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FORM, ORALITY, AND INTERTEXTUALITY IN EZEKIEL 28:1-19

This article provides a form critical analysis of Ezekiel 28:1-19, while also examining the methodological perspective of Susan Niditch in her book, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature.*[1] I propose an original literary structure based on speaker and audience, demonstrate a new understanding of the genre of Ezekiel 28, and highlight the importance of intertextuality within this particular text. In addition, I explore and assess Niditch's methodological strengths and weaknesses as it relates to issues of intertextuality and orality. I demonstrate the limitations of her approach insofar as she lacks specific criteria for determining oral or literary works. I also illustrate that the interpretive question of orality and literacy is not invalid even if the proposed answers to it are speculative and difficult to prove.

I chose to examine only the first nineteen verses for two reasons. First, these verses deal exclusively with Tyre, while the concluding verses of the chapter (vv. 20-26) deal with Sidon and Israel. Second, Niditch only comments on vv. 1-19 in her work, although she never acknowledges this emphasis in her discussion of chapter 28. So, I follow her treatment of the text by focusing only on the first nineteen verses of the chapter. However, one should note from the beginning that the two textual sections within vv. 1-19 are distinct enough to warrant a separate discussion of each at almost every turn. Therefore, within each section of this article I often separate the units in order to provide a more in-depth discussion.

This article treats each form critical topic (structure, genre, setting) in turn, incorporating Niditch's work into the discussion when relevant. At the end, I consider Niditch's proposals on orality and intertextuality in a concentrated way.

[1] Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996).

Structure

Ezekiel as a book is structured according to thirteen chronological formulas found consistently throughout the book.[2] These formulas create a repeated literary pattern within each new literary unit consisting of a narrative followed by oracles. Thus, Ezek 28 belongs to a larger literary unit, which begins in Ezek 26:1 as follows: "in the eleventh year, on the first day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me." Ezekiel 29 begins a new literary unit with a different chronological marker: "In the tenth year, in the tenth month, on the twelfth day of the month, the word of YHWH came to me." In between these chronological formulas, stands the literary unit, Ezek 26-28. Furthermore, Ezek 28 contains three subunits, which all begin with the prophetic word formula.[3] Ezek 28:1-19 encompasses two of the three units. Modern commentators are basically universal in their acceptance of these two units as appropriate divisions of the text.

Report of Ezekiel's Oracle concerning Tyre's Prince

I. Ezekiel reports a divine word: Prophetic word formula	28:1
II. YHWH's instructions to "son of man"	28:2-10
A. Divine Command to "son of man" to speak to the leader of Tyre	28:2aa-β
1. Son of man address	28:2aa
2. Command to speak	28:2ab
B. Divine Message for leader of Tyre	28:2ac-10
1. Messenger Formula	28:2ac
2. Reason for punishment	28:2ad-5
a. I am a god	28:2ad-2bb
b. Wiser Than Danel	28:3-5
3. Announcement of punishment	28:6-10
a. Summary of punishment reasons	28:6
b. Punishment	28:7-10

The first-person prophetic word formula begins the section and establishes Ezekiel as speaker. The formula occurs 48 times in the book of Ezekiel as a structuring element to subdivide a literary unit. In Ezek 26-28, the prophetic word formula occurs five times to create five distinct oracles (26:1b-21; 27:1-36; 28:1-10; 28:11-19; 28:20-26). Thus, the formula introduces the next unit in this section (vv. 11-19) and signals that YHWH's speech is coming, and it is directed toward the prophet. Therefore, the above structural outline is determined at the

[2] For a complete outline of the literary structure of the book, see Tyler D. Mayfield, *Literary Structure and Setting in Ezekiel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 119-121.

[3] See Mayfield, *Literary Structure*, 117-121, for a discussion of this formula within the book of Ezekiel.

macro-level by the speaker: Ezekiel as the narrator (v.1), then YHWH as the instructor (v.2).

Verse 2 begins the divine word to the prophet, a word that continues for the rest of the oracle. This section divides into two sections: first, the divine command to Ezekiel and second, the message proper for the leader of Tyre. The criterion for division is based on the intended audience of the speech since YHWH is speaking throughout the verses. First, YHWH speaks to Ezekiel; then, through Ezekiel, YHWH speaks to the leader of Tyre.

The divine command to Ezekiel contains two parts. An address form "son of man," which is used throughout the book as Ezekiel's title, begins the command, and a command proper to speak to the leader of Tyre ends the command.

The message proper (vv. 2ac-10) includes a messenger formula, a relatively lengthy reason for the punishment, and the announcement of punishment. The messenger formula occurs frequently in Ezekiel and twice in our present passage. As it stands in our unit, these are the first words Ezekiel is instructed to say to the leader of Tyre. Verses 2ad-5 do not have a clear literary structure, although two key particles help divide the section in half. Verse 2ad begins with "because," while v. 3 begins with "behold." Finally, the announcement of punishment in vv. 6-10 divides according to the two occurrences of the particle, *lākēn*.[4] Note that the first *lākēn* does not act in its normal role to introduce the punishment. Instead, it introduces a messenger formula and a final clause that summarizes vv. 2ad-5. The second *lākēn* at the beginning of v. 7 serves the usual function and sets up the punishment presented in vv. 7-10.

The above structure diverges from other scholars mainly because of an emphasis on the rhetorical features of speaker and the addressee, although smaller sections of the unit were divided according to Hebrew grammar and syntax. Hals' structure, for example, captures some of the formulas, but relies more on themes and content.[5] Also, whereas some scholars such as Greenberg, choose to begin and end their discussion of structure with the message proper to the king, I outline the entire passage in its complete, literary form.[6]

Report of Ezekiel's Oracle concerning Tyre's King

I. Ezekiel reports a Divine Word: Prophetic word formula	28:11
II. YHWH's instructions to "son of man"	28:12-19
A. Divine Command to "son of man"	28:12a-ba

[4] For an assessment of the particle, see W. Eugene March, "Lākēn: Its Function and Meanings," in *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honor of James Muilenburg*, edited Jared J. Jackson and Martin Kessler. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1974, 256-284.

[5] Ronald M. Hals, *Ezekiel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 195-6.

[6] Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 576-7.

1. Son of man address	28:12aa
2. Command to raise a dirge	28:12ab
3. Command to speak to him	28:12ba
B. Divine Message for King of Tyre	28:12bb-19
1. Messenger Formula	28:12bb
2. Dirge	28:12bc-19
a. Positive Image of king	28:12bc-15a
b. Negative Image of king	28:15b-19

As with the previous oracle, this one begins with a first person prophetic word formula. The oracle is demarcated with this formula at its beginning and another occurrence of the formula in v. 20, which begins an oracle against Sidon, Tyre's northern neighbor. Ezekiel as narrator is the speaker of the unit. In v. 12 the speaker shifts to YHWH as Ezekiel relays the deity's word. First, Ezekiel is addressed as "son of man," a term that occurs ninety-three times in Ezekiel beginning in Ezek 2:1. The phrase begins the divine address to the prophet, which ends in v. 19. Next, an imperative and *waw* consecutive verb provide the prophet with two directives: to lift up a dirge against and speak to the king of Tyre. Then, the message proper for the king appears in the form of a messenger formula and a dirge.

Dividing the dirge proper into individual sections proves difficult. The text is complicated and confounding as evidenced by the many Greek textual variants. Furthermore, no syntactical markers alleviate the situation. Thus, I divide the material in half based on content. There is a noticeable shift in the tone of the language at v. 15a. Whereas before this fulcrum the king is described as "full of wisdom," "perfect in beauty," "blameless," after v. 15a he is "filled with violence," and "proud." Furthermore, the actions of YHWH are recorded in the first person in the second section. Zimmerli's reconstruction of the passage, which tries to maintain the *qinah* pattern, is without textual and methodological support.[7] Greenberg, unfortunately, focuses again on the structure of only a part of the oracle, the dirge.[8] Although his discussion is erudite, he misses the overall structure of the passage.

Niditch's treatment of Ezek 28 does not include a discussion of structure. She fails to distinguish between the two oracles. Since they have a similar referent, namely Tyre, she discusses them as if they are a unity. Her primary focus is on the second oracle (vv. 11-19), although she never clarifies the reasons for this focus.

However, elsewhere in her book, she argues that the use of formulas by an author demonstrates that a text belongs in an oral register, that is, they

[7] Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 81-86.

[8] Greenberg, *Ezekiel 21-37*, 576-7.

"evidence traits typically associated with ascertainably orally composed works." [9] The two oracles in Ezek 28:1-19 contain both a prophetic word formula and a messenger formula. Furthermore, Sweeney states, concerning the messenger formula, "It seems to have originated in the ancient and widespread practice of the oral transmission of a message by means of a third party."[10] Yet, the question remains: How far removed is Ezekiel's use of these formulas from the oral world of messenger transmission in which they supposedly originated? These formulas are used so frequently throughout the prophetic literature that they have become, in fact, literary devices/markers—a role far removed from their original oral origins. So, in the case of these formulas, what once functioned entirely within the oral world has become fixed in its literary use by the writers of the prophetic literature.

Genre

To find and label the genre(s) of a passage does not bring about a complete grasp of the text's meaning.[11] The genre in which a text participates certainly provides many clues as to its purpose and meaning, but the text's genre does not speak the whole truth about a passage.[12] Each passage brings a certain amount of individuality or deviance to its genre.[13] Furthermore, some passages participate in more than one genre, as in the case of our texts.

Both units, Ezek 28:1-10 and 28:11-19 are reports of YHWH's instructions to Ezekiel to speak an oracle. The narrator and Ezekiel are the same in this passage since the initial statement is in the first person singular[14], and they both serve as the speaker of the whole passage. The text does not present the prophet as delivering the oracle. Instead, Ezekiel relays how the word of YHWH came to him and gave him a command to speak. This genre designation is significant since most scholars, including Hals, whose commentary is particularly interested in genre, view these units foremost as oracles. The text does not warrant this claim, since hypothetically it could have stated that Ezekiel stood up and delivered an oracle against the leader/king of Tyre. Designating these units as reports however does not allow us to ignore the fact that within the text an oracle is embedded.

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[9] Niditch, *Oral World*, 10.

[10] Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39, with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 546.

[11] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York: Oxford, 2003), 12, notes "The point is not simply to identify a genre in which a text participates, but to analyze that participation in terms of the rhetorical strategies of the text."

[12] For the language of a text "participating" in genre, see Newsom, *Book of Job*, 12.

[13] Newsom, *Book of Job*, 12, states "Authors often invoke generic models in order to deviate from them."

[14] Technically, the narrator of the report speaks on behalf of the fictive speaker, Ezekiel. But the two speakers are essentially the same at the highest level of the passage's structure.

Each of our units contains an oracle. Ezekiel reports that YHWH commands him to speak an oracle (v. 2ab, 12ba); then, the text provides that oracle.[15] Sweeney's definition of the genre proves helpful: "a broad generic category that designates communication from a deity, often through an intermediary such as a priest, seer, or prophet."[16] The communication in our oracles comes from YHWH through a prophet, Ezekiel (called "son of man"), to the leader and king of Tyre, respectively. The oracle is unsolicited on the part of the prophet; no inquiry into the fate of the leaders of Tyre was made by Ezekiel. Furthermore, although some scholars view these oracles as against the nation of Tyre, they are not portrayed that way in the text.[17] An individual is singled out in each case as the recipient of the message.

Each oracle also participates in a second genre, which becomes clear when one considers the actual message of YHWH to the leader or king. Verses 2ad-10 contain a prophetic judgment speech against an individual. According to Koch's label, it is a prophecy of disaster.[18] This genre typically includes three elements: a statement of the reason for punishment, the transitional word "therefore" and the messenger formula, and the announcement of punishment.[19] All three are present in Ezek 28 as well as two of the secondary characteristics of the genre: a modified call to attention (2aa-b) and an oracular formula (v. 10bb). The statement of the reason for punishment includes a quotation of the leader, who proclaims himself a god. The transition takes place in verse 6 with *lākēn*, while the announcement of punishment follows almost immediately. One expression of individuality within the text occurs in verse 6 when a summary of the reasons for punishment is given followed by another *lākēn* and then the announcement of punishment. Zimmerli calls this an "ugly repetition" and removes it from the original oracle.[20] His extraction has no textual basis and does not account for the current text as we have it, a text that does not seem awkward at the transition.

Verses 12bc-19 contain a dirge based on the Eden story of Genesis. The genre, *qinah*, of this passage is made explicit in YHWH's command to Ezekiel in vv. 12a-ba. Sweeney provides a definition of the genre, *qinah*: "a funeral song that bewails the loss of the deceased, describes his or her merits, and calls

[15] Notice also that in the second unit, Ezekiel is commanded to do two things: raise a dirge and speak. So the second unit does contain an oracle, but it is simultaneously a dirge.

[16] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 526.

[17] Hals makes the following observation: "It is actually, of course, Tyre itself as a city-state and not the person of its king which is the real object of the message, although some aspects of the ancient idea of divine kingship are employed as local color within the oracle." Hals, *Ezekiel*, 196.

[18] Klaus Koch, *The Growth of the Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969), 205.

[19] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 533.

[20] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 76.

for further mourning."[21] This genre differs from a lamentation in that the latter laments the future of a community, while the former focuses on an individual. In our verses, the genre is transformed by the prophet from a solemn event into a mockery: "prophets frequently adapted the dirge, often mockingly, to announce the fate of a king or personified nation."[22] In fact, the genre is changed drastically and yet retains the label of a *qinah*.

Gerstenberger lists the main components of a dirge as follows: expressions of moaning, a description of catastrophe, a reference to former bliss or strength, a call to weep and wail, and a subdued plea.[23] The dirge here contains only two of these elements. First, an extended passage recounts the former glory/strength of the King (12bc-15a). Second, a description of the catastrophe follows in vv. 15a-19, concluding with a "dreadful end" for the king. Interestingly, the expressions of moaning and the call to weep, elements that seem imperative for an image of lamentation, are missing. The genre has undergone some significant permutation concerning its constituent components.

Moreover, the dirge's characteristic 3-2 *qinah* meter is only detectable in a few verses. One should not insist on a consistent meter throughout the passage like Zimmerli, who tries to reconstruct the meter by adding and subtracting various words.[24] It is clear that no responsible reconstruction will restore the *qinah* meter; it does not exist uniformly throughout the unit. The fact that the text does not use the meter displays another example of its individuality.

As mentioned above, the dirge also uses the theme of the Garden of Eden in order to speak of the king of Tyre. The imagery of Eden contained in vv. 13-15 significantly shapes the dirge's presentation of the king, while the Eden imagery of v. 16 does not affect considerably the second part of the dirge. This use of Eden within the dirge may help explain why the genre is missing certain crucial elements. The dirge seems influenced mainly by the imagery and not the genre expectations.

Niditch cites the dirge form and the "occasional adherence to the limping style of the dirge" within our passage as arguments for the text's oral register.[25] She defines the dirge as a "mourning song" which was "recited before the death of its object...to bring about the object's downfall in a magical transformative way."[26] Therefore, it seems she is treating the dirge more as an event, than a genre of literature. At the very least, she is relying more on the dirge's use within its social setting than on its use within our text in order to make her argument for the oral nature of the passage. I should note that Niditch also lists other features of

[21] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 518-9.

[22] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 519.

[23] Erhard Gerstenberger, *Psalms, Part 1, with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 10.

[24] Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 87-9.

[25] Niditch, *Oral World*, 37.

[26] Niditch, *Oral World*, 36.

the text which point to the more "literate end of the continuum,"[27] but it remains unclear how the modified, unconventional dirge of vv. 12bc-19 contributes to an argument for the orality of the text.

Niditch, within the larger discussion of the book, also addresses the issue of "conventionalized patterns of content" or literary forms as one feature of oral register texts.[28] Unfortunately, her discussion is short and does not treat fully the issue of the relationship between genre and orality. She assumes that the patterns of content are part of a traditional style that has its roots in orality.[29] However, she does not argue for this conclusion. Furthermore, she does not discuss the literary aspects of genre. For example, all of our Israelite genres are known principally through their presentation in literary form. Genres are mediated through written literature. Niditch assumes that a pattern must be transmitted orality; on the contrary, a pattern can equally be reproduced and transformed at the literate end of the spectrum of texts.

Our discussion of genre shows the complexity of Ezek 28:1-19. Both units are presented as reports of divine instruction, yet they both contain oracles. Furthermore, the oracles utilize two distinct genres with one genre (prophetic judgment speech) remaining fairly consistent with its typical form and the other genre (dirge) modifying its form extensively.

Setting

Current form critical research realizes the multiplicity of settings for any given text. Whereas older form critics focused exclusively on a text's *Sitz im Leben*, recent research by scholars such as Richter has highlighted the importance of other settings.[30] This section explores three separate settings for our text: *Sitz im Leben*, *Sitz im Literatur*, and *Sitz im Geschichte*. By treating these settings separately, I do not mean to imply that they are not interrelated.

A text's *Sitz im Leben* inherently concerns social setting, the context in the life of ancient Israel in which we see texts being produced. For the sake of space, I focus within this setting on the most prominent genres within our passage—the prophetic judgment speech and the dirge. Unfortunately, this means I must ignore the aspect of report and oracle and the social settings which created them.[31] Finally, I should note that the *Sitz im Leben* of our two genres below do

[27] Niditch's term and concept. See Niditch, *Oral World*, 89-98.

[28] Niditch, *Oral World*, 20-21.

[29] Niditch, *Oral World*, 10-11.

[30] Wolfgang Richter, *Exegese als Literaturwissenschaft: Entwurf einer alttestamentlichen Literaturtheorie und Methodologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

[31] This omission does not mean that a social setting for these genres does not exist. However, it is interesting to note that most scholars do not address the social setting of these two genres because they prefer to view this passage as a prophetic judgment speech and a dirge.

not correspond neatly with their use in our passage. This dilemma highlights well the problem with older scholarship on setting. It should not be assumed that because a social setting can be determined for a particular genre that this setting is operative in the individual text.

By focusing on the element of judgment, Wolff first proposed a juridical setting for the prophetic judgment speech.[32] Westermann sees its origin in the speech of a messenger since the judgment speech contains a messenger formula.[33] Wolff's explanatory power rests in his ability to explain the presence of a list of reasons for the punishment; the verdict demands evidence of wrongdoing. Yet, Westermann explains well the reason for a messenger formula at the beginning of the speech. In the end, the social setting of the genre could be a unique combination of these two individual settings, which have been integrated by a prophet.

The social setting of the dirge concerns death. Gerstenberger notes that the certainty of no return that comes with the death of an individual and the final defeat of a city in war serves as the settings for the dirge or lament.[34] Sweeney states, "the dirge was originally performed by hired women or gifted individuals after a death, and it was usually sung in the presence of the corpse as part of the funeral preparations."[35] Here one can see how different Ezek 28's use of the dirge is from its social setting. This discrepancy points to the next setting.

Sitz im Literatur relates to the text as a literary representation. It forces the interpreter to approach the text as a piece of literature; in other words, it moves the conversation from the diachronic level of *Sitz im Leben* to the synchronic level. Here one can focus on the genre labeled report of YHWH's instructions.

Viewing the passage synchronically as literature and examining its literary structure, Ezek 28:1-19 is presented as two separate reports of YHWH's instructions. Ezekiel, the prophet, is not portrayed as literally speaking to any leader; he only reports YHWH's directions to him to speak. Of course, the reader assumes that the instructions were carried out, and the performance of the two oracles occurred. However, the literary setting does not mention this event.

The topic of the historical setting (*Sitz im Geschichte*) of the passage dominates historical-critical research and includes questions such as "when did the text's author write?" and "what historical events occurred during the time of the text's writing?" In order to identify this setting, one must rely on the historical information that the text provides.

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[32] Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1991), 56-64.

[33] Westermann, *Basic Forms*, 98-128.

[34] Gerstenberger, *Psalms*, 10.

[35] Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39*, 519.

According to Ezek 26:1, which is the last chronological marker given in the text, Ezek 28 is dated to "the eleventh year on the first day of the month," i.e., 587/86 B.C.E. However, Ezek 29:1 actually provides a date that is earlier than Ezek 26:1 so that the book does not progress along a chronological line, making the dating of these sections more difficult. Correlating the text with historical events such as the fall of Tyre proves difficult because Ezek 28 seems to look forward to the time of Tyre's destruction. Allen argues for a date of this passage during the long siege of Tyre, therefore sometime between 587 and 573 B.C.E.[36] Both Hals and Zimmerli hesitate at an attempt to locate either unit chronologically.[37] It seems the difficulty lies in the unhistorical nature of the passage; mythological themes and vague references prevent a precise historical dating.

Niditch does not situate Ezek 28 within its historical context except for a brief comment on its exilic date. However, in an intriguing way, she does present the passage within a literary setting. One might call it a canonical setting or an intertextual setting, but Niditch is careful to position Ezek 28:1-19 within the context of the Eden story in Genesis 2-3. She argues that Ezek is "an additional creation narrative," which takes up and transforms images from Genesis and uses them in order to accomplish different purposes than those found in the earlier passage.[38] I discuss more of this transformation below so for now it is enough to notice that this type of intertextuality affects the setting of the passage.

Intertextuality and Orality

The topics for discussion of the present text are almost endless, including how the two units seem to echo each other in their varied presentation of the same theme[39], how the units use different names for the leadership, and how mythological themes like the use of Danel are incorporated into the text. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on two issues that Niditch mentions, and possibly conflates, in her discussion of Ezek 28—intertextuality and orality/literacy.

Intertextuality refers to the use of a story or theme within the Hebrew Bible by another author within the Bible. Niditch, in her chapter on Genesis 1, 2-3, and Ezekiel 28 seems to have this type of phenomenon in mind; however, she focuses more on the question of orality and literacy.

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[36] Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48* (Dallas: Word, 1990), 93.

[37] Hals, *Ezekiel*, 200; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 76, 89.

[38] Niditch, *Oral World*, 25.

[39] For example, the following elements are common to both units: proud heart vv. 2, 4, 17; beauty vv. 7, 12, 17; splendor vv. 7, 17; wisdom vv. 4, 5, 7, 17; trading vv. 5, 16, 18; gold vv. 4, 13. See Allen, *Ezekiel 20-48*, 93.

Ezekiel 28 has several references to other biblical texts, making its use of intertextuality one of the most important keys to understanding the overall message of the passage. First, Ezek 28 resonates with the creation narratives in Genesis 1-3 in its use of themes and specific language. Eden is used in 28:13 to describe the perfect place where the king of Tyre lived before he met his dreadful end. The passage deliberately uses this creation theme in order to speak of a place of perfection. Also, a cherub is mentioned as serving as a guardian for the king (v. 14) and the phrase "the day you were created" in verse 14 points to the first created person. All this leads Newsom to conclude that Ezekiel is representing the king of Tyre as an "Adamic" figure.[40] Niditch notices both these connections and the obvious differences between the stories. For example, in Ezekiel, the theme of hubris is used within the story of the garden. Therefore a "fall" occurs in the Ezekiel passage, a fall that does not appear in Genesis.[41] Additionally, terms such as "sin," "violence," and "profane" occur within Ezekiel, but such strong language of wrongdoing is not found in the Genesis story.[42] Finally, the understanding of paradise, which is synonymous with God's holy mountain, is more "sophisticated" and "worldly" in Ezekiel than in Genesis 2.[43] In the end, Niditch argues that the traditional material of Genesis is "incorporated in a specific literary setting that individualizes it apart from the tradition."[44] The story of Eden has been recontextualized, a process which assumes both continuity and discontinuity of themes/elements, by Ezekiel in order to condemn the king of Tyre.[45]

Another example of intertextuality concerns the list of precious stones in v. 13. Niditch cites Newsom, who sees a priestly metaphor in the covering of precious stones.[46] The text could be referring to the list of stones on the priest's breastplate as listed in Exodus 28:17-21. Although, only nine stones are mentioned here, while Ex 28 mentions twelve. So, it looks like Ezekiel is using priestly imagery. However, either some of the stones dropped out through the transmission of the text, or Ezekiel only knows about a partial list.

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[40] Carol Newsom, "A Maker of Metaphors: Ezekiel's Oracles against Tyre." In: *Interpreting the Prophets*, edited by James Luther Mays and Paul J. Achtemeier. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987, 196.

[41] Niditch, *Oral World*, 33. One should note here the possible intertextual connection to the Holiness Code, which also uses the same words for "sin."

[42] Niditch, *Oral World*, 34.

[43] Niditch, *Oral World*, 35.

[44] Niditch, *Oral World*, 38.

[45] Newson, "Maker of Metaphors," 196. She notes: "While there are undoubtedly mythological allusions in these verses, one cannot assume that Ezekiel is simply telling a well-defined ancient myth. It seems more likely that Ezekiel is using such allusions, as he uses other materials, to create his own fictive situations for his own rhetorical purposes."

[46] Niditch, *Oral World*, 34.

Niditch's reading of intertextuality is compelling, even if it is only tangential to her point. Ezekiel uses multiple images from other biblical texts to weave his "story" about the fall of the king of Tyre in vv. 11-19. This notion of intertextuality looms large in this passage and serves as one way of understanding the divine message to the leadership of Tyre.

The final topic, which is the focus of Niditch's book and her discussion of Ezekiel 28, relates to the ideas of orality and literacy within texts. Niditch argues that biblical texts can be placed along a continuum that has orality and literacy as its poles.[47] In highlighting this issue for biblical scholarship, she contributes to the discussion by demonstrating that not everyone in an ancient society could read and write; there are levels of literacy. Therefore, texts also demonstrate different levels of literacy. She suggests that many biblical texts have certain features like parallelism and repetitions that represent a traditional style rooted in orality.[48] Furthermore, some texts such as letters or legal documents suggest a text on the more literate end of the continuum.[49]

For the Ezekiel passage, she argues that the contextualization of the Eden story within Ezekiel's oracle demonstrates that the Ezekiel text is "at the more literate end of the continuum."[50] She assumes that the use of earlier material by Ezekiel, especially within a totally new context and genre, represents a literary process. Additionally, the list of stones and the "erudite use of synonyms for sin" prove a more literate text.[51] Niditch assumes here that more complexity equates to literacy, while simplicity equals orality. Both of these assumptions are misguided and dangerous. While I would agree that the recontextualization of the Eden story by Ezekiel is a literary move, it is difficult to correlate the two concepts. In other words, recontextualization could certainly occur in oral settings. Finally, Niditch assumption that the list of stones demonstrates literacy cannot be maintained. Other ancient literature demonstrates that people were able to memorize very long lists and recite them orally from memory. Of course, this does not mean that Ezekiel's recitation is an oral production, only that it is conceivable (although ultimately improbable).

Niditch also suggests that certain aspects of Ezekiel 28 demonstrate a more oral aspect of the text: "use of the dirge form, the parallelism, and the occasional adherence to the limping style of the dirge are much expected in the oral register."[52] Of course, one can argue that Ezekiel's use of the dirge form is rather odd and transforms the genre into a new form. Furthermore, the social setting of the dirge, which was orally based, is far removed from the literary

[47] Niditch, *Oral World*, 78.
[48] Niditch, *Oral World*, 13.
[49] Niditch, *Oral World*, 89-91.
[50] Niditch, *Oral World*, 37.
[51] Niditch, *Oral World*, 38.
[52] Niditch, *Oral World*, 37.

setting of Ezekiel 28. Niditch lists these oral qualities without critically assessing their place within the overall genre and setting of the passage.

In the end, Niditch's reading of Ezekiel 28 is too short and undeveloped to be helpful. She notices some key elements of the passage including both traditionally defined oral and literate features, but she fails to appreciate them fully within the structure, genre, and literary setting of the passage. An element that is part of the traditional, oral style does not have to remain in the oral realm; it can be incorporated into the literacy realm to such an extent that it losses its oral quality.

Conclusion

I conclude with a word about Ezekiel 28 and a word about Niditch's methodology.

Ezekiel 28:1-19 presents two reports of YHWH's instructions to Ezekiel. Yet, generically, the text is more complex; the divine speech is an oracle addressed to an individual in both units, and each unit uses a different genre to convey its message. Furthermore, the genre of prophetic judgment speech, which is used in vv. 2ac-10, is preserved in typical form, while the genre of the dirge in vv. 12bc-19 is completely changed in its incorporation of various biblical themes. The historical setting of each unit is difficult to ascertain because of the vague historical allusions and the mythological elements of the passage. Both units adapt biblical stories and themes in order to convey their message, even though the supposed addressee is a foreigner who would presumably not have knowledge of these biblical themes.[53]

Unfortunately, Niditch does not discuss prophecy at length in her book. She focuses more on narratives, leaving open the question of how orality and literacy interact within prophetic literature. Her short discussion on Ezekiel 28 raises many questions about the orality of prophetic literature, but it provides few answers and even fewer guidelines as to how to pursue this line of thought. The criteria for establishing a text's oral and literate features are difficult to conceive, and one must keep in mind that all our knowledge of prophecy is mediated through a text. In the end, it is a text created by those who could read and write that one studies.

[53] This point raises questions about the audience of the passage. Does Ezekiel really mean for his oracle to reach the leadership in Tyre? Or should we see the audience as Israelite?