The Canonical Taming of Job (Job 42:1-6)

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The afterlife of the biblical book of Job is little short of a literary *creatio continua.* Partly out of philological despair with the Hebrew text, partly out of literary creativity, or again out of existential involvement, ever-new translators continue to re-adapt the literary and symbolical universe commonly known as the book of Job. This started early on: the LXX to the book is a shorter re-adaption of the Hebrew, a version in its own right (Witte 2007: 38-41; cf. Marcos 1994). The same goes for the Qumran Targum and later versions. The implied Hebrew text of the book is in fact still subtly changing in ever-new translations, as *hapax legomena* and textual problems of the book are continuously re-negotiated. The open-ended character of the work is, however, not simply generated by translators. The complex philology and literary anatomy of the Hebrew begs for creative reading.

This essays explores certain aspects of the dynamics unfolding when this complex text encounters invested readers. The textual specimen is Job 42:1-6. Readers throughout the centuries have recognised the importance of this passage, which holds the last entry in the dialogue. More often than not these six verses are seen as the one passage that defines the reading of the entire book. The text is, however, loaded with textual, philological, and rhetorical difficulties, and I deal with three of these: one textual, one discourse linguistic, and one philological. My point is that 'standard' interpretation applies a reading profile across these difficulties, a profile that consistently renders Job to be on the 'tame' end of the interpretive spectre available in the Hebrew text. This, I shall argue, reflects a canonical dynamic that extends from the LXX through to exegetes of the 21st century. Biblical scholarship needs to recognise the effect of this canonical dynamic and to reflect more self-consciously upon professional and critical implications of its presence in scholarship.

1. Three Inter-Connected Complexes in Job 42:1-6

Job 42:1-6 has been intensely studied and there is no need to repeat all arguments here. Those interested will find relevant discussion for instance in David Cline's recent commentary, in

Thomas Krüger's essay 'Did Job Repent?', and especially in Ellen van Wolde's article 'The Reversal of Job'.[1] Approaching the three problems in the pericope my first aim is simply to register the range of challenges in the Hebrew text. I start – quite appropriately for this complex passage (and book) – with the end.

a) The Philology of Job 42:6

i) Job 42:6 holds three philological challenges. The first concerns the apparently intransitive verb אֶמְאַס, which would be from either of the assumed roots מאס I 'refuse, reject', or מאס II 'flow, melt'. The LXX, Vulgate, and most interpreters take it to be the first. In that case one would expect a grammatical object, but there is none. So what is it, precisely, that Job 'rejects'? One solution has been to look for implied grammatical objects. The LXX introduced a first person reflexive pronoun: 'I despised myself' (ἐφαύλισα ἐμαυτὸν). This was accepted by the Vulgate and later by the *Lutherbibel* and the Authorised version. It still is the most usual solution in modern translations, found for instance in NRSV. The traditional Targum tackled the problem a little differently, inserting 'my riches' (עותרי) as the despised object. Both are what Ellen van Wolde called text semantic solutions: assuming an implicit object and calculating the closer or the wider literary context to produce a grammatical object.

A second solution, still reading מאס I, is to take עפר ואפר in the second half of the verse as a double duty object for both verbs מאס and נחם. The Masoretic cantillation encourages this solution, which has been more popular with exegetes than with bible translators.[2] This renders the text to mean that Job changes with regard to his situation of dust and ashes, also repudiating these same dust and ashes (whatever they may signify: see below).

Thirdly, a play on a possible double entendre for the two roots מאס seems to be reflected in the Qumran Targum to Job, and possibly in the LXX (Morrow 1986: 212-14). Further along that line, scholars reading the root מאס II 'flow, melt' have heard the text so as to have Job 'melting', as in 'submitting', 'giving in', or perhaps 'resting his legal case'.[3]

ii) The second problem is the verb נחם, which has a wide semantic range, such as 'to console / be comforted', 'to regret', but also 'to grieve' as we shall see. The standard translation since the Vulgate has been 'to repent (in dust and ashes)' (Dailey 1993: 205). Recent scholarly studies have shown that this translation is untenable (Patrick 1976; Dailey 1993).

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1. Clines 2011: 1204-24; Krüger 2007a; van Wolde 1994. Also important to our discussion are Patrick 1976; de Boer 1991; Dailey 1993; Morrow 1986; and relevant sections of Good 1990; Strauß 2000.
2. Since Patrick 1976, see Good 1990: 376, and documentation in van Wolde 1994: 249.
3. As recently Clines 2011: 1205, 07. More on this reading in Morrow 1986: 217f.

The philology and syntax opens for other solutions and already the LXX had translated differently than the Vulgate. It took dust and ashes as symbol for humiliation and rendered the verb based on that: 'I consider myself dust and ashes' (ἥγημαι δὲ ἐμαυτὸν γῆν καὶ σποδόν). The Targum conceived of dust and ashes as a symbol for death and burial, and hence for the dead: 'I grieve / find consolation over my dead children, [those of] dust and ashes' (אתניחמית על בניי דהנון עפר וקטם).

iii) The third problem is the rich symbolical potential of the very phrase 'dust and ashes', already reflected above. It could be taken to point metonymically or metaphorically to death, human frailty, humiliation, etc. – and also, with the Targum, to someone exposing these qualities or, with Clines and others, to practices related to death and mourning.

Already these three philological points generate a considerable creative space for the translator and interpreter of the passage, and there is more.

b) Discourse Linguistics and Perspective in Job 42:3-5

A reading of Job 42:1-6 must deal with three potential quotations in this passage.[4] First, verse 3a is almost identical to 38:2, spoken in the mouth of YHWH.[5] Secondly, a phrase in verse 4b is identical to a sequence a little later in that same divine speech.[6] Thirdly the sequence שְׁמַע־נָא וְאָנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר in verse 3a closely resembles Elihu's utterance in 33:31, שְׁמַע־לִי הַחֲרֵשׁ וְאָנֹכִי אֲדַבֵּר. What is the nature of these repetitions: are they glosses to be dismissed, are they happenstance similarities, or common rhetorical figures? If indeed they have some quality of quotation, what are their rhetorical force: are they sincere, ironic, adversative, or other? And further, as quotations, how do they contribute to formulating the point of view from which propositions of the remainder of the discourse are spoken?

Ellen van Wolde (1994: 228-34) made the guild a great service when offering a discourse linguistic analysis to these verses. She describes biblical Hebrew semantics as 'text semantics': the semantic potential of individual lexemes is often wide, and the actual sense invested in each case is define by way of context. Hence, the semantics of Job 42:1-6 must to a large extent rely on a calculation of the context, and indeed of the book at large. Among several striking findings in her essay, van Wolde is able to coin analytically the question of what may be the point of view for different parts of the passage. For instance, Job might be quoting God's view of Job without Job himself assuming that perspective. Van Wolde also implicitly raises the question of mode. If indeed Job quotes God (or Elihu, which van Wolde does not

4. Most scholars discuss only two quotations, but cf. Gordis 1978: 492.
5. There is one extra word in 38:2; בְּמִלִּין, ('words' [without knowledge]).
6. אֶשְׁאָלְךָ וְהוֹדִיעֵנִי, also in 38:3 and in God's second speech in 40:7.

discuss), he might do so with either consent or contempt. This opens a question that van Wolde does not explore: whose point of view is expressed in verse 3b, and in what mode? Does this line render Job's sincere and newly won evaluation of himself (the traditional view, which van Wolde seems to accept), or is it rather a continuation of the divine quote, thus representing Job's summary of how God sees Job (while Job himself might take exception)?

c) The Hebrew Text of Job 42:2a

Judging from standard exegetical literature, the last of my three problems initially looks like a non-issue. There is a *Kethib / Qere* discrepancy in the first word of Job's utterance in 42:2. The *Kethib* has a second person singular verb: '*You [God] know* that you [God] can do anything, ….' The Masoretes noted a first person verb in the *Qere*: '*I [Job] know* that you [God] can do anything…' Most ancient versions followed *Qere* at this point: the LXX (Ziegler 1982: 408), other early Greek versions, the Vulgate as well as the Old Latin (Latin Bible 2002; Sabatier 1749: 907), most of the medieval Targums,[7] and the Peshitta (Rignell 1982: 54). This reading was taken up by vernacular bibles like the Wycliff's Bible (late 14th century), the *Lutherbibel* (1545) and King James Authorised Version (1611).

Many modern scholars follow the versions without much discussion. Others point to the grammar of Gesenius-Kautsch and find a defectively written first person verb,[8] so that the *Kethib* has the same form as the *Qere*. I found only three scholars discussing the *Kethib* seriously as an alternative. Hans Strauß (2000: 347f) discussed the possibility but in the end translated with *Qere*. Ellen van Wolde (1994: 229) claimed that both readings were preserved in order to enhance a multi-vocality in the passage. Gerald Janzen (1985: 251f) assumed the *Kethib* was the older text, but took it to express the same sense as *Qere,* only more emphatically. To my mind none of this is really tenable, and neither is the majority position to follow the versions, as I will shortly argue.

2. Another Reading of Job 42:1-6

Interpreters like Morrow (1986: 211f), van Wolde (1994: 247 et passim), Newsom (1996: 627, 629 n 2), Good (1990: 377 et passim), and Krüger (2007a: 219f) all argue that Job 42:1-6 is so complex, one must respect the possibility of plural readings. I fully agree, and my account of the rhetorical framing of such plurality would be to anchor it in a view of the

7. Stec 1971, 304* notes that the Antwerp polyglot follows the *Kethib.*
8. Gesenius and Kautzsch 1991, §44i. Only two of its many references seem, however, to concern a defective 1p sg perfect.

book as a dialogical work where different voices are liable to present opposing propositions – and sometimes more than one sense for each voice in the book (Stordalen 2006). It seems to me that the reader may have to keep in mind alternative calculations of this literary universe based on alternative, plausible, readings of key passages. Indeed, reading this book seems to consist of calculating the literary impact of such continued interaction. In the following I suggest a reading that I hold to be plausible, and preferable to several existing reading options. For now, however, my main point is that this plausible reading seems by and large to have been overlooked. There seems to have been a dynamic that profiled most receptions of this passage – modern as well as ancient ones. This time we start from the beginning.

a) 'You Know' in 42:2a

It seems very unlikely that the *Kethib* ידעת in Job 42:2a could in fact be a defectively written first person perfect. The consonant formation ידעת occurs 98 times in Hebrew text in Leningradensis.[9] Most of these are qal perfect second person forms, a few are qal participles. Leaving out Job 42:2, only Ps. 140:3 seems to have been read as a first person singular perfect, and here the missing *yod* clearly is an error in L, as seen in BHS. Conversely, there are 98 instances of first person singular perfects of ידע in the Hebrew text of the Masoretic bible, and not one of them is written defectively. Eleven of these are in the book of Job.[10] Out of 55 instances in Judean Desert biblical scrolls currently read to document a first person singular perfect of ידע, all but one follow the same pattern. This one instance (4Q115) renders the *Aramaic* Daniel 4:6, which has the same consonant formation also in the Aramaic of L.[11] So in biblical *Hebrew* a defectively noted first person perfect is not positively attested to this verb outside the verse in question.

This seems to conform to a phonetic pattern in biblical Hebrew: out of 250 instances of a third *'ayin* verbs in 1 person perfect (any stem), not a single case has a defectively written 'i' at the end. Correspondingly, out of 78 instances of a third *'ayin* root in any form followed only by a *taw*, not a single instance features any defectively written vowel after the *taw,* save for the expected second person singular perfect forms. Although the material is scant, the impression is that the sequence *'ayin – taw* did not invite subsequent defectively written vowels in biblical Hebrew.

9. All statistics rely upon Accordance software. The biblical text is Hebrew Bible 2010.
10. Job 9:2.28; 10:13; 13:2.18; 19:25, 21:27; 23:3; 29:16; 30:23; 32:22.
11. Data from the Accordance module Abegg et al. 2009.

Turning to Judean Desert non-biblical scrolls, the consonant formation ידעת occurs 14 times.[12] Out of these, eight are evidently second person perfects, and they are distributed in Hebrew as well as Aramaic text.[13] Six instances *may* be first person perfect forms, and thy are all in Aramaic text.[14] This indicates that in biblical Hebrew the formation ידעת is second person singular perfect only, while in Aramaic it may be either first or second person singular perfect. (Dan. 4:6 and 5:22 shows it would be impossible to distinguish between first and second masculine perfect forms in unpointed biblical Aramaic.) It is evident that the Masoretes did in fact read *Kethib* as a second person verb, which is why they noted their correction. Consequently, I think the possibility of a defectively written first person form in the Hebrew text to Job 42:2a can be ruled out.[15]

In that case we do in fact have a text critical issue. Ellen van Wolde (1994) argues that the Masoretic tradition aimed at preserving both *Kethib* and *Qere* in verse 2. This seems to me to be overstated. The *Qere* was noted to facilitate the *correct* text, while the *Kethib* was preserved not for its semantic but rather its sacred (or historical) qualities. When text was actually read, ritually or otherwise, *Kethib* was not represented. So, we should choose one of the two. And it seems clear to me that the second person verb in *Kethib* must represent the older text. This form is implicitly recognised as the earlier text by the Masoretes. A second person verb *could* be documented in the unpointed Qumran Targum to Job (11Q10 37:3): its unpointed Aramaic is either first or second person, but Targumic tradition remembered a second person reading as late as in the Antwerp polyglot (Stec 1971, 304*). More importantly, *Kethib* has the more difficult reading, as it collides with the first person imperfect verb in verse 3 and requires a more complex apprehension of the paragraph. Above all, the versions document a widespread preference for a first person form, which of course motivated also the *Qere*. Hence, it seems inconceivable why a second person reading (as in *Kethib*) would emerge later on in the process.

How does the a second person form contribute to reading the pericope? Ellen van Wolde (1994: 230f, 238-42) convincingly argued that the theme of (God's) knowledge and (Job's) ignorance figures prominently in the discourse in verse 2-4. She did not, however, note that Job seems to be subtly opposing this scheme, making the claim that he too has

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12. Data from the Accordance module Abegg 2009, also using its reference system.
13. 1QH(a) 17:30 (Hebrew); 4Q381 f31:5 (Hebrew); 4Q508 f2:5 (Hebrew); 11Q10 3:5; (Aramaic); 11Q10 30:2 (Aramaic); 11Q10 37:3 (Aramaic Targum to Job 42, see more below); 11Q19 55:4; 64:15 (Hebrew).
14. 1Q20 6:16 (Aramaic); 4Q 196 f2:1 (Aramaic); 4Q212 f1iii:22 (Aramaic);11Q10 5:7 (Aramaic, text damaged); 11Q10 5:7 (Aramaic, text damaged); 11Q10 14:11 (Aramaic, text damaged).
15. Similarly Strauß 2000, 348, but with different argumentation.

knowledge. In verse 5 Job evokes the conventional metaphor of eyes as instruments of understanding (Fyall 2002: 177-79; Westermann 1977: 126). The knowledge he 'sees' would presumably relate to God, since that is what his eyes gaze upon. And by good reason that knowledge about God would somehow relate to the knowledge about God that Job formulated in verse 2. In the *Kethib* Job formulates the insight that YHWH is aware of God's overwhelming power and that this awareness plays into the deity's navigating the cosmos. This perception of the deity is, by the way, not a bad rendition of the gist of the divine speeches in chapters 38 to 41! So, between verses 2 (*Kethib*) and 5 it would seem that Job, rather than taking part in God's discourse on (God's) knowledge and (Job's) misunderstanding, aims to initiate a different discourse, one on (God's) power and (Job's) powerlessness. Therefore, even when finally meeting in person, as it were, Job and his God still seem to be speaking past each other – as they have been doing all the way up to this point. This creates a new space for calculating these verses. The textual matter commonly regarded as a non-issue becomes a key to reading the pericope (and perhaps the book).

b) Perspective and Mode in Job 42:3b (and 42:4f)

Let us stipulate that 3a and 4b represent Job quoting God's earlier speech in chapter 38, and that in 4a Job is playing on Elihu's earlier words in chapter 33. Whose perspective is then represented in verse 3b, the only part of verses 3-4 not marked as quotation? The answer rests on the perception of the particle לָכֵן. This lexeme typically occurs in direct speech. It may connect a new rhetorical unit logically to a preceding narrative or discourse (Gen. 4:15; Exod. 6:6; Judg. 8:7, etc.), or it may introduce a logical continuation or intensification within one and the same discourse (Judg. 10:13; 1 Sam. 27:6, cf. van Wolde 1994: 230f). This opens two possibilities. Either Job is speaking in his own voice, representing in plain words his reaction to YHWH's quoted proposals. Alternatively, Job still renders YHWH's point of view, now in the form of a summary of the content of the divine speech that had followed the quote in 3a. Most readers take the first for granted, but it seems to me that requires the *Qere* reading in verse 2. Without that reading, there is hardly any point prior to 42:3 that might indicate that Job should have sympathy with any proposition conventionally claiming the deity's superiority as a reason for Job to stand down. Therefore, when reading with *Kethib* a second person verb in v. 2a, the second alternative in v. 3b seems preferable. Then Job extends the quotation from YHWH with a summary of the argument that had followed the quote. Again, Job's rendition of for instance God's rhetorical questions in chapters 38–39 would in fact be fairly on the mark. Having Job cite God in this way, the author employs what Bakhtin would have

called a double voice; the presence of God's voice within Job's voice (Stordalen 2006: 29-33). This opens for the possibility that Job would not immediately embrace God's view of Job.

That possibility is strengthened in verse 4b. Here Job quotes YHWH 's speech as the cue for Job finally to speak in his own voice (verse 5).[16] But originally, of course, God intended that quote ironically: the implication was that Job should shut up. Job now turns God's irony around, and speaks. Equally rhetorically, in 4a Job twists Elihu's words and now throw his pious acclamations *for* the deity back *against* God. So, Job quotes God's primary advocate and God himself in order to break the silence that both had tried to impose upon him, and which Job had originally submitted to in 40:5. This subversive use of originally denigrating speech acts seem to me to indicate anything but submissiveness on Job's behalf. This insight colours my apprehension of the mode of Job's own voice in this pericope as antagonistic.

c) Making Philological Sense of Job 42:6

The wide semantic range of this verse contributes to widening the space for the literary *creatio continua* going on in the book. My aim here is to give an English rendition that aligns with the view of the non-submissive Job found above. In so doing, I sympathise with David Clines' reading, hoping to press even further along the same lines.

A preliminary issue concerns the stichometry of the verse. Since the reading of the pericope is so closely connected to the *Kethib / Qere* complex in v. 2, I find it unadvisable to take the Masoretic cantillation (presumably siding with *Qere*) as a point of reference. Rather, this would be my stichometry for the verse:

על כן אמאס

ונחמתי על עפר ואפר

If so, the first line is strangely short, and one may sympathise with those who have suggested that something was removed, perhaps a grammatical object. Scholars have suggested an original Hebrew object is reflected in the LXX or the Qumran Targum, but I think Morrow (1986: 212-14) must be correct when dismissing these as text critical evidence. We are left with a first line without a grammatical object, and I will try to make sense of that text.

As for the verb אמאס (qal), two options exist: either to assume an implied grammatical object or to find a non transitive English rendition of either of the two roots מאס. Given the perspective of the non submissive Job, the option chosen by Clines and many before him, could work. They read מאס II, and translate 'I submit' (or similar), meaning 'I rest my legal

16. In this analysis I differ from van Wolde 1994: 231, 232f.

case'.[17] There is, however, a better solution. If a basic sense of מאס is 'reject', it seems reasonable that the verb could be used in discourse as a rhetorical device with the force something like 'I reject (this discourse)', in other words: 'I have had enough'. The same verb in the same stem seems to be used intransitively with precisely this force in Job 7:16: 'Enough: I do not live forever! // Leave me alone, for my days are but a breathe!'[18] I assume a similar non transitive sense in Job 42:6a, and render אמאס simply as 'enough!' (cf. de Boer 1991: 193).

The verb נִחַמְתִּי could be either niphal or piel. Both stems have a wide semantic range related to the conversion of mind: to regret, be sorry, be consoled or comforted. The combination נחם על conventionally denotes what people grieve over, or take comfort for (de Boer 1991: 191f; Janzen 1985: 255f). I take particular interest in a few instances where נחם transcribes practices occurring within a mourning process: neighbours breaking bread (Jer 16:7); family and friends offering gifts (Job 42:11); Pharaoh lamenting his troops (Ezek 32:31).[19] In these cases נחם (in niphal and piel) names practices aimed at shifting mind. These could be performed jointly by mourners and those close to them; in Job 42:11 Job's visitors do נחם *with* Job. This reflects perfectly a moment in ancient Near Eastern and biblical individual mourning habits as described by Gary Anderson (1991). At a point in the process the mourner is exhorted to complete the mourning, leave the world of the dead, and reincorporate himself with the world of the living. A ritual presentation and reception of gifts is part of the completion of this section of the mourning rite.[20] There is no idiom for such an act in modern Western languages. Perhaps a suitable English rendition could be 'to complete one's mourning' with the understood alignment of internal and external aspects of the process and also the expectation of social recognition of and participation in the mourning.

As for the expression עָפָר וָאֵפֶר ('dust and ashes') its symbolic potential has been thoroughly discussed. It seems to me much of its multivalent potential actually rings through even in the English, and so I do not discuss this here. Let me just say that embedded in its symbolic range are references to mourning rites, like those mentioned in Job 2:11f, where the friends come to comfort (נחם) Job while he is 'in the ashes' (בְּתוֹךְ־הָאֵפֶר) and they take part in mourning rites by throwing dust (עפר) upon their heads.[21]

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17. Taking אֶמְאַס as a legal utterance: 'I recall / withdraw', apparently first suggested by Pope 1973: 348f.
18. מָאַסְתִּי לֹא־לְעֹלָם אֶחְיֶה חֲדַל מִמֶּנִּי כִּי־הֶבֶל יָמָי.
19. Perhaps also Job 7:13, where the bed carries complaint and the couch is for נחם.
20. Anderson 1991: 78-82 and esp. 84-87. Similarly de Boer 1991: 192f, on other grounds.
21. Similar practices are described in Gen. 18:27; Ezek. 27:30; Job 30:19.

d) Another English Rendition of Job 42:1-6

The above arguments permit a reading where Job objects to God's display of overwhelming power by insisting on completing his rites of mourning – a mourning that God and Job's friends have so far declined to fully recognise.[22] God's display of power makes Job give up his hope to move the deity. But he does not forfeit the inclination that his experience requires a more thorough kind of נחם (reversal of mind) than God and Job's friends had been willing to concede. While there are many issues I did not discuss, I offer this English rendition to indicate implications of the points argued above. For the purpose of clarity the renditions that most deviate from conventional reading are emphasised.

1 Job answered the Lord and said:
2 ***You*** know you can do anything;
nothing of your purpose would be impossible to you.
3 [You said] 'Who is that, darkening the council without knowledge?'
[That] I make assertions, but I do not understand;
[that] the topic be too wondrous for me, and I do not understand even that.
4 ***[Like Elihu said:]*** 'Listen now, let me speak,'
[For you yourself said:] 'I will inquire from you, and you shall teach me.'
5 ***[So:]*** Hearsay I was hearing about you,
and now I see you with my [own] eyes.
6 Therefore: ***enough***!
But I still complete my mourning over dust and ashes.

e) A Provocative Implication for the Book as a Totality

There is no room to explore the wider implications of this reading here, but let me mention one aspect that lends credibility to the above reading.[23] If 42:6 says Job insists on completing his mourning with the expected social ratification, then the visit of relatives and friends in 42:11 makes sense. More surprisingly, even the gifts from YHWH narrated in 42:10.12-15 could be seen as subtle נחם gifts. And Job 42:7-9 could be seen as divine support for a ritual re-initiation of Job to his previous ritual role (cf. Job 1:5).

All this opens towards a reading that entails a new perception of the restitution of Job – the part of the book that most modern interpreters find philosophically disturbing. In this reading the restitution completes the mourning process and so confirms Job's consistent

22. נחם occurs as a *Leitmotif* in the book: Job 2:11; 7:13; 16:2; 21:34; 29:25; 42:6.11.
23. Also taking the epilogue as part of the book argument, cf. Clines 2011: 1240-42.

solidarity with his own experience of loss. Job thus retains his integrity (Job 1:1 etc.) While YHWH gets the benefit of the power, Job gets his socially recognised נחם, and the score is even – at least until the next catastrophe strikes.

3. Canonical Formation: Job the Pious

It seems clear that the aspect of the book that most fascinated modern biblical scholarship, was the portrayal of Job the rebel. His discourse offered them the opportunity to deal with deeply humane and existential matters in ways that were felt to be meaningful – and also to address what some of them saw as the suppressive power of religious tradition. And yet, as I shall demonstrate, in the key passage of Job 42:1-6 the overwhelming majority of academic readers describe Job on the defensive and submissive end of the available interpretive range. In so doing they side with ancient receptions of the pericope, from the Septuagint and the Vulgate through the *Qere* and the Targums. Why is this, and what does it say about traditional reading conventions in biblical scholarship?

a) Modern and Ancient Receptions

A long line of prominent scholars made Job either explicitly repent in verse 6 (like the LXX and Vulgate), or they made him submit by withdrawing his legal case. It is no point to attempt a complete list here, but let me mention these works, all of which are significant and of high quality: Dhorme (1984: 646f); Fohrer (1963: 531f, 534-36); Gordis (1965: 304f); Weiser (1968: 254, 264f); Pope (1973: 347-49); Westermann (1977: 125); Gordis (1978: 493f, 573); Murphy (1981: 43f); de Wilde (1981: 396, 398-402); Habel (1985: 576, 582); Janzen (1985: 251, 254f); Zuckerman (1991: 25, 152); Perdue (1991: 232); Wolfers (1994: 373, 460-62); Strauß (2000: 336, 387); Fyall (2002: 179f); Wilson (2007: 476). Most of these also think that Job's speech in verse 3b is sincere, which renders him on the defensive also in that verse.

Conversely, the list of scholars attempting to find a rebellious Job in this passage is fairly short and also fairly recent. And to my mind, not even David Clines, a wonderfully recalcitrant scholar who champions this view, really succeeded to save Job's integrity. Clines clearly has the inclination to render Job as non-submissive. He takes the proponent to 'submit (legally)' rather than to repent in verse 6, thus avoiding a blunt submission. But he also lets Job admit in verse 3b that there may have been some substance to YHWHs previous speech. Also he lets Job 'accept consolation for my dust and ashes' in verse 6, which seems to me to admit that the deity had provided something valuable. And, of course, in verse 2a Clines (2011: 1204f) translates with the rest of the guild along the lines of the *Qere*.

Prior to Clines, only a few scholars attempted to read the pericope in the same direction. Among them were Patrick (1976); de Boer (1991, first presented in an address in 1977), Morrow (1986); Good (1990); Dailey (1993); van Wolde (1994); Newsom (1996); Krüger (2007a). Some of these portray Job as a 'soft' rebel, by letting him avoid to succumb completely or to making ambiguous propositions. To the extent that these scholars comment upon verse 3b, they all take it to be spoken sincerely in Job's voice, thus in practice offering a sort of confession. See for instance Good (1990: 340); van Wolde (1994: 231 *et passim*); Newsom (1996: 627f); Krüger (2007a: 226); Clines (2011: 1204f).

There clearly is a profile to modern critical reading at this point, and it goes contrary to the inclination of most of these scholars to focus Job's rebellion. And the single point that most effectively pushes these excellent scholars in the same direction is their choice to read or translate with *Qere* in Job 42:2. Once Job is heard to recognise (in a sincere voice) God's power in verse 2a, the textual space for his rebellion evaporates. Again, the list of scholars making this textual choice is impressive. (Dhorme 1984: 645; Fohrer 1963: 531; Gordis 1965: 304f; Weiser 1968: 254, 263f; Rowley 1970: 341; Pope 1973: 347; Westermann 1977: 124-28; Hesse 1978: 202f; Gordis 1978: 491; Murphy 1981: 43f; de Wilde 1981: 396; van Selms A. 1983: 207; Habel 1985: 575; Hartley 1988: 534f; Good 1990: 170f, 370-78; Perdue 1991: 232, 234; Alden 1993: 408; Wolfers 1994: 373; van der Lugt 1995: 407-09; Newsom 1996: 627; Strauß 2000: 336, 337f, 386; Fyall 2002: 37, 177f; Wilson 2007: 465f.) Clines (2011, 1204f) is again a good case in point: '*[Kethib]* makes no sense […] [*Qere*] is universally accepted as the preferable reading.' As argued above, this text critical choice is argumentatively weak. If academic reasoning is *not* what keeps the *Qere* reading in this loop, then what is it?

Already in Robert Gordis (1965: 219, 222-27) noted that the Job character that made it into traditional Jewish reception was the pious sufferer of the frame tale, not the passionate rebel of the dialogue. We now know the LXX has a very strong depiction of Job as righteous (Witte 2007: 48-50), and it avoids rendering Job's contest with God (Marcos 1994: 265). The Targums portray Job more as a saint than a rebel (Mangan 1991: 272), and so does the Testament of Job (Begg 1994: 437-39). The Mishnah and later rabbinic tradition see Job as a model of virtue (Weinberg 1994: 287f, 290). Also in early Christian reception Job became a model for the patient believer (Simonetti and Conti 2006: xv, 1f). In short, the piety of Job seems to be a constant feature across ancient reception (Vicchio 2006: 113, 131, 152, 190, 192f, 209f, et passim). A reflection of the perception of Job as a model believer is visible already in Ezek. 14:14-20 and Jas 5:11. It seems evident that the versions and *Qere* to Job 42:2 reflect a profile in traditional reception of the hero and the book. Indeed, this reading would seem necessary for anyone aiming to render Job as remaining (in the end) pious.

So, we may conclude that ancient reception of the book 'tamed' Job in 42:2 in order to render him recognisable from the point of view of orthodox believers. And modern scholars in *their* reception do much the same. There is a genealogy of conventional reading to be explored here. Also, modern biblical scholarship needs to reflect seriously about this dynamic in the discipline and its implications.

b) The Presence of Past Reception

Biblical scholarship was funded on a view of biblical theology formulated for instance by Johann Philip Gabler (1753–1826) in 1787.[24] The program was to free the reading of the bible from the teaching of the church by having exegesis limit itself to the historical sense of the scriptures. Biblical theology was intended to break off from its ecclesial context and stick simply to historical 'facts'. Contrary to Gablers's and other modernists' expectation, however, the past exerts more influence on current life than is visible on the surface. This seems to be strongly so in the case of the bible. For more than a millennium the Vulgate occupied central spaces in Western culture. Its renditions got moulded into texts, European languages, and common practices, some of which are still lingering. Beyond that, the Vulgate prolonged its presence by influencing vernacular bibles like the Wycliffe bible, the *Lutherbibel*, and the King James' Authorised Version. Publishers of bibles in the 21st century may claim these were 'translated anew directly from the source languages',[25] but anyone with experience in actual bible translation knows this is in fact more complicated. Most Protestant bibles connect historically either to the *Lutherbibel* or to King James' Authorised Version. Roman Catholic bibles connect to the Vulgate, and Orthodox bibles to some version of the LXX.
Churches and national bible societies that produce modern bibles are hedging around the integrity of their respective tradition. For instance in the case of Job 42:1-6 this usually means that modern translations decide for a rendition informed by the LXX-Vulgate profile.[26] So, past reception of the bible is present not only in dusted manuscripts in monasteries and museums. They are represented also through current bible translations, by the institutions that produce these bibles, and – mostly unwittingly – by the public that rely on these institutions to keep providing bibles. Taken together, these habits, institutions, cultural products, markets,

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24. In his inaugural lecture in Altdorf, *De iusto discrimine theologiae biblicae et dogmaticae regundisque recte utriusque finibus* (ET: On the correct distinction between biblical and dogmatic theology, and the right limits of each.)
25. A promotional slogan for the new Norwegian bible in 2011.
26. Thus the Norwegian 2011 translation, against the advice of the translation team.

etc. make up what I would call the material matrix that subtly represent past reception of the bible in the present.

A professor of Hebrew Bible / Old Testament studies analysing the book of Job makes contact with this matrix in many ways. First, given the complex philology of the book, the professor is likely to consult a number of current translations. Being 'modern' texts, these are perhaps liable to accumulate more argumentative force than the ancient versions, which they often nevertheless reflect. The matrix appears also in the professor's students, many of whom were recruited to theological studies through encounters with precisely these modern bibles. And through the market of education the professor and her institution is involved in a cultural economy that puts biblical studies on the university agenda because the bible is perceived to charter ideas, attitudes, and practices that are valuable in that economy.

Obviously, the impact of this presence of past reception of the bible is anything but direct and authoritarian. However, the fact that modern scholars so unanimously accept the standard view of Job 42:2 indicates that it could still exert influence. In fact, our deeper investigation of this one examples offers a view of the current intellectual blow to modernist and historicist ways of imagining biblical studies. The idea of pure intellectual perception hovering freely across all historical context, much in the fashion of Gabler, is simply no longer tenable. The discipline og biblical studies needs a different format, one that recognises the complex presence of past biblical reception as part of the condition as well as the rationale for the discipline.

c) Curators of Cultural Capital (Canons)

A new format for biblical studies is a complex issue that cannot be discussed in full here: my aim is to start a reflection only. In all simplicity, I would suggest for biblical scholars to learn a lesson from cultural studies. It makes sense to see the presence of past reception of the bible in translations and receptions, reflections in literature, oral convention, popular practices, and so forth as taking part in what Pierre Bourdieu called cultural capital. Such capital comes in three forms. Its fundamental form is *the embodied state*: knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired by an individual through a process of socialisation. The second form, *the objectified state*, occurs when capital of the first form is objectified 'in objects and media, such as writings, paintings, monuments, instruments, etc.' (Bourdieu 1986: 6, etc.). These objects can be appropriated materially (through the expenditure of economic capital) or symbolically (through embodied cultural capital). Third, there is *the institutionalised state* of cultural capital: when embodied capital is consigned through the acquisition of academic degrees, titles,

and other certificates of embodied cultural competence. For reflecting on the bible, let us consider the objectified state of cultural capital.

When a version of the bible reaches the status of objectified cultural capital, like various English standard versions, it becomes a cipher for a large amount of collective cultural work and production over a long time. Such work includes aspects of individual acquisition of literacy, the formation of literary taste, sense of history, of social values, perceptions of humanhood, etc. Like other successful objectifications, the bible can be used to promote cultural formation (or, in the parlance of Bourdieu: *habitus*) to the next generation. In fact, Bourdieu – perhaps surprisingly to many[27] – describes this dynamic of cultural validation in ways very similar to what literary theorists name canonization.[28]

The fact that the bible has reached such a status in many Western societies is doubtlessly one important reason why biblical studies are on the agenda in European universities. It is common knowledge in these societies that this particular cultural heritage has a long history, that its original texts were in non-Western languages, that its literary and rhetorical forms mirror cultural competences different from those in current Europe, that their historical references need to be verified, and so forth. So biblical scholarship is needed, despite the fact that the bible has been translated possibly more than any other book. The bible as cultural heritage needs to be presented to the public in a credible fashion. In this perspective biblical scholars fulfil a duty which is not very different from that of curators in historical or archaeological museums. These curators preserve and sometimes restore their objects, they decide suitable frames, excerpts, and sequences for these objects to be viewed by the public. The parallels to my textual archaeology above should be clear.

If we imagine biblical scholarship to take part in curating a social canon, within which is contained also a religious canon, interesting perspectives arise. First, it is evident that biblical literature does not loose its dimension of being cultural capital when it emigrates from the pulpit – or: in the case of Job, perhaps from the theatre – to the auditorium. For biblical scholars to neglect this aspect of their cultural — somewhat in the fashion of Gabler — would mean to leave that dimension to interpreters who historically have often been less sensitive or less responsible with these dimensions of the text. Unlike in the time of Gabler, however, today it is possible to recognise reception of the bible widely outside of ecclesial and other expert religious circles. As is now recognised in much professional practice, this may give biblical studies a new perception of its location in cultural space.

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27. Few indexes to Bourdieu's books mark 'canon' or 'canonicity'. The one in Bourdieu 1993 counts 15 occurrences, two of which are substantial (106-07; 243-44).
28. Guillory 1993: 325-40 informatively applies Bourdieu to a discussion of modern literary canon formation.

Secondly, a cultural canon like the bible as perceived in culture is full of internal paradoxes and surrounded by social contestation. Responsibly curating this heritage therefore means taking part in the hermeneutical and political debate on how best to curate contested heritage in contemporary cultural institutions.[29] Obviously, for a professor in a public university of the 21st century it makes little sense to side with one or the other hegemonic reception (be it religiously or culturally charged). Instead, the ethics or reading seem to take on a new and more significant role of the discipline (see below).

Thirdly, in this new format a study of the bible as canon would *not* primarily attempt, in the style of Childs or others, to identify 'standard' Jewish or Christian interpretations of a given passage. Rather, canonical studies would have a strong empirical element, mapping what groups of readers actually do to a given text – not unlike the study I offered of reading profiles to Job 42:1-6. Such studies might be of limited value for critical exegesis of a given passage (below), but they could reveal a lot about genealogies of reading patters and so to the conditions for making sense of a given passage in a given community.

d) Critical Reading: Curating Job 42:1-6

Finally, and all to briefly: biblical studies should also have room for critical reading in this new format. This where ethics of reading come into play in new ways. Let me exemplify by returning to our biblical passage.

First, however, and before turing to ethics or reading, a basic demand for any serious reading is that it respects the best knowledge currently available on linguistic, literary, rhetorical and other conventions coded into the biblical text. Hence, much of the classical historical philological repertoire of biblical studies remains relevant, and also linguistics, literary studies, etc. All this should be clear in the above discussion of Job 42:1-6.

More characteristically, a curator of this passage would have the responsibility to ask: what might be a useful or interesting rendition and presentation of the passage for the many readers and communities relating to it as cultural capital? In a complex case like Job 42:1-6, different answers might be needed for different 'exhibitions'. (I believe this applies to many classical texts: most of them strike me as immensely complicated universes of textual production, transmission, and reception.) So the curator keeps asking: what reading situation and what readers to serve? In the case of my work on the book of Job, my biography – i.a. as an auxiliary chaplain in a mental hospital back in the 1980's – has rendered me sensitive to the fact that this particular book may offers an emotional and intellectual space where individuals

29. A wonderful presentation in Naguib [forthcoming]. Cf. also Brosius and Polit 2011.

may negotiate their struggle to make sense of their lives, often in the face of loss and severe suffering. My encounters, in different settings over many years, with interlocutors enduring such struggles tells me that rendering Job as defensive and submissive in Job 42:1-6 renders this passage to be less of a psychological, cultural, and philosophical resource than it could have been, in particular to vulnerable readers. I sympathise with these readers, and occasionally I could well see myself as one of them. The fact that scholars like Clines and van Wolde also seem to look for a non submissive Job in ch. 42, could perhaps be taken to indicate that this sensitivity is shared. Perhaps it reflects an emerging reading pattern, one that is suitable for present times while also being capable to offer a credible representation of the text.

Even if this were the case, it would of course not do away with all conventional reading of Job 42:1-6, nor would I like it to do so. The portrayal of Job as pious seems to have served a good many readers well for a very long time. It would be foolish to try to terminate that service. My move is not an attempt to destroy the traditional reading, it is a move to challenge its canonically generated hegemony, which so effectively seems to have prevented alternative reading. The that readers I aim for, do seem to need this help: they have no reading tradition to speak for them. They rely on a curator working in his 'laboratory' to restore and present the possibility that the book of Job renders a story of a poor man who kept insisting on the integrity of his suffering; a man who under the weight of life took the history of that suffering as his point of orientation, a basis for his quest for identity and authenticity. Therefore, I thought, it would be my responsibility, as yet another curator of this particular heritage, to provide just that reading option.

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