

Foreword

The question of how we should interpret the narratives of the Old Testament continues to be a matter of some importance. In the 1980s there was a creative outburst in the interpretation of such texts through the work of pioneering scholars like Alter, Sternberg, and Bar-Efrat. What these authors did was make us realize the importance of appreciating how narratives work as texts. In doing so, they drew especially on the key literary theorists of their time, though often with a fairly light touch so that not all who appreciated their work realized the extent to which it was formed by such concerns. Their work was pioneering twenty or thirty years ago, but has now become more or less a standard point of reference. Yet the theory of narrative has not ossified at that point, and we are increasingly aware that much more work needs to be done, work that pays close attention to the features of the text itself while also drawing in new voices from other disciplines. At the same time, and without always being expressly concerned with narrative, a number of scholars have recently sought to engage in an interdisciplinary reading of the Old Testament through the hermeneutical lens of film. What has been lacking is a serious attempt to integrate these two areas.

It is for this reason that I believe that this book is an important contribution to Old Testament studies. As an Old Testament scholar with an interest in narrative, and also a film maker, Grenville Kent is well qualified to explore the interface between these disciplines and to show the fruitfulness of bringing them together in both theory and practice. It is, I believe, an innovative work that integrates narrative film theory with narrative poetics in the Old Testament, in this case investigating the use of repetition in narratives, resulting in a number of new insights into his sample text of 1 Samuel 28. Since he takes this as a

sample text, the insights developed could be applied more broadly, and the work indicates this. Moreover, the use of film theory (as opposed to an impressionistic use of film) represents a new hermeneutical model for the interpretation of narrative texts within the Old Testament that as far as I am aware has not been used elsewhere. We are thus treated to a fresh exploration of a potentially rich area of theory that can underpin the study of Old Testament narrative that is worked out in dialogue with wider areas of theory and carefully applied to a text. With this foundation laid, I hope that Grenville Kent and others can continue to develop this field for us.

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