the book — are thus a long quotation (see 4,17–21; 5, 14, 19, which are extended quoting-phrases). After the introduction his advice to his son is transmitted. The introductory story is almost certainly fictional. The Instruction contains references to the introduction and is probably contemporary with it,[23] though the Instruction may contain traditional material. Whether or not Onchsheshonqy ever existed, what we now have in the book as a whole is an anonymous frame-narrator telling the story of Onchsheshonqy — what he did and what he said.

Deuteronomy[24] (in its present state, but excluding the additions in 4:41–43, 32:48–52, and 34:1–12) is an extended first-person monologue by Moses set within a sparse third-person framework indicated by a number of quoting-phrases. Deut. 1:1–5 is an extended quoting-phrase; 28:69 is a summary retrospect. Briefer quoting-phrases are more numerous, e.g., 5:1, 27:1, 9, 11, 29:1. 31:14–25, whose relation to D is problematic, is a short narrative about Moses. Thus in *Deuteronomy* too there is a voice telling *about* the chief character, looking back on him from an indefinite distance, while remaining itself well in the background.

Tobit. Immediately after the title and brief identification, which is itself not part of the frame-narrative, Tobit begins speaking in self-presentation form with a personal retrospect similar to Qohelet's. Both sages look back from the vantage-point of old age upon their earlier experiences: "I, Tobit, walked all the days of my life in ways of truth . . . ." Then follows a monologue of typical wisdom counsels and observations. Yet the book as a whole is a third-person narrative. In 3:7 ff. the author begins to speak *about* Tobit, with Tobit quoted at length throughout the book. 14:15 is an authorial retrospect taking us down to after the destruction of Nineveh, when Tobit's son Tobias died at age 127.[25] Although the emphasis here is quite different from that of *Qohelet*, with the frame-narrator's voice much more prominent in *Tobit*, the essential narrative design is the same: a frame-narrator who looks back on Tobit who looks back on himself. What is of special interest is that the first-person speaker

(23) *Ibid.*, p. xii.

(24) Prof. M. Haran suggested this important parallel to me. He notes that this narrative form may be another sign of wisdom influence on *Deuteronomy* (though not of wisdom authorship as such). On *Deuteronomy*'s affinities with wisdom literature see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford, 1972), part III.

(25) Even if chapters 13 and 14 are later additions to *Tobit* as F. Zimmerman argues (*The Book of Tobit* [New York, 1958] pp. 24 ff.), the essential narrative structure of the book is as described here, though in that case the distance of the frame-narrative's retrospect would be less pronounced.

(Tobit) can appear right after the title without a frame-narrator's introduction, even in a work where the voice of the frame-narrator has no hesitation about making itself heard throughout the work. The modern reader expects a frame-narrator to be more prominent at the start of the work. The frame-narrator's voice in *Qohelet* as in *Tobit* is scarcely heard at the beginning of the work—only "Qohelet said" in 1:2. The author allows the first-person speaker to introduce himself in order to establish him immediately as the focal point.

An analogy from modern literature may help clarify the nature and function of this narrative technique.[26] This work, *Uncle Remus* (the various volumes really form a single work), is so different from *Qohelet* in almost every way that it will be clear that I am concerned only with isolating the rhetorical function of a particular literary technique, not with a broader comparison of the two works.[27] Joel Chandler Harris' Uncle Remus is the main persona and the figure that unifies the various tales. The Uncle Remus stories, taken as a whole, are as much about Uncle Remus as about the characters in his tales.[28] He is thus functionally equivalent to Qohelet. Uncle Remus' words are surrounded by a frame-narrative. We hear this voice speaking in such contexts as "One time, said Uncle Remus, sighing heavily and settling himself back in his seat with an air of melancholy resignation . . ."; "The next evening when the little boy had finished supper and hurried out to sit with his venerable patron, he found the old man in great glee — talking and laughing to himself"; and, interestingly, "Lemme tell you dis, said Uncle Remus, der ain't no way fer ter make

(26) It is often useful to go far afield for models for literary techniques and processes. The purpose of these models is to illustrate and bring to our attention phenomena we might otherwise be unaware of and to help us break out of unjustified assumptions that may arise when working with a restricted body of texts. In using modern models we also have the benefit of data about authorship and process of composition that are lacking for ancient literatures. On the use of models from modern literature see M. Tsevat, "Common sense and hypothesis in OT study," *SVT* XXVII (1975), pp. 217–30, esp. 219 f. Such models, of course, can serve only for illustration and corroboration, not proof.

(27) I would, however, suggest parenthetically that the Uncle Remus stories might to a certain extent be a relevant model for the redaction history of other types of biblical literature: in the use of diverse sources of varied origins which are given a common narrative framework and set in a unified style; in the way the collection as a whole has goals—authorial goals—above and beyond the individual stories or "tradition-units" (Uncle Remus embodies the idealized antebellum Negro and gives expression to the reconstruction views of Harris); in the attribution of stories of varied origins to a central idealized figure; and above all in the way the author-redactor Harris is willing to remold his source material for the sake of a greater authenticity, beyond that of mere stenographic accuracy. See the following footnotes.

(28) "[Harris] has given us not merely a story about a rabbit and a fox . . . but he has given us, with lifelike reality, the negro who told it, and what he felt and thought about while he was telling it . . ." R. S. Baker, *Outlook* 78 (1904), p. 596.

tattlers en tale-b'arers tu'n out good."[29] The words "said Uncle Remus," interrupting a first-person sentence, are equivalent to *ʾāmar haqqōhelet* in 7:27. They are a delicate reminder of the presence of a frame-narrator's voice in the background and could not be taken as Uncle Remus' words. The frame-narrator presents himself not as the creator of the tales but as their transmitter, a relatively passive agent between their creator (Uncle Remus) and the reader.[30] The frame-narrator thus stays well in the background, appearing only with a remark here and there to give us Uncle Remus' setting and introduce his speech, and to maintain the overall continuity. He looks back on Uncle Remus in a way similar to the epilogist's retrospect on Qohelet. Why does Harris bother to create a frame-narrative yet keep it so inconspicuous? Surely the small amount of incidental information the outer voice offers could be conveyed in the voices of the characters in the fiction (Uncle Remus and the boy). The reason is that the device of the frame-narrative allows the author to maintain both a certain community of thought and feeling with the persona as well as a certain distance. The frame-narrator's brief words in his own voice let the reader know how to look upon Uncle Remus. The reader's relation to Uncle Remus is (as in the case of Qohelet) sensitive and easily distorted. The passive "transmitter" of Uncle Remus' tales lets us know how we are to look upon him: with gentle but definite respect for his wisdom ("his venerable patron"), and with only limited condescension (. . ."he found the old man in great glee — laughing and talking to himself"). It would be too easy to look upon Uncle Remus as a cute and simple "darky" with his dialect and his animal stories. Harris wants us to treat him seriously, so he provides a frame-narrative that treats him seriously. Yet the frame-narrator maintains his distance — mainly social — and does not identify himself with the persona by any means. He maintains the respect by speaking about Uncle Remus without any hint of contempt in his voice, and he preserves the distance mainly by showing

(29) *The Essential Uncle Remus*, ed. Santvoord and Coolidge (London, 1950), pp. 20, 58, 83.

(30) Harris once referred to this narrator as "a dull reporter" (quoted in S. B. Brookes, *Joel Chandler Harris–Folklorist* [Athens, Ga., 1950], p. 37). This reporter is not to be identified with Harris himself; see below, n. 44. Harris himself was far more than simply a collector and transmitter of Negro folklore. He utilized old slave tales but altered and polished and sharpened them until the products were far from pure folk tales. He once showed a friend sixteen introductions he had written for a single story. See L. Dauner, "Myth and humor in the Uncle Remus fables," *American Literature* 20 (1948), pp. 131 f. R. S. Baker commented that precisely because Harris was far more than a "mere copyist" his versions of the stories are "far closer to the real story than any verbatim copy could possibly be" (*Outlook* 78 [1904], p. 596).

the old man in his social setting and where he stands socially vis-à-vis the other characters. The attitude he teaches is: respect at a distance.

At the same time the frame-narrative is a way of attesting to the reality of Uncle Remus, even though he did not actually exist.[31] Harris sought to convey not actual belief in Uncle Remus' reality, but the illusion of reality.[32] The speaker testifies to Uncle Remus' reality simply by using a plausible voice that we, the readers, are more used to and can identify with. We are more willing to suspend disbelief in Uncle Remus' reality when he is presented in this way than if we were to come across a book of stories "by" Uncle Remus, presented directly in his own rather bizarre voice. In other words, a bizarre character, one whose voice we are not used to encountering in literature, needs a plausible, normal voice to mediate him to us and show us how to relate to him. Qohelet too receives this type of mediation from his frame-narrator, whose closing words we shall now examine more closely.

B. The Meaning of the Epilogue

The voice of the frame-narrator of *Qohelet* is heard most clearly in the epilogue, 12:9–14, which is the natural continuation of 12:8:

8. "Utterly absurd," said Qohelet, "Everything is absurd."
9. Now furthermore, Qohelet was a wise-man. He constantly taught the people knowledge, and weighing and investigating he composed many sayings.
10. Qohelet sought to find fine words and to write the most honest words of truth.
11. The words of the wise are like goads, and the (words of) masters of collections are like implanted nails that are given by a shepherd.
12. And furthermore, my son, beware of these things. It is pointless to make a lot of books, and much talking wearies the flesh.
13. Finally, when everything has been heard: Fear God and keep his commandments, for that is the whole man.
14. For God will bring every deed into judgment, (judging) even every hidden matter, whether it is good or bad.

(31) In fact he was a composite of four Negroes Harris had known as a child; see Dauner, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

(32) Harris was quite concerned with his credibility as a folklorist (although at times he denied being one) and claimed to have "verified" his stories (*ibid.*). Thus while Uncle Remus was admittedly an ideal and composite figure, his creator was concerned with establishing his plausibility.

Philological notes:

12:9 ויתר ש- "now furthermore"; note the disjunctive zaqqeph gadol on *w'yōtēr*. Hertzberg: "Dazu ist nachzutragen"; Ginsberg: יש עוד, צריך להוסיף.

The phrase cannot mean "More than (or, besides the fact that) Koheleth was a sage, he also taught the people knowledge" (Gordis), for teaching the people wisdom *is* the task of the wise-man, not something additional to it.[33] Furthermore, if *w'yōtēr* marked a comparison we would expect *w'yōtēr miššehāyāh* as in the Mishnaic examples Gordis cites.

עוד למד דעת את העם *ʿôd* means "constantly," as in Ps. 84:5 (Ibn Ezra, Galling, Hertzberg), cf. Gen. 46:29, Ruth 1:14 et al., where it means "a long time" or "repeatedly."

ואזן וחקר תקן משלים הרבה C. D. Ginsburg makes the interesting suggestion that the asyndeton in the verb series shows that the first two verbs are adverbial modifiers of the third. Gesenius-Kautsch §120 *g-h* brings several examples of coordinated verbs where the first actually modifies the second (e.g., מהרו שכחו מעשיו "they quickly forgot his deeds," Ps. 106:13), though admittedly no examples are cited (in G–K) of two verbs modifying a third.

12:10 וכתוב Point as inf. abs. *w'kātôb* (BH[3] and most). For examples of the inf. abs. as dir. obj. (here, of *biqqēš*) see Deut. 28:56, Isa. 1:17, 42:24; Gesenius-Kautsch §113*d*.

ישר דברי אמת An equivalent of this phrase appears in Prov. 22:21, קשט אמרי אמת (להודיעך). *qōšṭ* is the construct form of *qōšeṭ* (see Ps. 60:6), suggesting that in Qoh. 12:10 *yōšer* is in construct with the following phrase. ישר דברי אמת is a superlative, like *qômat ʾărāzāw* (//*mibḥar b'rōšāw*) "his tallest cedars" (Isa. 37:24) and *ḥakmôt śārôtehā* "her wisest princesses" (Judg. 5:29). Thus: "the most honest words of truth."

(33) Gordis' contention that being a *ḥākām* means being "a professional Wisdom teacher whose activity was limited to the scions of the rich" (p. 342) is not borne out by the task of wisdom as presented in *Proverbs* and certainly not by the use of the word *ḥākām* there. While pupils in the scribal schools probably did come from the middle and upper classes and the social settings incidentally portrayed in wisdom literature do fit those classes (e.g., Prov. 31), yet the wisdom writers never saw or presented their task as instruction limited to certain classes. Wisdom as such is accessible to all (Prov. 8–9). Nor does *ḥākām* ever mean strictly "professional teacher." Nor does *ʿam* mean the general populace, specifically excluding the rich.

12:11. בעלי אספות, a hapax, is difficult. It has been taken as referring to collections of wise sayings, with *baʿălêy* meaning "members" (Delitzsch, Barton, Gordis, Hertzberg, who compare *baʿal* = "participant" [in a covenant or vow] Gen. 14:13, Neh. 6:18, though the sense there is not quite the same). It is better to take *baʿălêy ʾăsuppôt* as "masters of (mashal) collections" (// *ḥăkāmîm*) and to supply *dibrêy* from cl. aα (thus C. D. Ginsburg, who notes the very same ellipsis in 10:12, 13). This verse is further discussed below, pp. 101 ff.

12:12. ויתר מהמה בני הזהר Not "And besides these . . ." (Barton), as if the listener is to beware of words other than the words of the wise, for that sense would require that the *mi(n)* governed by *hizzāhēr* appear before *yōtēr*. We must pause after *wʿyōtēr* as in vs. 9 (against the accents here) and translate as above "and furthermore" (Ginsberg). *hēmmā*: sc. *dibrêy ḥăkāmîm* and *baʿălêy ʾăsuppôt*.

Cl. b gives the reason why the boy should be wary of the words of the wise: עשות ספרים הרבה אין קץ Not: "Of making many books there is no end" (AV, Gordis, Barton, and most); there is no "of" (that would require beth or, more likely, lamed before *ʿăśôt*, cf. 4:8). *qēṣ* means "purpose, profit" (Tur-Sinai: תכלית ותועלת[34]); compare 4:8, אין קץ לכל עמלו (the lonely man's labor certainly has an end-point — death; what it lacks is purpose and value). Furthermore, if *qēṣ* means "end" in the sense of conclusion, finish, then *harbēh* in cl. bα is banal ("There is no end to much labor"). As for the syntax of the clause, *ʾêyn* cannot negate the predicate nexus in a nominal sentence. Rather, *ʾêyn qēṣ* is a noun-phrase, literally, "a nothingness of purpose" or "a lack of purpose," thus "a thing of no purpose." The nominal use of *ʾêyn* + noun is clear in prepositional phrases such as *bʾʾêyn mûsār* "because of lack of instruction" (Prov. 5:23), *mēʾêyn mayim* "because of lack of water" (// *baṣṣāmāʾ*; Isa. 50:2), *lʾʾêyn ʾônîm* "to the one-of-no strength" (// *layyāʿēp*; Isa. 40:29), and often, especially in exilic and postexilic literature. Note also the parallelism of *bʾʾêyn* with *bʾʾepes*, whose nominal character is clear, in Prov. 26:20. Such usages are in line with the original nominal character of *ʾayin*. Cl. bα , like cl. bβ, is thus an affirmative nominal sentence, with *ʾêyn qēṣ* predicated of *ʿăśôt sʿpārîm harbēh*.

ולהג הרבה יגעת בשר *lahag* is a crux, usually explained by reference to Arabic *lahija*, "apply oneself assiduously," a root that does not appear elsewhere in Hebrew. We probably should read *lhgh* (haplography;

(34) N. H. Tur-Sinai, פשוטו של מקרא (Jerusalem, 1967), IV, 2, *ad loc.*

point *hāgōh* or *hegeh*) or possibly *lhgy*.[35] The lamed introduces the subject as in 9:4 (on which see Gordis, *ad loc.*). HGH means "meditate, study" (see especially Ps. 1:2), which sense could be applicable here. But it also (and originally) means "utter, speak" and is used of teaching wisdom in Ps. 37:30, פי צדיק יהגה חכמה "the mouth of the righteous utters wisdom." This sense provides a better parallel to cl. bα. The literal translation of vs. 12b is: "The making of many books is a thing of no purpose and much talking is a wearying of the flesh." By this interpretation the verse speaks of the activities of the wise-men in both bα and bβ, as well as in vs. 11, rather than shifting to the pupil's activity in bβ. The verse deals with the making of books and with speaking, i.e., teaching, in both of which excess is pointless and wearisome — to both the writer/speaker and the reader/listener. This warning harks back to the description of Qohelet's activities in vss. 9-10: He sought fine words and constantly taught the people knowledge (=*hgh harbēh*), and he carefully composed many meshalim and sought to write words of truth (=*ᶜăśôt sᵉpārîm harbēh*).

12:13 כל האדם Elliptical; best taken as "the whole man" or "all of man" in the sense of the whole duty of man (Gordis) or, all that is important with respect to man. Vss. 11-12 spoke of activities that in excess are pointless and superfluous. Vss. 13-14 speak of what is essential.

12:14 על כל נעלם Compare 11:9, where *ᶜal* introduces what one is judged for. Here *ᶜal* is governed by the verbal notion implicit in *mišpāṭ*, a judgment *upon* (even) every hidden deed.

The voice that now comes into prominence speaks in a pronouncedly didactic tone. The speaker marks off the points to be learned: "Now furthermore . . . And furthermore . . . Finally . . . ." He praises the ancient wise-man Qohelet, generalizes about the words of the wise, cautions the boy about excessive writing and speaking, and sums up with an exhortation to fear God and obey him since his judgment is certain. He addresses these words to *bᵉnî*, "my son," in the customary wisdom fashion, thus creating an epic situation that must have been immediately recognizable to the early readers of *Qohelet*: the father-son instruction situation of didactic wisdom literature. The epilogist thus implicitly identifies himself as a wise-man, a wisdom teacher. This identification is important in

(35) See Ellermeier, pp. 46–48. *hgw/y* appears in Qumran with the meaning "study, meditation," see I. Rabinowitz, *JNES* 20 (1961), p. 112.

establishing his own reliability and showing the attitude the reader is to take toward him, the way in which he is to hear his words.

The frame-narrator's first function is implicitly to testify to the reality of Qohelet, simply by talking about him as having lived, speaking about him in a matter-of-fact, reliable voice, the voice of a wise-man. Qohelet is not an entirely plausible character—with his puzzling name, with his claims of royalty and vast wealth. The epilogist indicates that we are to react to Qohelet as having lived. The reader's acceptance of the reality of literary figures is important to certain authors even when writing the most outlandish tales. Swift, for instance, created a fictitious editor for *Gulliver's Travels* who does not *say* that Gulliver existed, but simply talks about his own relationship with that character, where exactly he lived, how his memoirs came to the editor, how he edited them. What the author seeks is not necessarily genuine belief in his characters' existence (though that may be the intention in the case of *Qohelet*) but *suspension of disbelief* for the purposes of the fiction.[36] In a similar manner Harris succeeded in making many people accept the reality of Uncle Remus, even to the point of writing letters to this literary creation, and the frame-narrative probably contributed to the character's credibility. The epilogist of *Qohelet* succeeded in convincing many readers that he had an intimate familiarity with Qohelet,[37] and it is clear that this is one of the epilogue's purposes. The reader is to look upon Qohelet as a real individual in order to feel the full force of the crisis he is undergoing.

The frame-narrator's second function is to present a certain attitude toward Qohelet and his teachings. This attitude is a combination of both respect for Qohelet and a certain distance from him.

The respect is explicit in vss. 9-10, where the epilogist tells us that Qohelet was a wise-man who constantly taught the people wisdom, whose creativity extended beyond what is related in this book.[38] Qohelet was a public figure, dedicated to the people, an author of quantity as well as quality. He weighed and examined the wisdom of the past—for a wise-

(36) See the analysis of the rhetorical function of *Gulliver's* fictitious editor and others by B. Romberg, *op. cit.* (n. 9), pp. 69–72.

(37) E.g., "1, 2 zeigt somit dieselbe Vertrautheit mit dem Manne Qohelet wie man es für 12, 9–11 herauszustellen hat. Wir sehen hier dieselbe Hand am Werke. Es ist der erste Epilogist, der Qohelet—vielleicht als Schüler, sicher als Anhänger—persönlich gekannt hat" (Ellermeier, p. 100).

(38) 12:9 implies that the narrator is acquainted with wisdom teachings by Qohelet beyond those included in the book. Insofar as the epilogist presents himself as having selected certain of Qohelet's teachings to pass on he is indeed analogous to an editor, though probably a fictitious editor like that of *Gulliver*. Both implicitly affirm the authenticity of the material they bring by asserting that there is more that they have not included.

man is a link in the chain of tradition—and created many sayings of his own. He tried to find fine words—for the wise-man placed great emphasis on excellent speech—and to write the truth. The epilogist, speaking in the voice of a conventional wise-man, thus certifies that Qohelet was indeed a wise-man and praises his goals. This testimony is quite necessary in the case of an unconventional, even bizarre, thinker such as Qohelet. Without this mediation the reader's attitude toward the central character could too easily go astray because of that character's deviations from the expected and the proper. The guidance given by the frame-narrator to the reader's attitude thus resembles the rhetoric of the frame-narrative of *Uncle Remus*. In both cases the chief persona is "protected" by the respect shown him in the voice of the frame-narrator, a type of voice the reader has been taught to regard as normal and reliable. The reader is shown that he is to take the main character seriously.

The epilogist is indeed respectful, but if we look carefully at the way he formulates his expression of respect we see that he is subtly non-committal with regard to the *truth* of Qohelet's words. In vs. 9 he affirms that Qohelet was an active, creative wise-man. But in vs. 10, when he comes to evaluate Qohelet's words themselves, his stance is rather equivocal. Qohelet "sought to find" (*biqqēš limṣō'*) fine words and to write the most honest words of truth: He sought, but did he find? Did he succeed in writing what he sought to write? The speaker does not say, but his use of "seek" (BQŠ) and "find" (MṢ') echoes two of Qohelet's theme words, reminding us that seeking does not necessarily mean finding; compare 8:17: "I saw all that God has done, namely, that man cannot comprehend [MṢ'] whatever is done under the sun—which, however laboriously a man may seek for [BQŠ], he cannot comprehend [MṢ'], and even if the wise-man claims to know, he cannot comprehend [MṢ']."[39] The frame-narrator certainly does not deny that Qohelet succeeded in his attempt to find fine words and to write the truth, but neither does he commit himself as to the success of this attempt. For all his esteem for Qohelet, he is carefully maintaining his distance.

The reserve in the epilogist's attitude becomes more pronounced in the following verses. The note of caution is quite clear in vs. 12, where he warns his son against excessive writing and speaking as wearisome, pointless activities. These are the very activities to which Qohelet dedicated himself (vss. 9-10). Vs. 11, however, is unclear, if not deliberately ambigu-

(39) The syntax of Qoh. 8:17a has a precise parallel in Jon. 3:10, where *kî* introduces epexegesis of the dir. obj. of *wayyar'*: וירא האלהים את מעשיהם כי שבו מדרכם הרעה "God saw what they had done, namely, that they had repented of their evil ways . . ." Qoh. 8:17 thus says that what God did was to make man unable to comprehend the world, cf. 3:10 f.

ous. It has usually been taken as additional praise for Qohelet's words as "words of the wise." *dorbōnôt* are the nails on the end of ox-goads, thus parallel to *maśmᵉrôt* in cl. aβ (see Gordis). The point of comparison between goads and words of the wise has invariably been thought to be that they goad one on to better actions, while the point of comparison between *baᶜălê ʾăsuppôt* and implanted nails is thought to be that the latter are firm. However, if there is parallelism here, as the synonymity of *dorbōnôt* and *maśmᵉrôt* seems to indicate, we would not expect the comparisons to refer to completely different things: to teaching and encouraging better behavior in others on the one hand, and to being in themselves invariable and permanent on the other. I suggest that the "nails" are identical with the "goads" and are "implanted" either in the sense that they are stuck in the flesh or in the sense that they are fixed in the end of the staff. In either case the *tertium comparationis* of the words of the wise and goads/nails is not that they are immovable nor even so much that they prod one on to better actions, but rather that they both prick and hurt you, that they are somewhat dangerous. Hence the warning in the following verse.

The shepherd mentioned here is not God. God is called "shepherd" in his capacity as keeper and savior, which is not relevant here, and the epithet "shepherd" is never used by itself to refer to God (cf. Galling, editions 1 and 2). Moreover, in didactic wisdom literature, Egyptian and Babylonian as well as Israelite (and the epilogist is speaking within the tradition of didactic wisdom), God is never called "shepherd." In fact, he is almost never given any metaphorical epithets in wisdom literature of any type. Nor are the words of the wise ever considered as given by God. Wisdom in general as a being or a quality is a divine gift, but not the specific words of wisdom. Another difficulty in the identification of the shepherd as God is the modifier *ʾeḥād*. Why predicate number of the "shepherd"? If the point is that there is only one divine shepherd who gives the words of the wise, rather than several, the "one" becomes very emphatic. The weight of the verse would rest there rather than in the similes of cl. a, and the verse would become a theological declaration totally divorced from context. Nor is Solomon the shepherd here (against Delitzsch, McNeile), because the epilogist clearly does not identify Qohelet with Solomon, nor could it be said that Solomon "gave" the words of the wise. I suggest that the subject of *nittᵉnû* is *dorbōnôt/maśmᵉrôt nᵉtûᶜîm*, which are "given" or "put" by a shepherd in the sense that it is a shepherd who prods his herd.[40] *rōᶜeh* is simply a shepherd, any shepherd, *ʾeḥād*

(40) For a similar use of NTN see Deut. 15:17, where it refers to "putting" the awl in the ear and doors.

functioning as an indefinite article.[41] In sum: the words of the wise sting like the jabs of a shepherd's goad. This warning about the words of the wise resembles that given by Rabbi Eliezer, who also mingled respect for the wise with fear of the effect their words may have: "Warm yourself before the fire of the wise, but be careful not to get burnt by their coals, for their bite is the bite of a jackal, and their sting is the sting of a scorpion, and their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are fiery coals" (Aboth 2:15). Certainly such a warning applies to the words of Qohelet.

It is no wonder then that the speaker cautions his son against excessive writing and speaking in the following verse, and goes on to stress what nobody, including Qohelet, would deny: the main thing in life is fear of God and obedience to his commandments. This advice echoes certain elements of Qohelet's teachings. Advice similar to the epilogist's appears within Qohelet's words, though not in such a simple form: Qohelet himself advised fear of God (5:6, 7:18) and he does speak of divine judgment (2:26, 3:17a, 8:12b-13, *et al.*), even though he sometimes denies its working. And although Qohelet does not explicitly advise keeping God's commandments, that requirement could be inferred from 5:3–5. The main difference between Qohelet and the epilogist is the way the latter asserts the standard religious doctrines in a tone of dogmatic certitude, in sharp contrast to Qohelet's insistence on the uncertainty of all knowledge.

In the final two verses the epilogist relegates all the words of the wise, Qohelet's in particular, to a place of secondary importance by summing up the essence of human knowledge: Fear God and keep his commandments, for his judgment is thorough and ineluctable. In a sense this is a call for tolerance of expression of unorthodox opinion; it allows everything to be heard and considered as long as one reaches a proper conclusion.

It is not only in offering a proper conclusion that the frame-narrative makes the book more easily tolerated. The use of a frame-narrative in itself puts a certain protective distance between the author and the views expressed in his work. This distance may be important even when the author is anonymous, because it may prevent the book as a whole from being violently rejected. The author blunts objections to the book as a whole by implying through use of a frame-narrator that he is just reporting what Qohelet said, without actually rejecting the latter's ideas.[42] The

(41) For *ʾeḥād* as an indefinite article see G-K §125*b*, *BDB* *ʾeḥād* § 4, I Sam. 24:15, 26:20, I Kings 19:4,5, Ezek. 17:7 and Aramaic *ḥădā* Ezra 4:8, Dan. 2:31, 6:18. In all these cases numerical qualification is not the point, i.e., there is no need to show unity as opposed to plurality. The modifier could be removed with little effect on the sense of the sentence.

(42) Romberg (*op. cit.* [n. 9] pp. 77 ff.) discusses the comparable case where an author

epilogist thus allows the more conservative reader to align himself with him, so that such a reader need not reject the *book*, even if he does reject the views of Qohelet.

It remains to inquire into the relation between the epilogist and the implied author. An implied author is the voice behind the voices that speak in a work of literature, the person whose feelings, ideas and values are ultimately to be conveyed.[43] To recognize that the epilogue is an integral part of *Qohelet* with a significant rhetorical function is not to say that the frame-narrator's tone and attitudes are a truer representation of the author's than are Qohelet's, that the simple piety of the epilogist is a full expression of the author's attitudes. The view of a frame-narrator (or even of an exclusive narrator) is not necessarily the implied author's whole view, which must be derived from reading the book as a whole on all its levels.[44] For one thing, the epilogist too is a literary creation, not to be simply identified with the implied author. The author has given him a conventional—and fictional—epic situation. He is a type-character,

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detaches himself from his creation by concealing himself behind an editorial fiction. On disguise of authorship as a literary device see H. Matthes, "Die Verschleierung der Verfasserschaft bei englischen Dichtungen des 18. Jahrhunderts," *Beiträge zur Erforschung der Sprache und Kultur Englands und Nordamerikas*, Bd. IV, (1928), pp. 33–113.

(43) An implied author is present in every work of literature, whether or not his voice is actually heard in the form of "authorial intrusions." The presence of an implied author in every literary work and his importance for the understanding of the work as a whole has been demonstrated by W. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago, 1961), esp. pp. 70–77. As an author writes he creates an implied version of "himself," and the picture the reader gets of this presence is one of the author's most important effects. Our sense of the implied author "includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole; the chief value to which *this* implied author is committed, regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form" (*ibid.*, pp. 74 f.). The significance of discerning the implied author is seen most readily in irony where we must go behind the surface meaning of the words to reach the implied author's viewpoint.

(44) Compare the case of *Gulliver*. The fictional editor speaks in a reliable tone as he testifies to Gulliver's truthfulness and the authenticity of the manuscript. Yet we do not imagine that this voice is identical with Swift, who after all did not believe in the Lilliputians and did not seriously intend the reader to accept their actual existence. On the contrary, our ability to appreciate the stories as satire depends on our ability to infer the author's unexpressed purposes that the fictional editor, by taking the stories at face value, does not comprehend. In the introduction to *Uncle Remus and his Friends* Harris virtually states that he, the author, is not to be identified with the frame-narrator of the Uncle Remus stories. He says that he is going to "step from behind the curtain" to speak about the collection of the stories, the author's relation to his public, etc. The authorial voice is distinguished from the frame-editor's also insofar as the former, which appears in the introductions, does not take part in the fiction that Uncle Remus is the true source of the stories. This case is interesting as an author's testimony to his sense of distinction from the frame-narrator, even when that narrator speaks in a very plausible voice, expressing attitudes that are virtually indistinguishable from the author's.

speaking in a typical style. In a book where the author shows himself capable of diverging radically from the conventional and effectively attacking orthodox ideas, a conventional character is not likely to be the closest representation of the author's viewpoint. Nor does being the last attitude expressed mean that it is necessarily the decisive one, even though some readers may choose to regard it as the essence of the book because it is more in accord with their own attitudes. But while the frame-narrator's orthodox tone may be reassuring it certainly does not dominate the book or cancel out Qohelet's skepticism, unless, of course, the reader lets it do so.[45] By ending a profoundly unorthodox book with orthodox affirmations the author has created a certain ambiguity. He has allowed the reader to choose which voice to identify most closely with, Qohelet's or the epilogist's.

The importance of recognizing the unified composition of *Qohelet* with its concentric voices goes beyond appreciation of the meaning and tone of the epilogue alone. Awareness of the frame-narrative gives us a fundamental insight into the proper reading of the book as a whole. Since there is a frame-narrator mediating Qohelet's words and an implied author beyond the frame-narrator, it is clear that we cannot simply identify Qohelet with the author. Qohelet is a persona,[46] a character created in the work whose distance from the author may be greater or lesser, but whose

(45) The ending of the epilogue has naturally played an important role in early and traditional interpretations of *Qohelet*, where it is generally seen as the dominant and conclusive opinion in the book: see, for example, Jerome's comment, "The Hebrews say that, among other writings of Solomon which are obsolete and forgotten, this book ought to be obliterated, because it asserts that all the creatures of God are vain, and regards the whole as nothing, and prefers eating and drinking and transient pleasures before all things. From this one paragraph [12:13 f.] it deserves the dignity that it should be placed among the number of the divine volumes, in which it condenses the whole of its discussion, summing up the whole enumeration, as it were, and says that the end of its discourse is very easily heard, having nothing difficult in it, namely, that we should fear God and keep his commandments" (trans. C. D. Ginsburg, p. 15).

(46) Cf. Delitzsch's acute observation that "In dem Buch [viz., 1:2–12:8] redet Koheleth-Salomo, dessen Maske der Verf. angenommen . . ." (p. 414). "Persona" originally meant a mask through which an actor speaks; it is now used of a character through whom an author speaks. It may resemble him to a greater or lesser degree but is not identical with him. O. Loretz also makes this point, approaching the question from a different angle, in an inquiry into the genre of Qohelet's monologue ("Zur Darbietungsform der 'Ich-Erzählung' im Buch Qohelet," *CBQ* 25 [1963], pp. 46–59). Loretz points out the formulaic, traditional usages in Qohelet's self-presentation and casts doubt upon the simple identification of speaker with author: "Es gilt zu überprüfen, ob die übliche Gleichsetzung des 'Ich' des Buches mit dem persönlichen 'Ich' des Verfassers Ausgangspunkt einer Interpretation des Buches sein kann. Es muss also untersucht werden, ob Qohelet als historische Person oder als 'poetica personalità' (Croce) zu uns spricht" (p. 48). Qohelet may be recognized as a persona even if one regards him as based on a historical character.

words cannot be thought of as an unmediated expression of his creator. As the frame-narrator presents Qohelet to his son and observes him from a certain distance, so the author presents him to us. We are not only to take in Qohelet's words, we are to look *at* him, to observe him as we observe, say, Prufrock or Tennyson's Ulysses, as well as to listen to what he has to say. A study of *Qohelet* should include the dimension of literary portrayal of the persona as well as the content of the persona's words.