

Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch. *Meaning and Context in the Thanksgiving Hymns: Linguistic and Rhetorical Perspectives on a Collection of Prayers from Qumran*. Early Judaism and Its Literature 42. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015.

Meaning and Context in the Thanksgiving Hymns is the revised version of Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch's 2011 doctoral dissertation, supervised by Bodil Ejrnæs, which applies elements of the sociolinguistic approach called Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the texts in the poetic collection, 1QHodayot^a. 1QH^a is the largest extant manuscript of the "Thanksgiving Hymns" from Qumran, discovered among the Dead Sea scrolls of Cave 1 in 1947. The psalms are written from a first-person "I" perspective, and they address God by giving thanks or praising God for special knowledge, spiritual strength, and deliverance from distress. The objective of Hasselbalch's investigation is to use SFL and CDA to recover information about the social context of 1QH^a that has been encoded into the lexicon and grammar of the text and into the selection of certain psalms for this collection.¹

Hasselbalch is active in Danish and English biblical and Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship. She has contributed to the Danish journals *Bibliana* and *Dansk teologisk tidsskrift* and to two volumes of the Forum for Bibelsk Eksegese series of the Museum Tusulanum Forlag.² She has also produced several English publications, including one

1. Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, *Meaning and Context in the Thanksgiving Hymns: Linguistic and Rhetorical Perspectives on a Collection of Prayers from Qumran*, EJL 42 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015); *The Redactional Meaning of 1QHodayot^a: Linguistic and Rhetorical Perspectives on a Heterogeneous Collection of Prayer Texts from Qumran*, Publikationer fra Det Teologiske Fakultet 23 (Copenhagen: Det Teologiske Fakultet, 2011).

2. Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, "Autoritet, flerstemmighed og forhandling i Genesisapokryfen," in *Bibelske genskrivninger*, eds. Jesper Høgenhaven and Mogens Müller, FBE 17 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum, 2012), 165–82; "Profeten Ezekiel: Inspirator for apokalyptiske himmelrejser," *Bibliana* 10.2 (2009): 7–11; "Moses og Pagten i bibelske genskrivninger fra Dødehavsrullerne," *Bibliana* 10.1 (2010): 9–13; "Påfuglen var "god smag" i antikken: Andre opstandelsessymboler forargede omverdenen," *Bibliana* 14.2 (2013): 28–30; "Har du set skriften på væggen?" *Bibliana* 15.1 (2015): 52–55; ed., "Forord: Guder og mennesker i aksetiden," *Bibliana* 15.2 (2014); "En retorisk analyse af en Hodayot-salme fra Qumran: Hvorfor er der to salmisteri 1QH^a 12,5-13,4?," *DTT* 70.3 (2007): 240–59; "David i fortællingen i verden:

study that interprets 4QMMT using the SFL techniques that she adopted in her dissertation.³ Hasselbalch is also the author of the entry on sociolinguistics in the *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, which is currently in press and scheduled to be published soon.⁴ Most recently she held a post-doctoral position in the Biblical Exegesis Section of the University of Copenhagen's Faculty of Theology for the project, "The Book of Genesis and Related Pseudepigraphic Literature," which was funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. She is also affiliated with the "Biblical Texts Older than the Bible Project" at the University of Adger and the University of Copenhagen.

Hasselbalch is at the forefront of the application of sociolinguistics in the study of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although SFL is not entirely new to biblical studies, she is the first to develop a research agenda around the application of SFL to the Dead Sea Scrolls. There have been a few studies carried out by New Testament scholars that adopt SFL for fine-grained examination of New Testament texts and a Hebrew Bible study that assesses patterns of language in Hebrew and Ugaritic poetry.⁵ However, these investigations do not use SFL to discern the social context of their compositions, so Hasselbalch has

En spatial nuancering," *DTT* 76.1 (2013): 32–45; "Skriptbrug i Habakkukkommentaren: Den litterære konstruktion af Retfærdighedens Lærers autoritet," in *Skriptbrug, autoritet og pseudepigrافي*, eds. B. Ejrnaes and L. Fatum, *FBE* 16 (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanums, 2010), 52–66;

3. Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, "Contextualizing Composite Works: The Case of 4QMMT with a Sociolinguistic Twist," in *Biblical Interpretation beyond Historicity: Changing Perspectives 7*, eds. Ingrid Hjelm and Thomas L. Thompson, *Changing Perspectives 7* (London: Routledge, 2016), 43–57; "Two Approaches to The Study of Genre in 4Q172," in *The Mermaid and the Partridge: Essays from the Copenhagen Conference on Revisiting Texts from Cave Four*, eds. George J. Brooke and Jesper Høgenhaven, *STDJ* 96 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 109–18.

4. Trine Bjørnung Hasselbalch, "Sociolinguistics," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Dead Sea Scrolls*, eds. Charlotte Hempel and George J. Brooke (London: T&T Clark, 2016).

5. Todd Klutz, *The Exorcism Stories in Luke-Acts: A Sociostylistic Reading*, *SNTSMS* 129 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Gregory P. Fewster, *Creation Language in Romans 8: A Study in Monosemy*, *LBS* 8 (Leiden: Brill, 2013); Ronald D. Peters, *The Greek Article: A Functional Grammar of Items in the Greek New Testament with Special Emphasis on the Greek Article*, *LBS* 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2014); Justin R. Woods, "Cohesive Chains in the Transfiguration Narrative of Matthew 17:1-13," *OJML* 5 (2015): 302–18; Silviu Tatu, *The Qatal//Yiqtol (Yiqtol//Qatal) Verbal Sequence in Semitic Couplets*, *GUS* 3 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008).

broken new ground within the broader field of early Jewish and Christian texts.

Hasselbalch's starting point is a critique of the dominate hypothesis that has divided the psalms of the Hodayot tradition into two groups: the Teacher Hymns and the Community Hymns. As many scholars have noted, the psalms do not neatly fall into these two categories, so there is a fundamental problem with the categorization schema. Additionally, there is an interpretive problem, which is embedded into the categories. The speaking "I" of the Teacher Hymns has been regarded as representing a leader of the community, whereas the "I" of the Community Hymns is thought to express the perspective of the general members of the community. Hasselbalch argues that this interpretive framework is an unjustified projection of our assumptions about the organization of the community behind the Dead Sea Scrolls onto the structural and generic differences of the psalms in 1QH^a. In other words, just because there are two types of psalms does not mean that we must posit two levels of the sect's hierarchy behind them. Hasselbalch seeks to jettison the categories and their accompanying framework and to use SFL and CDA to reconstruct a more accurate context for 1QH^a.

Hasselbalch's study proceeds in three phases. In the first phase (Chapter 2), she treats "Special Methodological Issues" by providing an overview of SFL, drawing primarily on Suzanne Eggins's *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*.⁶ She argues that SFL enables her to retrieve inscribed and uninscribed—that is, explicit and non-explicit—information about the context of 1QH^a, which allows her to set aside the Teacher Hymn-Community Hymn interpretive framework and reconstruct a new social context for the psalms. CDA is not discussed in the method chapter.

6. Suzanne Eggins, *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics* (London: Continuum, 2007).

In the second phase (Chapters 3–6), she analyzes five psalms (1QH^a 6:19–33; 20:7–22:39; 1QS 9:12–11:22; 1QH^a 12:6–13:6; 1QH^a cols. 25–26 containing two psalms) in order to demonstrate that the Teacher Hymn-Community Hymn interpretive framework is invalid.⁷ She calls these psalms “hybrids” because they complicate the two major categories.⁸ The SFL techniques of transitivity analysis and lexical strings are used to explore how the speaker’s agency functions in relationship to God and others. She identifies an elite, intermediary “I” with priestly resonances across all of the psalms—an “I” with which all the members of the Dead Sea community would have identified.⁹ She contends that this observation contradicts the notion that some psalms are dedicated to leaders while others are for general members. She also argues that these psalms have been removed from their original contexts, where the “I” of the psalms was not identical, and “entextualized”—that is, integrated and recontextualized—into a new manuscript, 1QH^a. The creation of this manuscript resulted in the heterogeneous “I”s being harmonized into one corporate “I.” This new “I” is strongly influenced by what she calls a “*maskil* ethos,” an elite identity associated with wisdom that she proposes the Dead Sea community has inherited from the *maskil* communities behind the Daniel and 1Q/4QInstruction traditions.

In the third phase of the study, Hasselbalch constructs a new social background for 1QH^a on the basis of her analysis of the psalms. She draws on insights from CDA by Teun A. van Dijk to establish how her reconstructed context is possible in light of the

7. 1QH^a 10:22–32 is analyzed as a test case at the end of Chapter 2.

8. Hasselbalch, *Meaning and Context*, 36–37.

9. “Dead Sea community” is a somewhat ambiguous term that needs to be clarified in this study, especially in view of the range of possibilities that have been proposed in the discussion about the community or communities behind the Dead Sea Scrolls.

heterogeneous character of the collection. She uses van Dijk's "mental models" and K-Device 4 to argue that the redactor of 1QH^a and his audience shared knowledge and a common perspective as an "epistemic community" that enabled them to make sense of 1QH^a, despite its heterogeneous nature. Essentially, they had insider knowledge about the context that modern readers lack. Hasselbalch proposes that these models can "open up a space where we can hypothesize about the meaning of juxtaposing the so-called Community and Leader Hymns."¹⁰

Her hypothesis is that the Community Hymns originate from outside of the Dead Sea community from elite wisdom and *maskil* circles in early Judaism. These circles constitute a single epistemic community that has a special role in God's agency as both "Goal" and "Actor" in God's activities. The Teacher Hymns were inspired by the Community Hymns, especially their elite ethos, but were composed by the Dead Sea community with a more exclusive sectarian perspective. They were not intended for leaders, but for all members within the sect. At this stage hybrids were written that combine features of Community Hymns and Teacher Hymns. The elevated position of the speaker in 1QH^a is never meant to highlight one historical person or office; rather, it underscores the elevated status of the entire sect over and against that of its opponents.

Most scholars in the fields of biblical studies and the Dead Sea Scrolls will find this study to be a challenging read. Hasselbalch's work is a new interdisciplinary endeavour, so there will be obstacles for those who are not familiar with SFL and CDA nomenclature and theory. However, it is worthwhile to explore these disciplines because, as Hasselbalch claims, they offer a wealth of resources for analysing texts, which may be

10. Hasselbalch, *Meaning and Context*, 257.

heuristically valuable, especially at the clausal and compositional levels.¹¹

However, even after reading Eggins's *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*, from which Hasselbalch derives most of her SFL approach, it is still difficult to understand what it adds to this study that could not be discovered using standard exegetical methods, or how transitivity analysis and lexical strings are really useful in dismantling the Teacher Hymn-Community Hymn interpretive framework and reconstructing a social context for 1QH^a.¹² Is it remarkable that a speaker occupies an intermediary role between God and others in prayers? That this pattern of agency is found in various degrees in all prayers in the study may have more to do with the genre of prayer than the intention of the redactor or the elite constitution of the hypothetical community behind this scroll, the so-called "Dead Sea community." Observations about transitivity and lexical cohesion do not form a very substantial basis for building a redactional history of 1QH^a and a reconstructing its social context within the landscape of Second Temple Judaism and its various religious groups.

Another problem is created by bringing together SFL methodology and van Dijk's approach to CDA in order to establish the context of 1QH^a. In "Knowledge in Parliamentary Debates," van Dijk launched a very strong and extensive critique of SFL, arguing that its notion of context is deeply problematic and incompatible with his own. Van Dijk contends that the concept of context in SFL is "theoretically ad hoc" and "explicitly anti-mentalist," which is antithetical to his own approach.¹³ In other words,

11. Hasselbalch, *Meaning and Context*, 60.

12. Eggins, *An Introduction to Systemic Functional Linguistics*.

13. Teun A. van Dijk, "Text and Context of Parliamentary Debates," in *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse*, ed. Paul Bayley (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2004), 339–72, 345–46.

the mental aspects of van Dijk's concept of context, such as the "mental models" and K-Devices that Hasselbalch has utilized, are theoretically at odds with SFL. Perhaps it is possible to reconcile the two approaches that Hasselbalch has combined, but an extended discussion would be required. Unfortunately, van Dijk is only briefly referenced once in Chapter 2, "Special Methodological Issues," without any discussion of the compatibility of his approach with SFL.¹⁴ Reflections on integrating CDA and SFL are also absent from Hasselbalch's discussion of van Dijk's models in Chapter 7.

Despite these challenges, the attempt to interpret some of the psalms of 1QH^a in light of their presence in the same collection is a valuable methodological contribution. The entextualization of psalms into a new collection certainly plays a role in accenting how they were read by ancient audiences, and scholars need to consider this effect when investigating collections and composite works. However, in this regard there also needs to be caution. Modern readers cannot easily discern what those accents were for the ancient audience. Moreover, it would be especially problematic to overstate the effects of entextualization so that all the parts of composite collections are read in a flattened or conflated way. It cannot be assumed that collections were made only because of commonalities between their component parts. Collections and composite works may have been created to highlight their differences too. To harmonize aspects of the psalms because they are in a single manuscript may pave over the particularities that redactors and compilers intended to preserve and emphasize.

In sum, Hasselbalch's study is a bold effort to employ a new pairing of linguistic approaches to re-envision the social context of 1QH^a. She expands the range of

14. Hasselbalch, *Meaning in Context*, 60.

vocabulary that has been used to analyse Dead Sea Scrolls and challenges Dead Sea Scrolls scholarship to explore the fields of sociolinguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis. We can look forward to Hasselbalch's continuing effort to bring these potentially fruitful approaches into the discussion in the future.