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Criteria for Assessing Intratextuality in Concentric Narratives

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1.1 Intratextuality

Intertextuality has become a standard feature of New Testament scholarship, especially as regards quotations of texts from the Hebrew Bible by first century authors. This is also being explored for various texts in the Old Testament,[1] although controversy over relative dating of books can make this more of a challenge. This paper, however, concerns not INTERtextuality but INTRAtextuality, that is, the deliberate juxtaposition of two separate texts within the same literary work in order to add meaning to both. At the level of clauses or lines, this mutuality and shared meaning has commonly been termed 'parallelism', and has been recognised as the primary distinguishing feature of Hebrew poetry for more than two centuries. At the level of paragraphs, scenes, or episodes, this intratextuality has only really come into its own as a tool for scholarly analysis since the development of literary and rhetorical criticism in the late 1960's and onwards.

Even so, scholars had been aware of parallelism between episodes in earlier periods, and this recognition prompted some to look for larger structures governing chapters, sections or even whole books of the Bible. Intratextuality was the analytical key they used to unlock the arrangement of verses or episodes previously judged to be unconnected. The human mind is programmed to find meaning in the similarity between different objects, for example in language, art, music or dance, so the enthusiasm with which some scholars applied certain intertextual patterns to different texts is understandable. However, the appearance of meaning in the arrangement of objects does not prove that this arrangement was deliberate, the result of intelligent artistic activity, and in many cases intratextual patterns were 'discovered' in texts where arguably they had never been 'hidden'.

One of the most popular of these patterns was the symmetrical arrangement of paralleled episodes between the paired first and last episodes, the inverted order of the second half of the structure causing the whole literary unit to achieve a satisfying closure. This inverted parallel pattern was given the name 'chiasmus' after the Greek letter 'X' (*chi*), to indicate the cross-over between A – B and B' – A' in a four-membered unit. A variation of the pattern recognised the possibility of odd-numbered inversion as well, where the two halves of the structure are connected by a central unparalleled episode, thus resulting in an A-B-C-B'-A' structure. The central episode therefore attracts a greater emphasis than the other episodes, enabling the interpreter to recognise in it the author's primary focus across the whole unit. Even so, the term 'chiasmus' continued to be used for this structure also, despite its inadequacy for structures of more than four elements, perhaps because its tenuous connection with Classical Graeco-Roman rhetoric of late antiquity gave the technique a greater scholarly credibility.

Unfortunately, the combination of a lack of caution in identifying patterns, a lack of clarity in distinguishing different types of pattern, and a lack of demonstrable theoretical foundations for ancient authors to use these patterns, resulted in a widespread scepticism about 'chiasm' and 'chiastic' structures on the part of mainstream biblical scholarship. Over the last few decades, some rhetorical analysts and literary critics have started to set the discipline on a firmer footing.[2] Yet with no abatement of enthusiasm elsewhere in applying the various patterns to biblical literature, we are much in need of agreed definitions and practicable criteria to rein in this powerful but untamed exegetical tool. My own particular interest is in the odd-numbered pattern of inverted parallelism, and especially as it applies to the book of Samuel, and the following proposal of definition and criteria form part of an extended discussion of the theoretical foundations of this pattern in my doctoral thesis.

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[1] E.g. Strazicich, (2007).

[2] Of particular note are Parunak (1981, 1982), Meynet (1998) and Walsh (2001).

1.2 Definition of Concentrism

Once the principle of intratextuality between episodes has been established, an even-numbered structure of 'inverted parallelism' (A-B--B'-A') can be expanded through the introduction of more pairs of episodes even at a large scale. Even so, however large the inverted parallelism, the degree of emphasis placed on the central pair of episodes will be less than in an odd-numbered structure with an unparalleled central episode (A-B-A'). For the sake of clarity, we would therefore use the term 'direct parallelism' for the (A-B-C--A'-B'-C') form, retain the term 'inverted parallelism' for the even-numbered (A-B-C--C'-B'-A') form, and suggest the term 'concentrism' for the odd-numbered (A-B-C-*D*-C'-B'-A') form of at least five episodes.[3]

The value of the term 'concentrism' is its inherent emphasis on the 'central' episode of the structure, which is the defining feature of the odd-numbered inverted parallelism form, and the feature which contains the greatest significance for interpretation of the whole passage. Large-scale inverted parallelisms do carry exegetical value in the parallels between paired episodes, but they lack the interpretative key at the centre, the keystone that holds the arch in place.[4]

To define the structure that will be our focus in the rest of this paper, the concentrism is composed of three essential elements: (1) a base pair, (2) symmetrical inverted slopes, and (3) a central unparalleled episode.[5] The two outermost episodes taken as a pair serve as either (i) the primary context within which the central message is understood, or (ii) the 'before and after' situations changed by the central turning point.[6] Once the outermost *inclusio* has been identified, the concentrism is established by the observation of symmetrical inverted slopes made up of a series of distinct episodes leading from the first towards the central episode and then back again towards the final episode. Every episode is paired with its parallel episode on the opposite slope, ascent paralleling descent.[7] The parallelism between each pair of episodes (including the base pair) must be demonstrated with the use of the seven criteria for verifying intratextuality outlined below.[8]

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[3] Meynet's glossary of rhetorical terms (1998, p. 376; cf. p. 199) distinguishes between 'chiasm' (even-numbered inverted parallelism) and 'concentrism' (odd-numbered inverted parallelism), despite apparently confusing the two types in the main body of his text (e.g. pp. 233, 236, 240-41), and his use of these terms is followed by Walsh (2001, p. 13) among others. My reason for requiring a minimum of five episodes for the designation of true 'concentrism' is that a concentrism by definition must have not only a base pair and central episode but also symmetrical inverted slopes, hence the need for at least two paired episodes around the centre. At the smallest level, an A-B-A' form could be spoken of as a concentric tristich, but at larger levels it is simply an *inclusio* around a central passage.

[4] Thomson's broader definition of 'chiasmus' as essentially "bilateral symmetry of four or more elements about a central axis" deliberately allows for both odd- and even-numbered structures, in order to reflect "the consensus of current opinion" (1995, pp. 25-26). He claims that Breck's insistence [1987, p. 71; 1994, pp. 18-19] on the importance of the unique central element, the pivotal theme, "does not appear to have found support" (1995, p. 26, n. 73), and this may indeed be the case for the majority of 'chiastic' studies. It is nevertheless clear that for those scholars whose rhetorical criticism prioritises exegetical value over simple aesthetic interest, the concentric 'pivot pattern' is undoubtedly the more important of the two patterns.

[5] As a general rhetorical technique, a 'concentrism' may be composed of clauses, poetic lines, sentences, etc., but as this paper focuses on concentric narratives, the most suitable generic term for the rhetorical units of the structure is 'episode'.

[6] Welch dutifully reports the similar suggestions of others in the Hebrew Poetry Group of the Society of Biblical Literature in the 1980's that "the extremes may be as important as, if not more significant, than the center of a chiasm". Welch himself agrees instead with Lund, however, who "ranked the extremes second only to the center in importance" (1999, p. 174).

[7] Man (1984, 151-52) cites Miesner, Di Marco and Talbert to make the point that the pairedness of the pairs is essential to discerning the meaning of each individual episode.

[8] Breck (1994, p. 3) claimed that the burden of proof ought to lie with those who reject a proposed chiastic structure, but Welch is surely more reasonable in insisting along with the vast majority of scholars that "A burden of persuasion rests on any person describing a passage as chiastic" (1999, p.

Finally, when one has shown beyond reasonable doubt that every episode has its equal and opposite parallel, one arrives at the central, unparalleled episode. This episode is deliberately set apart from every other episode in the passage in order to receive maximum emphasis, and signifies either (i) the primary message of that whole concentrism,[9] or (ii) the turning point of that whole narrative.[10] The central episode must be of sufficient theological, ethical, or narratory weight and explanatory power to serve as the key for the whole concentrism,[11] and the central episode is to be interpreted primarily in conjunction with the *inclusio* of paired extremities that provide its context.[12] Without this exegetical centrality, the identification of a concentrism will fail to convince.[13] Furthermore, once the symmetry of the two slopes has been shown and the centre identified, it should be possible to recognise how the central episode adds a further significance to each of the responding episodes on the descending slope when compared with their opposite episodes on the ascent, in line with Kugel's observation of the way the 'second' element in Hebrew parallelism completes the thought expressed through the pair ("A, and what is more, B").[14]

1.3 Criteria

My criteria for assessing intratextuality between the paired episodes on the ascent and descent have been derived from those proposed by Richard Hays in his important book on intertextuality and allusion to the Old Testament in New Testament texts – *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*.[15] My seven criteria are as follows:

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159). Even so, my proposed criteria may equally be used to disprove concentric arrangements of a passage, as I will attempt for the book of Ruth, below.

[9] The only scholar I have found who questions the 'Presupposition that Centre is Important' [*sic*] is M. J. Boda ('Chiasmus in Ubiquity', p. 58); he claims the support of Clines (1984. p. 193 [not 192, *pace* Boda]), but neglects to quote Clines' important proviso ("This may be correct, but...") that precedes his appropriate reminder of the limits of our present knowledge about Hebrew poetry.

[10] Welch's tenth criterion 'Centrality' notes that "Inverting is the essence of chiasmus, so the clearer the reversal at the center point, the stronger the chiasticity of the passage" (1999, p. 165).

[11] Cf. Blomberg (1989) p. 7.

[12] This is either because the base pair provides the setting for the message epitomised by the central episode, or else because the base pair gives the 'before and after' situations for which the turning point is to be found at the centre. Walsh (2001, p. 14) notes that "Sometimes, in a concentric pattern, there is an explicit or implicit link between these outermost subunits and the central one."

[13] I have not made this one of my seven criteria, because without a suitable centre a proposed passage cannot be 'concentric' by definition, regardless of the cumulative proof of paralleled episodes.

[14] Kugel (1981) p. 58. This further significance of the episodes in the descending slope was already recognised by Bailey (1976, p. 50), who speaks of a "crucial new element that resolves or completes the first half". Walsh (2001, pp. 11, 14) notes that the entire 'panel' or 'sequence' of episodes before the centre can also be recognised as a process that is being paralleled and perhaps inverted in its opposite sequence.

[15] Hays (1989) 29-32. Many others have proposed assorted criteria for assessing 'chiastic' structures, a few of whom are worth noting for their analytical compilation of criteria. Welch (1999, pp. 161-67) offered fifteen criteria that are helpful individually but lack careful logical arrangement. Boda (1996, pp. 56-58) carefully classified thirteen 'errors in the rhetorical analysis of chiasmus', showing that it is easier to recognise negative 'pitfalls' than to propose positive, validating criteria for true structures. Thomson (1995, pp. 27, 28-33) discussed six characteristics (rephrasing some of Lund's seven 'laws') and then seven 'requirements and constraints' (three and four respectively) for identifying 'chiasmus', although with self-confessed 'hesitation', and 'deliberately vague'. The most helpful list of detailed criteria, however, is the collection of nine proposed by Blomberg (1989, pp. 5-7), which has been adopted without adjustment by others such as Brouwer (2001, pp. 38-44), Siew (2005, pp. 209-212) and Heil (2007, pp. 13-14), discounting the limited criticisms from Porter and Reed (1998, pp. 219-20). Even so, proposals to date have tended to confuse the theoretical principles behind the 'concentrism' technique, the features of its precise definition, and the criteria by which one might assess a particular example of the structure. In this thesis I have tried to distinguish these carefully, taking into account as many of the numerous observations or criticisms made of 'chiasmus' from the last hundred years or so as possible. A small selection of these will be cited in the following explanation of my seven criteria.

(1) ***Balance***. When dealing with intratextuality within a single synchronic document, Hays' first criterion *Availability* is largely meaningless. However we might apply the principle underlying this criteria (the plausibility of intertextuality, independent of its interpretation) to the matter of *Balance*; that is, if the author was intending to construct a concentrism, it is reasonable to assume that he would take care to account for every episode of his text, ensuring that each distinct episode be balanced with another. It goes without saying that unit delimitation, especially in narrative texts, is often an imprecise art, and transitional techniques between episodes further blur distinct boundaries, but even so, this must not be used as an excuse for sloppy scholarship or forced misreadings.[16] Balance must be demonstrated in number and position of episodes (every episode paired with a single corresponding episode at the equivalent place on the opposite slope)[17] and approximate length of paired episodes.[18] Imbalance of any type must either be acknowledged as an inconsistency undermining the proposal, or justified by plausible appeal to authorial intent, for which Volume of parallel elements may be decisive.[19]

(2) ***Volume***. This is a very important criterion, and although Hays focuses on 'echoes' of earlier texts and quotations of small verses or clauses, the recognition of intratextual 'reverberations' between parallel segments in a single document also depends at first on the amount and variety of links between the two. Smaller episodes may have not much more than verbal parallelism, including word pairs,[20] word play, or comparable semantic constructions,[21] and at this level one may notice many different techniques of parallelism in use that are identified in standard discussions of parallelism within Hebrew poetry.[22] Larger episodes usually also contain simple verbal parallels, but they are likely to include more complex conceptual parallels involving typical narrative features of genre, characters and activities,[23] quite possibly corresponding to 'natural' developments in the

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[16] Transitional techniques and unit delimitation are discussed elsewhere in the methodology section of my thesis. Thomson (1995, p. 214) clarifies the need for appropriate boundaries of the structure, and suggests the rule that a concentrism "will not break the flow of syntax".

[17] See 'Balance' in Welch (1999, pp. 165-66). Watson effectively disqualifies appealing to textual emendation as an excuse for imbalance of number or position (1981, p. 137), requiring that convincing macro-chiasm involve a whole stretch of text rather than just parts.

[18] Cf. Thomson (1995) p. 27; Boda (1996) pp. 56-57. Even so, Blomberg's seventh criteria (1989, p. 7) requires that the outline should divide the text at natural breaks, which carries the additional recognition that literary composition is not mathematics; an author is somewhat bound by the constraints of good ('natural') writing to complete a particular episode satisfactorily even if that affects the precision of Balance of Length between paralleled episodes.

[19] Walsh (2001, p. 11) explains that "the looser the equivalence in length, the stronger must be other connective elements to support the correspondence." As regards deliberate asymmetry, Parunak (1981, pp. 166-68) and Tanner (1992, p. 148) recognise that in addition to the central climax, asymmetrical elements in the structure can also emphasise particular passages. Walsh (2001, p. 8) helpfully points out that "The clearer the fundamental symmetry and the more obtrusive the disturbance, the more the asymmetrical element draws a reader's attention."

[20] Cf. Klaus (1999) pp. 261-72; Watson (1986) pp. 128-44.

[21] Berlin (1985, p. 1992) further classifies the linguistic (i.e. verbal) parallelism into grammatical, lexical, phonological and syntactical parallels. Walsh (2001, pp. 8-10) also has an excellent discussion of verbal parallelism, in which he discusses phonemic repetition, aurally or orthographically similar words or forms, word order, and even length and complexity of sentences. Watson (1981, p. 137) is by no means alone in assigning greater importance to verbal parallels than subjective 'headings', for which see footnote 29 and also my criterion 'Integrity', but see footnote 23 below for other scholars who consider conceptual parallels superior to verbal parallels.

[22] Cf. Watson (1986) pp. 46-55, 114-59; Gillingham (1994) pp. 23-28, 78-82); Nel (1992, p. 138).

[23] Walsh (2001, p. 10) explains that while repeated elements can theoretically be of any size, "the smaller the repeated element, the more limited the unit it can organize... It is on larger levels of organization, therefore, that thematic or conceptual repetition becomes more decisive." Cf. Butterworth (1992) p. 59); Thomson (1995) pp. 41-42). Berlin (1985, p. 1992) subdivides the second category of poetic parallelism, semantic (i.e. conceptual), into catchwords, themes, concepts, ideas, and

narrative plot.[24] It is important, therefore, that both verbal and conceptual parallels be identified,[25] and the more there are, the more likely the intentionality behind them.[26] When identifying paralleled elements, one must be aware that '***non-conformists***', examples of these elements that appear elsewhere in the concentrism outside the selected pair of episodes, have the potential to disqualify that particular parallel and thus undermine the concentrism.[27] Furthermore, interpreters can often select quite insignificant or common elements within units of text in order to demonstrate intratextuality, hence my third criterion.

(3) ***Weight***. Hays' criterion of *Recurrence* relies on the author's allusions elsewhere in his writing to the same source text, but if we are assuming a concentric structure, each episode will usually have only one other episode that was particularly intended to resonate with it. An alternative criterion, drawing out what Hays mentions about those passages the author considered to have been of particular importance, could be termed *Weight*. In the case of parallels between episodes at equivalent points on the two slopes of a concentrism, the more important the elements being paralleled are within one or the other or both of the units, the more likely the intentionality behind the parallel.[28] This criterion goes some way towards avoiding the commonly criticised problem with many proposed chiastic structures of arbitrary summary statements or 'headings' assigned to episodes,[29] selecting rather minor features of each episode to compare, rather than their primary meaning. A related objection often raised about concentrisms may be illustrated with the idiomatic scenario of unmentioned '***elephants*** in the room', that is, elements of one episode that are clearly very prominent and yet lack any parallel in the supposedly

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content.

[24] Tanner (1992, p. 148) notes that paralleling may be simple (i.e. repetitions of words or phrases), or complex, for which he notes that "often the paralleling elements can be ascertained only by abstracting the plot development". Walsh (2001, p. 8) further explains that "structural units are often thematic units (like paragraphs in English prose) or dramatic ones (like scenes). To the degree that symmetrical patterning enables us to discern the extent and limits of a literary unit it can provide clues to the thematic structure of the passage." Hence there is no problem in principle with recognising the concentric arrangement of both structure and plot as coextensive and mutually reinforcing; an author might be expected to construct his plot as a conscious concentrism [*pace* Boda (1996, p. 57 and n. 2 – 'Methodological Isolation') et al.].

[25] Cf. Blomberg (1989) p. 6); Walsh (2001), p. 10.

[26] Cf. Thomson (1995) p. 33; Welch (1999) p. 163-64 ['Density']; Blomberg (1989) pp. 6-7.

[27] Cf. Blomberg (1989) p. 7; Thomson (1995) p. 41; Boda (1996) p. 57; Welch (1999) p. 164 ['Mavericks']. Klaus (1999, pp. 260-61) carefully analyses the varieties of Non-conformists found in his chosen 'pivot patterns' (concentrisms), and justifies the imperfections by appealing to Accumulation and particularly to Weight. The vast majority of Non-conformist verbal parallels he identifies are clearly lacking in inherent Weight, making their use elsewhere in the structure unremarkable; weighty Non-conformists are more noteworthy when looking to falsify a concentrism.

[28] Blomberg's fourth criterion (1989, p. 6) reads, "The verbal parallelism should involve central or dominant imagery or terminology, not peripheral or trivial language." Butterworth (1992, p. 60) suggests, "Whole phrases are the most likely to be used to establish structure. Rare words, words used in characteristic ways, clusters of related words, are also likely to be used with a particular purpose." Welch (1999, p. 164) makes this his seventh criterion, 'Dominance', as regards "nouns, verbs, and distinctive phrases".

[29] Thomson (1995, pp. 30-31) discourages 'chiasmus by headings', noting that "The problem associated with headings is that, by definition, they must be both theologically and interpretatively selective. The key question is how well the chosen heading reflects the *author's* focus of interest rather than the *commentator's*." [emphasis his] His solution is to work only with passages small enough that the words themselves may be laid out graphically to represent the structure. Yet in his conclusion (p. 215) he admits that "in practice it might be argued that, when the basis of comparison of two elements relies on *content* rather than on *form*, the ensuing description of the relevant content of the element results in an implicit assignation of a 'heading' to that element. This having been said, however, the need for careful exegesis of the individual elements is not reduced." See also Boda (1996, p. 57) – 'Arbitrary Labelling'.

equivalent episode.[30] The interpreter must deal faithfully with the whole episode and justify any such 'missing' parallels, or else the paralleling of these episodes will lose credibility. It must be noted here, though, that in a genuine concentrism, recognising the equivalent position of two seemingly unrelated episodes within a concentrism may well reveal parallels that appear insignificant but on closer inspection demonstrate the true authorial intention behind the inclusion of one or the other or both units; thus the 'elephants' are put into proper perspective.[31]

(4) ***Trademarks.*** Viewing parallelism between a pair of episodes in the context of the overall concentrism serves to reinforce what otherwise might seem an overly 'light' parallel according to our third criterion. It is important to identify precisely how two episodes are paralleled, and in the process one should begin to recognise certain techniques of parallelism that are frequently used in the concentrism, whether that be word play, character comparison, theological emphasis, or narrative equivalence.[32] In this way one might be able to build up a 'profile' of the author, so to speak, in terms of his particular interests as shown in consistent compositional activity.[33] A very important reinforcement that can be noted at this stage is what I call '***miniatures***', that is, the presence of small-scale rhetorical structures, and particularly concentrisms, within an individual episode of the overarching concentrism.[34] Not only are these usually easier to identify through verbal parallels, and when identified can themselves indicate the primary message or concept of that episode, but they are evidence that the author did use concentrism as a compositional technique.[35] Obviously, the more pairs of episodes there are in a structure, the easier it becomes to 'recognise' compositional trademarks, and therefore we might argue that the ***accumulation*** of paired episodes in a concentrism has the potential indirectly to strengthen the argument for its existence.[36]

Compositional techniques are perhaps more objectively quantifiable, but discerning the accumulated significance of these parallels moves us into the more subjective realm of interpretation, which characterises the remaining three criteria. As Hays notes, "This test begins to move beyond simple identification of echoes to the problem of how to interpret them." He calls his fourth criterion *Thematic Coherence*, referring to how well an allusion fits into the overall line of argument the author is developing. We might say, then, that if the significance of the parallels between two episodes is consistent with the meaning of other parallels elsewhere in the concentrism, and gains added significance from the central episode, this may be adequate reason for the author's selection of these particular features to connect otherwise seemingly unrelated episodes.[37] *Trademarks*, therefore, refers to 'trademark' compositional techniques of parallelism and also to 'trademark' messages expressed through those parallels, the latter being an important aspect of the fifth criterion, Integrity.

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[30] Cf. Butterworth (1992) p. 59; Boda (1996) p. 57; Welch (1981) p. 13.

[31] As Blomberg (1989, p. 6) recognises, "Ancient writers often employed key terms as catchwords to link passages together, although the material they considered central does not always match modern preconceptions of what is important."

[32] Butterworth (1992, p. 60) argues that "Techniques discovered in several different passages may be regarded as more secure than those found only once or twice."

[33] Knowledge of the author's trademark parallel features will thus strengthen the argument that an otherwise less 'weighty' element in a pair of episodes is actually the author's primary focus.

[34] Cf. Welch (1981) p. 13.

[35] Cf. Boda (1996) p. 57; Welch (1999) pp. 166-67.

[36] Of course, a number of weakly paralleled episodes will hardly add to the credibility of the structure, and the larger the structure is, the harder it is to construct in the first place. Accumulation is more an indication of the relative expertise of the author, provided the parallels meet our second and third criteria adequately. Cf. Blomberg (1989) pp. 6-7; Welch (1999) pp. 163.

[37] Welch (1981, p. 13) notes that "Key words, echoes, and balancing should be distinct and should serve defined purposes within the structure."

(5) ***Integrity***. The original criterion of *Historical Plausibility* in Hays' list was intended to guard against readings that reflect modern sensibilities rather than what would have plausibly been intended by the author and understood by his original audience. The messages discovered through intertextuality should fit within the historical period in which the text was composed.[38] In a concentrism, the intratextual messages must similarly be plausible within the historical period of composition evident from the text.

Dating the letters of Paul, however, is generally far easier than dating Old Testament documents, for which dates may be proposed that are several hundred years apart. Historical plausibility is therefore not merely a matter of avoiding modern sensibilities, but also dependent on accurate assessment of the date of composition.[39] Two relatively objective methods of dating Old Testament texts involve surface-level features of the text. The first is identification of the latest time period spoken of within the document as the likely period of composition,[40] or at least its *terminus post quem*.[41] It is therefore essential that the complete extent of the original document be established through literary analysis before one tries to identify the latest historical reference.[42] The second is analysis of any comments by the narrator that indicate the *terminus ante quem*, that is, a message that can only have been valid within a certain temporary historical situation.[43] Debates over dating are complicated by the perceived relevance of ancient stories and texts to later audiences, evident in the canonical process itself. The re-use of an ancient document in subsequent centuries, however, exposes scholarship to the danger of misreading a text by detaching it from its original context, as if one were to interpret the Epistle to the Romans as not only relevant to, but having been written during the reign of Constantine. Speculation about the metaphorical significance of ancient stories to later generations, in order to arrive at an alternative date of composition for these stories, can sometimes bear a certain similarity to the excesses of the allegorical approaches of Philo and Origen.

Concentric structures that have been suitably verified in a text can effectively serve as a third reliable method of dating the text, due to their unusual exegetical value for conveying the message of the author. Just as explicit comments by the narrator can be distinguished from the events being narrated and then situated within specific temporary historical situations, so also can the messages expressed by concentric emphasis and parallelism. These sub-surface or structural features, however, are not self-evidently present to the extent that comments by the narrator are. They must therefore be shown to be in conformity with the evidence of the surface-level features as regards both dating and message, before they can be accepted as genuine evidence of authorial intent. For this reason, I have focused this criterion on the 'integrity' between surface meaning and

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[38] By way of example, he warns against "readings that turn Paul into (say) a Lutheran" (1989, p. 30).

[39] Hays makes the further observation (1989, p. 30) that even when we are confident of the approximate date of composition, this test "necessarily requires hypothetical constructs of what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century figures". He also acknowledges that an author "might have written things that were not readily intelligible to his actual hearers".

[40] For example, Jehoiachin's release from prison mentioned at the end of Kings and Jeremiah.

[41] For example, Psalm 78 mentions the destruction of Shiloh in Ephraim and God's choice of Jerusalem and David's tribe, Judah, so the psalm could not therefore have been composed prior to David's conquest of Jerusalem. Determination of the *terminus ante quem* is less straightforward, but Jerusalem's contrast with Shiloh rather than Samaria does support a composition not long after the *terminus post quem*, that is, within a century of the latest historical feature referred to in the text.

[42] For example, if the book of Judges is understood as part of the same composition as Kings (i.e. the 'Deuteronomistic History'), its latest historical reference will not be Samson but Jehoiachin. The frequent scholarly appeal to source material or editorial glosses, however, moves the discussion away from the limitations of extant manuscripts into the realm of unfalsifiable hypotheses. See Meynet (1998, pp. 177-80) for further elaboration of this point.

[43] A well-known example is the phrase *'ad hayyom hazzeh* ('until this day') that appears about sixty times in the narrative books of Genesis through Chronicles; see e.g. Geoghegan (2006).

structural meaning.[44] In identifying meanings within paralleled episodes, one should be able to recognise these same important authorial messages not only in other structural emphases within the text,[45] but also on the surface of the text, particularly in narratorial comments,[46] or at least to show the plausibility of these messages as belonging to the latest time period to which the document makes reference.[47]

(6) ***Agreement***. This criterion is simply clarifying Hays' expression *History of Interpretation*; other interpreters of the text, both critical and pre-critical, should have recognised many if not most of the parallels identified – originality, particularly regarding popular books or passages, ought to arouse suspicion.[48] While generations of scholars will have noticed parallels between different episodes, it is the synthesis of all of them into a complete concentrism that can be an original contribution.[49] Alternatively, it may be the messages communicated through the parallels that find agreement in wider scholarship, even if the parallels themselves had not been noted previously – agreement of exegesis as distinct from intratextuality.[50] It is worth making the same observation Hays does that while the reinforcing of a parallel with reference to other scholars can serve as a possible restraint against arbitrariness, this criterion "should rarely be used as a negative test to exclude proposed [parallels] that commend themselves on other grounds".[51] Once identified, a concentrism can be used to uncover many more parallels previously unnoticed, though this should not be used as an excuse.[52] The more uncorroborated parallels are identified,

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[44] As deSilva (2008, p. 369) wisely insists, "We need to keep the *text*, and not the *pattern*, foremost before our eyes."

[45] Consistency of structural 'message' throughout the literary piece is the final step proposed by Butterworth (1992, p. 61): "Investigate the unit under discussion in its context, to check that any proposed structure is consistent with the relationships that its members have with features elsewhere in the book or section of a book."

[46] Thomson (1995, p. 43) notes in his discussion of 'chiasmus as an exegetical tool', "It is obvious that a given chiasmus is only one rhetorical unit in a larger context. Particularly if a new focus of interest is suggested as a result of the exegesis of the chiasmus, it is important to see how this relates to the remainder of the epistle." Klaus (1999, p. 273) raises the question of whether an editor might structure source material that had been narrated by others, thus distinguishing between the 'narrator' and the 'editor'. However, it seems self-evident that a later compiler (or better 'secondary author') will be in agreement with an earlier narrator's presentation of the material if he includes it unchanged, unless it is made suitably clear to the audience that the earlier author is not being quoted with approval [see Patrick (2010, pp. 50-51)]. For that reason, we might treat any narratorial comments in a text as reliable indication of the final author's intent, which we might also expect to recognise in the overall literary structure of the document.

[47] It is surprising how few rhetorical analysts and scholars of 'chiasmus' have given any thought to this criterion; this may perhaps be due to an insufficient interest in the exegetical value of concentrism, or to a lack of attention to the purpose of the entire literary document within which the rhetorical structure has been identified, as Klaus (1999, p. 277) acknowledges.

[48] Cf. Blomberg (1989) pp. 5-6; Thomson (1995) p. 222.

[49] Blomberg (1989, pp. 19-20) explains that "with most chiastic outlines, most of the building blocks have been observed by different people at different times; what has been lacking was for someone to recognize the whole and construct a synthesis."

[50] Butterworth (1992, p. 60) urges those proposing concentrisms to "Consider the conclusions of scholars in various branches of OT research – especially those who have not been primarily concerned with structure – and compare conclusions concerning the overall meaning and emphasis of the unit."

[51] Thomson (1995, pp. 222-23) also warns against overplaying the criterion of Agreement: "It could obviously be countered that there are as many instances when commentators *fail* to make such a linkage, and many occasions when they make links that are not accommodated within the chiastic pattern." The burgeoning quantity of biblical scholarship makes it ever more likely both that scholars will have suggested alternative comparisons between texts, and that the one proposing concentrism has simply not yet stumbled upon those scholars who have recognised the same parallels.

[52] Thomson (1995, pp. 216, 223-24) illustrates the circularity of using exegesis first to help determine the pattern, and second to produce new insights on the basis of a well-founded pattern. He praises 'chiasmus' for its unique potential to produce "new, and hitherto unsuspected, exegetical insights", but

the more likely it is that the creativity lies not with the author but with the interpreter.[53] If previous scholars have not agreed with the parallels being found, it is less likely that future scholars will agree.

(7) ***Satisfaction***. Similarly, this final criterion from the list Hays proposed can be appropriated directly into our criteria for discerning intratextuality in concentrisms. As Hays notes, one must avoid the affective fallacy and interpretative circularity in expressing this criterion. However it is indeed "the most important test", though least quantifiable, because it is in effect an appeal to "the experience of a contemporary community of competent readers".[54] Not only should the parallels between each pair of episodes be satisfying to other readers both lay and scholarly,[55] but the effect that the central message has on the entire structure and each individual parallel should commend itself to the discernment of others.[56] Hays asks whether, "when [the interpreter] beckons us to listen, we do hear faint music reverberating around us". C.S. Lewis describes similarly the way in which, when an interpretative key is found for a particular text, one begins to see everything else by its light.[57] The proposed concentrism should show superior explanatory power when compared with all other compositional **alternatives**,[58] not only the standard scholarly outlines of the text, but especially other concentric analyses.[59]

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without care this may drift into subjective 'reader-response' analysis of the type entertainingly warned against by Barton (1996, pp. 228-31).

[53] This is effectively a call for diligence and breadth of reading on the part of the scholar proposing the structure.

[54] Welch's fifteenth and final criterion, therefore, is 'Aesthetics' (1999, p. 167); "Finally, there is room for subjective appreciation. Computers alone cannot identify chiasmus… human readers must judge an author's artistic success".

[55] As Butterworth notes (1992, p. 59), "There may be other reasons for repetition [of the same word or root];" if such alternative explanations are regularly suggesting themselves to the thoughtful reader, the satisfaction with the overall presentation will be greatly reduced.

[56] Welch (1999, p. 167) mentions further aesthetic factors to consider: "the author's fluency with the form; consistency in sustaining the structure, balance, and harmony; pliability at the turning point (which yet does not draw undue attention to itself); and meaningful applications of the form that do not resort to subtleties so obscure as to be esoteric or awkward."

[57] "There then comes to you a person, saying, 'Here is a new bit of the manuscript that I found; it is the central passage of that symphony, or the central chapter of that novel. The text is incomplete without it. I have got the missing passage which is really the centre of the whole work.' The only thing you could do would be to put this new piece of the manuscript in that central position, and then see how it reacted on the whole of the rest of the work. If it constantly brought out new meanings for the whole of the rest of the work, if it made you notice things in the rest of the work which you had not noticed before, then I think you would decide that it was authentic." from *The Grand Miracle*; accessed via Ward (2008) ix.

[58] Cf. Butterworth (1992) p. 59; Welch (1999) p. 163. Blomberg (1989, p. 5), however, makes this his first criterion: "There must be a problem in perceiving the structure of the text in question, which more conventional outlines fail to resolve… If a more straightforward structure can adequately account for the textual data, recourse to less obvious arrangements of the material would seem, at the very least, to risk obscuring what was already clear." While this is undoubtedly wise advice to those setting out to find concentrism (an inherently risky business), satisfaction with current outlines is no less subjective for having widespread support; advances in scholarship depend upon individuals who have seen something they believe everyone else ought to see too. DeSilva (2008, p. 345 n. 3) might therefore be indulging in idealism when he tries to 'impress upon' "analysts disposed to search for macro-chiasmi" the need to be "actively seeking out alternatives to their own conclusions as a means of testing the same".

[59] *Pace* Breck (1994, pp. 196-98) and others. The very definition of concentrism requires that the central element of the structure hold the primary interpretative key to the entire literary unit, so if other concentric proposals situate the centre elsewhere, the meaning of the entire work changes. Slight reworking of the precise delimitation of episodes should be expected as the structural proposal is refined, but the concentrism stands or falls on the persuasive force of the centre.

Although those who offer criteria often make the qualification that a proposal need not meet every one to be valid,[60] I would argue that every one of these seven criteria must be met for a genuine deliberate parallel to exist between two paired episodes, and therefore for the concentrism to be verified.[61] One may not necessarily address each criterion in detail or in order, but all must be demonstrable in one way or another, or their absence easily explicable:[62]

(1) *Balance*: The two episodes being considered should be paralleled with each other alone, at an equivalent position on each slope, and be of a similar length.
(2) *Volume*: There should be multiple parallels between the two episodes, both verbal and conceptual, with paralleled elements that do not feature regularly at other points in the concentrism.
(3) *Weight*: The parallels should be between weighty elements in each episode rather than inconsequential details, preferably between elements that are themselves emphasised rhetorically within the episode, and the interpreter must not avoid other significant features of the text that may indicate a different explanation for the arrangement.
(4) *Trademarks*: The type of parallels at work should be specified, in order to build up a 'profile' of trademark techniques of the author, and also trademark messages communicated through the parallels; miniature examples of concentrism should be noted in support of the use of this technique at an architectonic level, and the larger the structure the more expert the author.
(5) *Integrity*: Messages communicated through parallelism between episodes should be consistent with that of the whole structure, which should complement those in other structures elsewhere in the document in question. They should also be recognised on the surface of the text, particularly in narratorial comments, or at least it should be possible to show the plausibility of these messages as belonging to the latest time period to which the document makes reference.
(6) *Agreement*: The vast majority of parallels being proposed for the concentrism, or at least the messages communicated by these parallels, should be able to be reinforced with reference to other critical and pre-critical scholars.
(7) *Satisfaction*: The parallels between each pair of episodes should be satisfying to other readers both lay and scholarly, and the effect that the central message has on the entire structure and each individual parallel should commend itself to the discernment of others; if alternative structures or compositional explanations have been proposed, this particular concentric pattern will need to be seen to have superior explanatory power.

With any work of literature, it would be naïve to assume that a single interpreter could fully account for the complexity and artistry involved in its composition. Nevertheless, the case for a fundamentally concentric structure governing the proposed passage or book must be able to be established 'beyond reasonable doubt' using these criteria, for the proposal to stand.

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[60] For example, Blomberg (1989, p. 7) recognises, "These nine criteria are seldom fulfilled in toto even by well-established chiastic structures, so it would seem these controls might actually be too rigid. But granted that some exceptions should be permitted, the more of these criteria which a given hypothesis fails to meet, the more sceptical a reception it deserves. Conversely, a hypothesis which fulfills most or all of the nine stands a strong chance of reflecting the actual structure of the text in question.

[61] Scholer and Snodgrass (1992, p. xxi) observe that "Even those persons who discuss criteria for identifying chiasmus often make unjustified identifications of chiasmus", citing Clark (1975) and Welch (1981) as examples. I trust that my analyses will not fall foul of my own criteria, but even if this does seem to be the case, it is more important that rigorous criteria be established in the field of 'chiastic' studies and rhetorical analysis.

[62] Thomson (1995, p. 32, emphasis his) makes the point that "The validity of a chiasmus depends on the *cumulative impact* of a number of criteria."

1.4 Stages of Assessment Using the Criteria

It is suggested that these criteria naturally progress through four stages in the process of assessment, as befits their cumulative force. [1] The necessary start to such a process is to set out the structure being proposed, identifying the distinct rhetorical units being arranged, so that it is possible to recognise both the overall concentric character of the proposal and to note the presence or absence of Balance. Imbalances should be noted at this stage, even if their justification does not appear until the second or third stage. [2] The second stage involves the careful demonstration of the Volume and Weight of the intratextuality in each pair of episodes in turn, starting with the outermost pair that forms the beginning and end of the overall rhetorical unit, and working inwards to the unparalleled centre. Non-conformists and Elephants ought to be acknowledged and explained, although explanation might rely on evidence from the next stage. [3] The third stage has the interpreter assemble the author's Trademark techniques of intratextuality and also begin therefore to explain their exegetical significance. The messages of each pair of episodes ought to reinforce the centrality of the middle episode in the context of the beginning and end, and the Integrity between this overall message and the explicit 'surface' comments of the author should be clear. As Agreement can apply to either the intratextual parallels or the exegesis of their meaning, or preferably both, appeal to other scholars should be made throughout the second and third stages respectively. [4] Finally in the fourth stage, the proposal as a whole must engender a greater Satisfaction on the part of informed readers than alternative structures or presentations of the text's purpose. One may find it easier to outline these (inadequate) alternatives before embarking on one's own proposal, but the conclusion should not shy away from standing the new proposal up in the midst of the others to show it to be head and shoulders above the rest. A critique of a concentrism proposal, on the other hand, should be able to point at the end of the assessment to more convincing and satisfying alternatives.

2. Application of the Criteria to the Book of Ruth

It is inevitable that the growth of literary criticism within biblical scholarship will result in divergent analyses of the dominant structural arrangement of each book. The seven criteria outlined above have therefore been designed expressly for the purpose of assessing proposals of concentrism, rather than inverted or direct parallelism. Different concentric proposals will tend to identify different central episodes, and consequently match up different pairs of episodes, and there will also be disagreement over the precise definition of rhetorical units (episodes). It is necessary, therefore, to select only one concentric proposal to assess at a time, and then either accept, modify or discard it according to how well it meets the criteria.

The book of Ruth has been analysed by different scholars (or sometimes the same!) as either an inverted parallelism or a concentrism, so for the purpose of this study we will select one particular scholar's concentric proposal, namely that of David A. Dorsey in his book *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis – Malachi*.[63] Others who have also proposed concentric structure in Ruth are Tischler, Wilson, Luter and Rigsby, Hongisto, and in some ways Radday,[64] but Dorsey's proposal is both of manageable length and consistent enough to warrant its use for this paper.

Dorsey's 'overall layout' of the book of Ruth is outlined by him into seven episodes (as with most of his concentric analyses of biblical books) as follows:

[63] Dorsey (1999) pp. 121-28.

[64] Tischler (1993) pp. 151-64; Wilson (1997) pp. 137-46; Luter & Rigsby (1996) pp. 15-28; Hongisto (1985) p. 23; Radday (1981) pp. 71-76 (esp. 75-76).

11.9 The Book of Ruth

a **introduction: devastation of Naomi's family** (1:1-5)
* Naomi's family is lost; Elimelech's line is ended
* Ruth's tragic marriage to Naomi's son; he is sickly and dies; no children
* both of Naomi's sons die
* past events set the stage for the story
* economy of words

b **two of Naomi's relatives deliberate about whether to support her** (1:6-19a)
* both initially agree
* one turns back when marriage is mentioned
* one chooses to stay with Naomi, in an admirable speech
* a blessing is uttered for Ruth
* decision to support Naomi means that Ruth will probably not remarry

c **return to Bethlehem in emptiness and hopelessness** (1:19b-22)
* setting: "at the beginning of the barley harvest"
* surprised question of identity: "is this Naomi?"
* "I left full, but Yahweh has brought me back empty (*rêqām*)"
* Naomi and Ruth come into (*bw'*) Bethlehem in despair

d **TURNING POINT: meeting of Ruth and Boaz** (2:1-23)

c' **Ruth's appeal at the threshing floor and her return to Bethlehem in fullness and hope** (3:1-18)
* setting: when the people were "winnowing barley"
* surprised question of identity: "who are you?"
* Ruth left empty; she returns with six measures of barley: "you must not go back empty-handed (*rêqām*)" (3:17)
* Ruth comes into (*bw'*) Bethlehem with good news and hope

b' **two of Naomi's relatives deliberate whether to support Naomi** (4:1-12)
* both initially agree
* one turns back when marriage is mentioned
* one chooses to help Naomi, in an admirable speech
* a blessing is uttered for Ruth
* decision to support Naomi means that Ruth will be remarried

a' **conclusion: restoration of Naomi's family** (4:13-21) [sic]
* Naomi's family is restored; Elimelech's line is raised up again
* Ruth's happy marriage to Naomi's relative; he is wealthy and robust (note etiologies of names); they are blessed with a son
* "your daughter-in-law … is more to you than seven sons!"
* future events provide broader significance of story
* economy of words

2.1 Assessment of Balance

The structure is evidently concentric according to our definition, with the central episode providing the 'turning point of the entire story'; Dorsey explains that from the point that Ruth and Boaz meet, the lives of Naomi and Ruth are 'filled with ever-increasing hope' (p. 127). The introduction describes the problem of the story and the conclusion resolves this problem, by means of the relationship initiated in the central episode. In terms of Balance, there is a precise correspondence in terms of number and position of episodes, without any textual emendations proposed or asymmetrical episodes. However, Balance of length immediately presents a problem for this proposal, connected with his decisions about divisions between different episodes. The [a/a'] pair of episodes is of roughly equivalent length, as is the [b/b'] pair, but [c] is only fifty-four words long (1:19b-22) whereas [c'] comprises an entire chapter (3:1-18). Dorsey recognises that the first of these episodes is rather more 'brief' than the second, but appeals for support to the intratextual parallels between the two: "there appear to be several intentional editorial touches that create points of correspondence between the two otherwise dissimilar units" (p. 127). Hence we move to the second and third criteria.

2.2 Assessment of Intratextuality (Volume and Weight)

In the [a/a'] pair there is indeed an unusual 'economy of words', although one might argue that the speech of the women in 4:14-15 and 4:17 is not so 'economic' but more typical of the narrative in the rest of the book. The parallel of 'past' and 'future' events sets the story in context, but arguably this would be necessary for the story even if it did not have a concentric form, and the highlighting of the audience's historical distance in 4:7 is a potential Non-conformist. It is true that Naomi is said to have borne a son, which parallels her loss of a son, but Non-conformists are found in Naomi's speech in 1:11-12 and implied in Boaz's expectation of children for Mahlon from Ruth in 4:5 and 4:10, unless these are treated as

Trademark parallels found also in [b/b']. The names of Boaz and Mahlon clearly signify opposites, as is confirmed in their relative virility, and although these names are not confined to this pair of episodes, there does seem to be a special emphasis on naming in [a'] (4:14, 17; but cf. 4:11 and 1:20-21, perhaps indicating a pairing of [c] and [b']?). Dorsey's explanation neglects to emphasise specific verbal parallels beyond 'sons', but he might have strengthened his case by noting the clear contrasted settings of Moab in 1:1-5 and 'Israel' (rather than Judah – cf. 4:11) in 4:14 and implied by the reference to 'David' in verses 17 and 22. Perhaps the weight of this paralleled setting tips the scales in favour of Dorsey's division of episodes here, and Porten has pointed also to a possible parallel between 'ten years of death in Moab' and 'ten generations of birth in Israel', which may justify treating 4:13-17 and 4:18-21 as a single 'episode'.[65]

In the [b/b'] pair, the primary emphasis of both 1:6-19a and 4:1-12 does seem to be on two relatives of Naomi who must choose whether or not to help Naomi, although this could probably be better expressed as 'whether or not to reinforce existing kinship ties', because there is no particular service offered to Naomi in [b] (cf. 1:16-17). Dorsey highlights 'marriage' as the cause of the first of each pair of relatives turning back, but this is not the primary focus; in each case their 'initial agreement' is actually a narrative device for highlighting the personal cost accepted by the other relative in order to show *hesed* to Naomi (cf. 3:10) – Ruth forsakes marriage, and Boaz forsakes inheritance. The description of the speeches by Ruth or Boaz as 'admirable' is too subjective a parallel, as the author does not describe anyone being 'impressed' by either their actions or their words; as the audience we recognise the cost of their decisions, but this is not referred to in either speech, 1:16-17 or 4:9-10. Neither are the blessings on Ruth in each section particularly paralleled, because the motivation for the blessing in 4:11 is not Ruth's character but her marriage to Boaz, and also because of the Non-conformist blessings on Ruth in 2:12 and 3:10, and on Boaz in 2:19 and 20. Dorsey mistakenly attributes Ruth's blessing in [b'] to "the women of Bethlehem", who don't actually bless the LORD (not Ruth) until 4:14; perhaps this reveals some uncertainty about his inclusion of 4:13-17 in [a']? Nevertheless, the primary conceptual parallels between [b] and [b'] are strong enough to bear the Weight of intratextuality, and had he decided to consider Volume, he might have referred to the important word pair [*zqn/n'rh*] (1:12; 4:12), and perhaps also [*lyn/byt*] (1:16; 4:11; but cf. 3:13) and [*'ammî*] (1:16; 4:4). However, an Elephant that seems to have been neglected is the 'witnessing' of Boaz by 'the elders and all the people' in the entrance of Bethlehem (4:9-12), paralleling the response of 'all the city' as Naomi enters Bethlehem (1:19-22); in both cases this completes the intended action of the main character in the episode (1:7; 3:13). In neither case do the observers interact with Ruth herself, deliberately contrasting with the emphasis on Boaz identifying Ruth outside the city in 2:5-7 and 3:9 (cf. 2:15-16; 3:14).

It is in the [c/c'] pair that we find Dorsey's identification of intratextuality most uncertain. Three out of the four paralleled elements have weighty Non-conformists elsewhere: The settings 'at the beginning of barley harvest' and when Boaz 'winnows barley at the threshing floor' (1:22; 3:2) are not nearly as similar as the paralleled activities of reaping and gleaning barley (2:2-23) and winnowing and guarding barley (3:2-7; a different word is used in 2:17). 1:22 does no more than set the subsequent events of the book in close temporal proximity to the arrival of the women in Bethlehem. The 'surprised questions of identity' (1:19; 3:9) are not the only such questions; Boaz's question in 2:5 actually parallels the question about Ruth's identity in 3:9 much more closely than 1:19. Similarly, the 'coming into' Bethlehem of Naomi and Ruth in 1:22 is not nearly as similar to Ruth's entrance into Bethlehem in 3:15 as is Ruth's solo entrance in 2:18. The only unique and weighty verbal parallel between [c] and [c'] is the use of the adjective 'empty(-handed)' (1:21; 3:17). Even so, in the second instance it is Ruth, not Naomi, who is no longer empty-handed, just as it is Ruth not Naomi who is satiated in 2:14 and 18. It seems the intent of the author is rather to parallel Ruth's fullness before Naomi in 2:18 and in 3:17, in order to point to Ruth as the means of Naomi's eventual

[65] Porten (1978) p. 23.

restoration to fullness at the conclusion of the story. Dorsey appealed to the Weight of the paralleled elements between [c] and [c'] to justify the imbalance of length, but these parallels have each been disqualified on account of weighty Non-conformists in [d], suggesting that [d] and [c'] should be paired instead.

2.3 Assessment of Agreement

Dorsey is not unaware of the 'obvious' match between chapters 2 and 3, and explains this alternative with a whole paragraph and even an alternative six-part inverted parallel arrangement of the book, but nevertheless prefers his concentric structure for three reasons. The first is that he believes 1:19b-22 to be too distinctly defined as a separate episode to function as "simply the conclusion of the episode of 1:6-19a". The second is that his proposal involves "a more conventional seven-part symmetric scheme". The third is that his arrangement identifying 2:1-23 as the central episode seems to be strengthened by recognising the meeting of Boaz and Ruth as "the story's unmistakable turning point".

Regarding his first point, Dorsey identifies four shifts that set apart 1:19b and following as a distinct episode from 1:6-19a – "location (from Moab to Bethlehem)", "character (from the three widows to Naomi, Ruth, and the people of Bethlehem)", "time", and "topic".[66] Undoubtedly all of these types of shift do indicate the start of a new scene. In any collection of episodes that makes up a single literary work there will be varying degrees of continuity and disjunction between adjacent scenes and episodes, but for the sake of defining new episodes of the rhetorical structure we are looking for major divisions rather than minor ones. Various scholars have written on the subject of unit delimitation, but for our present purposes we will select two of the most important techniques an author may use to distinguish episodes. The first is the introduction of 'background' sentences that do not begin with the VAYYIQTOL construction,[67] and the second is transition sentences that describe the passing of time.[68] 1:19 uses neither of these major disjunctive techniques, instead completing the journey from Moab to Judah that began in 1:7 with a final scene as the women enter Bethlehem. If we were to use instead just the four general shifts that Dorsey identifies, we might similarly separate off 2:18-23 as a distinct episode, because the location shifts from the field to Naomi's house, the characters shift from Ruth, Boaz and the reapers to Ruth and Naomi alone, the time shifts (journeying from the field into the city), and the topic shifts from Ruth's successful gleaning to the identity of Boaz. Therefore Dorsey's insistence that 1:19b-22 be marked off as a "separate unit" is not justified.

As for the "obvious appeal" of an analysis containing seven parts rather than six, it is not the mere identification of a seven-part concentrism that causes Satisfaction, but rather the correct discernment of the arrangement that makes best sense of a specific piece of literature and enables better exegesis of its purpose. Concentric structure does enable an author to put greater emphasis on a particular episode as of primary significance for the overall work, but there were many other patterns available to the ancient storyteller that might convey his or her purpose equally effectively.

Dorsey's third argument focuses on the Satisfaction of the overall structure as focused on the first meeting of Boaz and Ruth, contained within 2:1-23. As this is the culmination of the

[66] Dorsey (1999) p. 122.

[67] For example, the *kî* clause in 1:6b creates a disjunction in narrative flow between verses 6 and 7, thereby completing 1:1-6 with an *inclusio* of 'famine > bread', and likewise 1:7-22 with an *inclusio* of 'departed > returned'. 2:1 begins with "And to Naomi…" rather than a VAYYIQTOL verb, as also 4:1 begins with "And Boaz…".

[68] For example, 2:23 summarises the remainder of the barley and wheat harvest in a single sentence, concluding with "And she lived with her mother-in-law." The following episode is therefore in the context of winnowing rather than reaping. 1:4c also summarises the passing of time, but 1:1-6 is a short and terse description of the historical background to the following story set at the time of the harvest and so 1:5-6 is unlikely to function as a distinct episode. 4:13 describes in a single rapid sentence a period of at least nine months, setting apart what follows from the events of the harvest that take up the majority of the book.

analysis of the book's message as revealed by the structure, we ought first to consider the Trademark intratextual techniques and the Integrity of its message with the surface comments.

2.4 Assessment of Exegesis (Trademarks and Integrity)

Collating Dorsey's identified parallels, the author's Trademarks apparently include a few narratorial techniques such as economy of words or 'etiologies of names' [a/a']; settings such as in [c/c']; activities by or towards the characters such as blessings, 'admirable speeches' [b/b'], questions, or even the common verb 'entering' [c/c']; reversal of characters' experiences such as Naomi's bereavement [a/a'] or Ruth's entrance to Bethlehem in emptiness [c/c']; or simple re-use of a traditional theme such as two relatives deliberating about supporting a third [b/b']. He summarises the purpose behind the intratextuality of each pair of episodes, and behind the structure as a whole, as being "to highlight the change of fortunes and the new hope that began with the story's turning point". In effect, he sees it as no more than a simple folktale with one big problem at the start that must somehow be solved by the end. That is of course possible, but hardly a satisfying exegesis of the book's primary purpose, particularly as it gives no explanation for the evident surface interest of the author in the connection of this particular couple and of the son they raise up for Naomi, with King David (4:17-22), falling foul of the criterion of Integrity.

As for the 'turning point' in 2:1-23, while it is true that without Boaz meeting Ruth it is unlikely that Naomi would have ended up with an heir to inherit her husband's property, this meeting was by no means the only 'turning point' of the story. Dorsey claims that "Up to this point the narrative has been heavy with hopelessness and destitution. After the meeting, the narrative exudes hope." Yet his explanation of the internal progression of 3:1-18 and also of 4:1-12 in each case includes a deliberate building of tension in the audience – we do not know beforehand how Boaz will respond to Ruth's proposal, nor how the closer kinsman will respond to the offer of Ruth with Elimelech's property. Surely this suspense and "threat to the hoped-for marriage of Ruth and Boaz" undermines the meeting of Ruth and Boaz as the 'obvious' turning point of the story. Although he does not even describe Alternative concentrism proposals, let alone defend his own as superior to them, others have thought it reasonable to place the 'turning point' elsewhere. For example, Radday views the centre to be the end of chapter 2 and beginning of chapter 3 where "Naomi takes the matter into her own hands", because the author's intended theological message is that God does in fact bring about His will through human initiative.[69] This would seem to be at very least a more worthy centre for the book's theological message than the one chosen by Dorsey, who defines its purpose as "to be an uplifting story, designed to encourage and inspire the audience" to imitate Ruth and Boaz whose "admirable qualities" determined the success of their meeting.

2.5 Assessment of Satisfaction

Dorsey appeals at the start of his analysis (footnote 1) to the Agreement of other scholars -- Tischler throughout and Wilson in most details – however, in his third footnote he also lists six scholars advocating alternative analyses, without explanation, and then at the end of his own analysis he admits that a six-part inverted parallelism arrangement (1:6-22 with 4:1-12; 2:1-23 with 3:1-18) would be "a legitimate alternative". He himself "tentatively" favours the seven-part analysis, though this will hardly inspire confidence or Satisfaction with his proposal on the part of fellow scholars. I personally find the six-part inverted parallelism arrangement to be far more satisfying than Dorsey's concentrism, and would suggest that Porten's proposed analysis offers a further level of detail and clarity to Dorsey's inverted parallelism.[70] I would slightly adjust their episode divisions in light of the above analysis, as follows: [A (1:1-6)] – [B (1:7-18) + C (1:19-22)] – [D (2:1-3) + E (2:4-16) + F (2:17-23)] – [D' (3:1-5) + E' (3:6-15) + F' (3:16-18)] – [B' (4:1-8) + C' (4:9-12)] – [A' (4:13-22)]. Here is not the place,

[69] Radday (1981) p. 76; Luter & Rigsby associate this centre with Boaz rather than Naomi (1996, pp. 16-17).

[70] Porten (1978) p. 23; cf. also Bertman (1965) p. 167; Bar-Efrat (1980) 156-57.

however, to advocate my own exegesis of the intratextuality contained in the resultant structure, especially as it is not even concentric.

My assessment of Dorsey's concentrism proposal for the book of Ruth using my seven criteria identified even with the first criterion of Balance an imbalance in the relative lengths of the two episodes 1:19b-22 and 3:1-18. On closer analysis this pair was also found to be lacking in intratextual parallels of sufficient Volume or Weight, whereas it was relatively straightforward to recognise that several of the identified Non-conformists were found instead in 2:1-23. This supported the alternative parallel between chapters 2 and 3 which Dorsey himself admitted "is far better [a match] than that between the threshing-floor story and the story of Naomi's and Ruth's arrival in Bethlehem in 1:19b-22". In the assessment of Volume and Weight in Dorsey's [b/b'] pair of episodes, an 'Elephant' was identified in 4:1-12 that lacked a parallel in 1:6-19a. Its equivalent was located instead in 1:19b-22, suggesting that 1:6-19a and 1:19b-22 might be better grouped together as a single episode paralleling 4:1-12. This would then support the six-part inverted parallelism arrangement of the book, and also even out the Balance of length throughout the structure. Dorsey's identification of 4:13-22 as a united episode paralleling 1:1-5 was found to have additional unnoticed intratextual elements supporting his delimitation, although we later found reason to adjust the latter episode's boundary slightly to include verse 6. As for the assessment of Trademarks and Integrity, the length of the overall structure did not allow the accumulation of a detailed profile of the author's techniques of intratextuality nor of the resulting messages. However, even the limited exegetical significance Dorsey drew from the pairing of episodes and from the location of the turning point in 2:1-23 were found to be simplistic and inadequate, failing to display sufficient Integrity with surface interests such as King David, and of insufficient theological weight to serve as the central focus of the book. Although Agreement with two other scholars was claimed in passing, Dorsey failed to defend his own proposal even against the inverted parallelism alternative he himself acknowledged, let alone against other suggestions of concentrism. He therefore comprehensively failed to meet the ultimate criterion of Satisfaction, at least in the view of the present writer, although elements of his analysis may well serve to improve on others' proposals of an inverted parallelism structure.

It is hoped that the above assessment of one particular proposal of concentrism for a biblical book has demonstrated the value of my seven cumulative criteria in proving or otherwise the presence of concentric intratextuality in biblical narrative. I regret that space prevents me from offering a positive proposal by means of the same criteria for a concentric structure in, for example, 2 Samuel 10 through 12. That shall have to await the conclusion of my doctoral thesis on 'the prophetic structure of 1–2 Samuel'.

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