

Introduction

Why Sound?

In the Greco-Roman world writing was heard, not read silently. The implications of this observation have been dawning on New Testament scholars for the past generation, especially since Werner Kelber's *The Oral and Written Gospel* (1983). Modern New Testament scholarship is a child of the printing press, centered around silent reading. The assumptions of print have shaped scholarship in unintended and unrecognized ways. While aware that modern composition does not correspond with the situation in the ancient world, scholars have struggled to deal methodologically with the implications of this change.

Once it became clear that oral composition proceeds differently than literary authorship and is governed by different dynamics,¹ scholars began to frame the issue in terms of orality and literacy. The result was much creative work that recaptures some of oral performance's dynamics among illiterate audiences, the kind Jesus himself most likely addressed.² But enthusiasm for these insights and what they might illuminate in New Testament study has tempted scholars to leap over the onset of literacy in the ancient world and thus to construe "orality" simply as speech, and "literacy" as the production of manuscripts according to modern notions of authorship. Failure to appreciate the processes of literary composition in the memorial culture that produced the New Testament has thrown methodology off track.³ Those who have focused on the importance in the first century BCE of rhetoric (Robbins 1996), performance (Rhoads 2005, URL: <http://www.biblicalperformancecriticism.org/>), and the memorial arts (Shiner 2003) have alerted scholars to this deficiency; but their work has not provided an analytical approach that addresses the spoken character of New Testament compositions—that is, their sounded quality. Our work seeks to fill this methodological gap.

Since we today lack native fluency in hearing and speaking Koine Greek, our hearing is always secondary to our silent reading of a printed Greek text.⁴ To analyze a composition's sounds, we need a reliable model that does not depend on facility in listening to a dead language. We find a basis for such analysis in Greek grammar itself

together with extant written reflections on Greek grammar and literary composition from the ancient world. Because Greek grammar analyzed spoken sound and sound's effects, we find support for sound analysis in the very structure of the Hellenistic Greek language and in the analysis by its own practitioners of the sounded quality of literary compositions. By paying attention to their clues, we can develop a sensitivity to a composition's sounds and their effects.

Our analytical approach proposes to map in graphic form a composition's sounds and then to analyze those sound effects according to the listening conventions in place when the compositions were created. So we begin with the composition itself⁵ and plot its sounds—its cola, periods, rhymes and other sound effects. This exposes a composition's structure, a structure meant not to be seen but heard. Perhaps a modern example will help. When we read silently, the printed text provides us with an astonishing array of typographic clues—word division, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph and chapter divisions. These cue the silent reader's perception of a composition's structure even before we begin to apprehend its meaning. Ancient manuscripts have almost no chirographic equivalences for these typographic clues.⁶ An ancient listener who heard a manuscript read out loud had to hear the structure rather than see it. Sound mapping proposes to illustrate those structures that are implemented through sound. Our work shows that a composition's sound structure frequently differs substantially from structures construed by the New Testament editors who added chapter and verse numbers and by modern editors who even later have supplied section titles and paragraph marks, usually driven primarily by abstract theological concepts.

Once a sound map is developed, it must be analyzed. Maps are not self-explanatory, but require interpretation. Just as in statistical analysis that plots data points on a graph and draws a regression line, data thus graphically displayed must be interpreted. And in the same way that many collections of statistics can illustrate various aspects of any phenomenon, many sound maps can be developed to analyze a composition's various features. Our analysis is guided by analytical tools provided by native speakers and hearers of Hellenistic Greek in their written reflections on language.

Sound mapping and analysis is a foundational method—not higher criticism, but lower criticism. It falls between text criticism and other methods of interpretation.⁷ While higher methods operate more at the semantic level of meaning, sound mapping and analysis operates in sound units. It contends with semantics, but also recognizes

the independent contributions to meaning made by sound itself in cultures that relied on public performance for literary publication. Sound mapping and analysis does not aim to replace other traditional analytical methods, but offers new data that other methods must incorporate and explain. The disclosing of a composition's structure and sound effects indicates what needs interpretation. Thus a sound map together with sound analysis operates in a positive fashion to indicate what a composition has selected for hearers to attend to; and employed negatively, the technique can rule out some of the things it does NOT mean.

To develop this analytical approach, the book is divided into two sections: Theory and Examples. Part 1, "A Theory of Sound Analysis," lays out programmatically the theoretical foundation for understanding sound mapping and analysis. We begin with the material basis of writing and communication in the Greco-Roman world. Chapter 1, "The Technology of Writing in the Greco-Roman World," explores how writing technology determines both *what* can be communicated and *how* it can be communicated. The next two chapters pursue the question of how communication was conceived by Greco-Roman authors. Chapter 2, "The Woven Composition," investigates the memorial character of literary composition and the role of literature in a memorial culture. As the title suggests, weaving provided the primary metaphor for literary composition in antiquity. Chapter 3, "The Grammar of Sound," explores the prevailing science of sound in the Greco-Roman world, Greek grammar.⁸ From these first three chapters, it becomes clear that repetition plays a critical role in sound's ability to communicate. Chapter 4, "Repetition: Sound's Structuring Device," redefines repetition in terms appropriate to oral performance and surveys the ways that repetition organizes compositions and guides meaning-making. Finally, Chapter 5, "Developing Sound Maps," explains step by step how to develop a sound map.

Part 2, "Illustrations from the New Testament," selects six examples from the New Testament to exemplify various aspects of sound mapping and sound analysis. In actuality, any Greek composition could have been selected, or for that matter any number of compositions. These six examples were selected for a variety of reasons, some of which turned out to be irrelevant or misguided after we developed and analyzed their sound maps. We selected these New Testament⁹ compositions because (1) they represent styles and genres found in the New Testament and (2) each composition posed an interpretative problem that commentators have not yet solved. Thus if we could

illuminate an unsolved issue in New Testament scholarship, it would demonstrate the value of sound mapping and sound analysis. The reasons for the selection are made clear in each chapter.

Because sound's dynamics are powerful and plentiful, printed maps can hardly do them justice. In developing our sound maps we strained to capture each composition's unique governing dynamics, especially at the level of structure. Our sound maps eliminate chapter and verse numbers and supply new references based on cola and periods, since these comprised the atomic literary units in Hellenistic Greek. We have not rigidly imposed a single numbering scheme or method of text display on our examples, but instead have allowed each composition to dictate appropriate display methods. While our graphic conventions vary, our attention to a composition's organic architecture remains consistent.

Sound mapping requires reading in Greek, yet a number of our readers have requested English translations to make the Greek text more accessible, especially for use in class with students beginning the study of Greek. To accommodate this use, we have provided English translations from the Scholars Version, adapted where necessary. We have tried to do this in a way that does not make the text cluttered or confusing. Because the SV translation renders dynamic equivalents and employs colloquial English, the translation sometimes does not correspond colon by colon to the Greek text, or is misleading in other ways when compared with the Greek. In such cases we have modified the SV to achieve a closer correspondence, although we have been conservative in this regard. Modified passages are noted with the abbreviation *Lit.* Such modifications also facilitate cross-referencing between the Greek and English versions by colon number, since we do not use conventional versification. We hope the translations will promote a fuller understanding of the sound analysis and its uses, even though the translated passages cannot exhibit the sounds and structures evident in Greek.

Each chapter has its own list of Works Consulted, since at times the references have little overlap. Similarly, Part 1 and Part 2 pursue somewhat different strategies, and thus require different protocols for footnoting. In footnoting Part 1, we have tried to be comprehensive. Ancient authors are quoted in the accepted form for classical citations.¹⁰ In Part 2, the example chapters, we have sought to be not so much comprehensive as illustrative. Since sound mapping and sound analysis are foundational, we have not argued with others' conclusions, but instead have illustrated how sound mapping re-orientes interpretative questions.

In a joint work of this nature, we are both responsible for the final product. At times we find it difficult to remember who wrote what, but lines of responsibility are clear. An initial paper exploring sound mapping was a joint effort that was presented to the Society of Biblical Literature Matthew Seminar (Scott and Dean 1993) and subsequently published in a collection of essays from that seminar (Scott and Dean 1995).¹¹ In the introduction to that volume, Bauer and Powell remarked: “Still, of all the papers in this volume, theirs is the most adventuresome, offering what they call ‘a first step.’ It is a promising experiment with a new approach that appears to have enormous potential for future study” (Bauer and Powell 1996, p. 21). In retrospect, we were just feeling our way, hardly taking a first step. Scott had the first intuitions and Lee subsequently took those insights and developed them in her dissertation (Lee 2005), which has formed the basis for chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 in Part 1 and Chapter 10 in Part 2. She has extensively reworked these chapters for this volume. Scott is responsible for Chapter 1 in Part 1. All the other chapters are so jointly co-written that we no longer know who did what. All the example chapters have been extensively reworked by both of us.

If the argument of this book is correct, we have inaugurated a method to help scholars of the Greco-Roman world analyze the sound that animated ancient compositions.¹² We have accomplished this amid lively dialogue with many who have intuited the importance of sound and oral performance for New Testament criticism. These include Werner Kelber, who has long encouraged this project and mentored Margaret Lee in the Regional Scholar program of the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), and Thomas Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, Vernon Robbins, Arthur Dewey, and the Bible in Ancient and Modern Media Section of the SBL. We are also extremely grateful to Phillips Theological Seminary and Tulsa Community College, who granted sabbatical leaves to support this project. Tom Hall has provided an expert proof-reader’s eye.

Vernon Robbins once urged, “When I hear you explain this, I know you’re on track; but when I try to do it myself, I don’t know where to start.” We hope this book answers his implicit challenge and encourages other New Testament scholars to carry these insights forward in ways we have yet to imagine.

ENDNOTES

1. Foley (1988) has sharply focused these differences, building on the work of Lord (1960) and others.
2. Dewey (1989) and Horsley and Draper (2006) are good examples.

3. See below Chapter 2, “Manuscripts, Orality and Literacy.”
4. This is why our book does not advance a theory of the pronunciation of Hellenistic Greek, and why we have not attempted a sound recording of the language. We cannot know for certain how Hellenistic Greek was pronounced in any particular time or place in the Greco-Roman world, but we know that its spelling was phonetic and letters were pronounced consistently, whatever the pronunciation scheme. See chapter 2, p. 81, for further comments on the pronunciation of Hellenistic Greek.
5. We take the composition to be the text printed in Nestle-Aland²⁶. We realize this is a constructed text, but it represents the best we have available at this time.
6. As is well known, Greek manuscripts employ *scriptio continua*. Early Latin manuscripts do have word divisions, but under the influence of Greek, writers began to employ *scriptio continua*.
7. Nonetheless, the strategy has a contribution to make to textual criticism. Sometimes the analysis of the sound indicates another explanation for a textual variant.
8. This chapter draws on an early exploration of the grammar of sound, one first published under Margaret Lee’s former surname, Dean (1996).
9. We could also have selected compositions outside of the New Testament. They would have worked just as well. There is nothing about this method that is specific to the New Testament, just as Koine Greek is not specific to the New Testament.
10. Abbreviations from *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*. English translations are from the Loeb Classical Library editions, unless otherwise noted.
11. This paper was published both times under Margaret Lee’s former surname, Dean.
12. We want to emphasize that we do not consider sound mapping and analysis as a full-fledged methodology but rather a pragmatic basis for critical methods.

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