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The Figure of David and a Canonical Approach to Psalms 3–14

To assert that the figure of David plays an important role in the book of Psalms may sound like common sense to some, but ridiculous to others. On the one hand, David is the subject of several psalms and is named in the superscription of nearly one-half of them. On the other hand, modern historical study of the Psalter has all but left David behind. Approaching the book using higher critical and both form criticism and cult-functional criticism, scholars have discounted the historical connection between the psalms and David, rendering the role of David in the superscriptions obsolete. The past thirty-five years, however, have seen the rise of a “canonical approach” that seeks to understand the purpose and meaning of a psalm within its context in the final form of the book. Here, the role or function of the figure of David again has become a significant sub-topic within contemporary psalm studies.

In the struggle to understand the figure of David, scholars have shown an interest primarily in how David functions in the larger theological program of the book. According to one influential model, David functions differently depending on which sections are being read. In Books 1–3 (Pss 1–89), which are usually construed as historical commentary on the failure of the Davidic covenant, David functions as a historical and sapiential figure: his sufferings and deliverance are interpreted as an example of the faithfulness of YHWH for his promises to David, understood in terms of the monarchy in the pre-exilic period. With the failure of the Davidic monarchy at the end of Book 3 (Ps 89), in Books 4–5 (Pss 90–150) David changes roles, now understood as a bygone righteous figure, one worthy of imitation as Israel sings, reads, studies, and meditates on the Psalms. Here, David is no longer the “David of history,” but a literary figure who exhorts Israel towards a faith in YHWH alone as king. Related to this latter role, the use of expanded biographical (or historical) superscriptions attached to thirteen psalms is taken as a hermeneutical clue to allow readers a better understanding of the inner mind of the David found in the books of Samuel. They create a complementary portrait of David, so that when read together with 1–2

Samuel, the reader better appreciates the spirituality and motives undergirding David's actions.

In this book, I am asking whether contemporary psalm scholarship has properly grasped how the figure of David is utilized within the book of Psalms. My argument will address several related concerns, including the question of "speaking voice" (or "literary persona") and canonical context. Through an analysis of literary voice in the history of interpretation, the introductory role of Pss 1-2, and the hermeneutical value of the superscriptions, I will use Pss 3-14 to trace the relationship between literary voice and the development of the figure of David in the Psalter. I will argue that the figure of David functions multivalently in Pss 3-14, suggesting that to pigeonhole the literary voice of David into only a "historical" or "sapiential" voice is to misunderstand his role in Pss 3-14 specifically, and Book 1 (Pss 3-41) more generally.

As my analysis will show, beginning even with Book 1, the Davidic figure should be understood as exploring the faith of Israel concerning the failure of the Davidic line of kings in Judah and an ongoing hope in YHWH for the establishment of a just kingdom in the context of the Davidic promises. Book 1, then, is not an anthology meant to uphold and show YHWH's *past* faithfulness to the Davidic promises and king, but was carefully-constructed to address and explore those concerns expressed in the theological heart of the book (Book 4, Pss 90-106), including YHWH's faithfulness to his covenant promises, the ongoing role and function of the Davidic dynasty, and the relationship between the successes and failures of the Davidic line with the laments and praises of ancient Israel. Moreover, within the context of Pss 1-2, the figure of David developed in Pss 3-14 not only functions as a bygone righteous figure to be imitated by faithful readers, but also takes on additional figural roles directly related to these concerns. As such, I will show that one cannot properly interpret the larger theological program of the book without also understanding how the figure of David has been utilized in Pss 3-14. These psalms have been purposefully placed at the beginning of the Psalter to provide a kind of "pressure" on the reader, the Psalter's first exploration of the themes and concerns introduced in Pss 1-2.¹

1.1. The Rise of the Canonical Approach

The study of the Psalms has changed dramatically over the course of the past two centuries.² Generally speaking, there have been three main periods, the first

¹ The term "pressure" is one used by C. Kavin Rowe and Christopher R. Seitz, linked with Brevard Childs's language of the "coercion" of the biblical text. See C. Kavin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *ProEccl* 11 (2002): 295-312; Christopher R. Seitz, *The Character of Christian Scripture: The Significance of a Two-Testament Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 67-69.

² Consistent use of terminology related to psalms is difficult to attain. I have made every attempt to render references to the entire book as either "book of Psalms," "Psalms," or "Psalter," and to "psalms" and "psalm" in lowercase when making generic

marked by higher or literary criticism (nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries), the second marked by form criticism and cult-functional criticism (early to mid-twentieth century), and the third marked by a broadly-construed canonical and/or final-form approach (late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries). In the nineteenth century, one of the first waves of higher criticism reached the Psalter through the 1811 commentary of W. M. L. de Wette.³ De Wette's work marked a tectonic shift in the study of the Psalms. While he was by no means the first to question traditional views, he was among the first to expressly use an array of historical tools to put forward a coherent, convincing argument away from the traditionalism which still marked his predecessors.

By the mid-to-late nineteenth century, most of the psalms had been relegated to the late postexilic period and the editorship of the Psalter was conigned to the Maccabean period. The psalm superscriptions, losing their historical worth, at best were valuable in showing the ways a psalm might have been used. They were viewed as created by the editors of the book and were not even attached to the "original" form of a psalm.⁴ This did not mean that a focus on the historical situation was given up, simply that the superscriptions were not any help in getting there. Indeed, at this time a psalm was considered to be a literary work of art, with interpretive focus falling on the author's historical situation (i.e., the events and environment which the psalm itself references) and inner feelings (i.e., one's psychological and religious beliefs within a particular social setting).⁵ While there continued to be some pushback in various corners, the higher-critical understanding of the Psalter gained sway throughout Europe, England, and the United States.⁶

By the end of the nineteenth century, convictions were changing, with a new "religio-historical school" (*religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) calling for the reevaluation of history, culture, and religion.⁷ Within this milieu, a ground-

references. I will also be rendering the divine name with small capitalized letters, YHWH. When quoting other works, I have left their own use of these terms unedited.

³ W. M. L. de Wette, *Commentar über die Psalmen* (Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer, 1811).

⁴ C. A. Briggs and E. G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 1:lvii, describes this process well. The commentary of Diodore expresses a similar view, so it is not entirely new to the modern age. See Diodore of Tarsus, *Commentary on Psalms 1–51*, trans. Robert C. Hill, WGRW 9 (Atlanta: SBL, 2005).

⁵ Erhard S. Gerstenberger, "Psalms," in *Old Testament Form Criticism*, ed. John H. Hays (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1974), 180.

⁶ See the so-called "reactionary" commentators of this period, who continued in the spirit of traditional interpretation, such as: E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentar über die Psalmen* (Berlin: Ludwig Oehmigke, 1849–52) [ET: *Commentary on the Psalms* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1846–48)]; J. A. Alexander, *The Psalms* (Edinburgh: Andrew Elliot & James Thin, 1864); Albert Barnes, *Book of Psalms* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1868); and C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (London: Marshall Brothers, 1870).

⁷ Gerstenberger, "Psalms," 180–81.

breaking approach to the Psalms was formulated by the German scholar Hermann Gunkel.⁸ For him, a psalm could only be rightly understood through the examination of its “genre” (*Gattung*), alongside a recognition of a psalm’s “setting in life” (*Sitz im Leben*), the situations in which a psalm would have been used. In this regard, a psalm’s genre was understood within a more general ancient Near Eastern study of the “history of types” (*Gattungsgeschichte*).

Gunkel argued that there were four major *Gattungen* corresponding to celebrations and events in life,⁹ and although each *Gattung* had its origin in the cult, the vast majority of psalms in the Psalter, being individual songs, no longer belonged in that environment, but were more expressive of a personal and private piety than their original settings.¹⁰ Through his influence, the classification of psalms into different genres has stood the test of time, even if some scholars have nuanced them a bit differently over the course of the past century.¹¹ There has, however, been considerable opposition to Gunkel’s understanding of *Sitz im Leben*.

The first major argument against Gunkel came from Sigmund Mowinckel, whose approach faithfully relied on the foundational elements of Gunkel’s form criticism, but went in significant new directions concerning their original setting.¹² Whereas Gunkel maintained that most psalms were composed by individuals no longer formally involved in the cult, Mowinckel argued that the psalms were cultic in both origin and intention, composed by members of the temple personnel.¹³ In relocating them to the pre-exilic period, Mowinckel also proposed a new *Sitz im Leben* for many psalms: an annual autumn New Year festival.¹⁴ Situating this festival within the early monarchy, he argued that it celebrated the enthronement of YHWH as the universal king, whereby YHWH made all things new, liturgically enacting both his triumph over primeval chaos

⁸ Hermann Gunkel, *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1930) [ET: *The Psalms: A Form-Critical Introduction*, trans. Thomas M. Horner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967)]; Hermann Gunkel and Joachim Bergich, *Einleitung in die Psalmen: die Gattungen der religiösen Lyrik Israels* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1933) [ET: *An Introduction to the Psalms*, trans. James Nogalski (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998)].

⁹ Gunkel, *Introduction to the Psalms*, 19.

¹⁰ Ronald E. Clements, *One Hundred Years of Old Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 81.

¹¹ The most notable has been Claus Westermann, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, trans. Keith R. Crim and Richard N. Soulen (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981).

¹² Sigmund Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien I-IV*, SNVAO (Kristiania: Jacob Dybwa, 1921–24) [ET: *Psalm Studies*, trans. Mark E. Biddle, 2 vols., SBLHBS 2–3 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014)]; Mowinckel, *Offersang og sangoffer* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co., 1951) [ET: *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship: Two Volumes in One*, trans. D. R. Ap-Thomas (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004)].

¹³ A. R. Johnson, “The Psalms,” in *The Old Testament and Modern Study: A Generation of Discovery and Research*, ed. H. H. Rowley (Oxford: Clarendon, 1951), 190, 205.

¹⁴ Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, 1:106–92.

and the work of creation.¹⁵ In the ritual drama, YHWH is shown to reign over those kings and rulers allied with chaos, vindicating the faith of Israel by renewing his covenant with them and with the house of David. Given the scarcity of evidence for this festival within Scripture, much room was created in scholarship for developing Mowinckel's conclusions in several different directions.¹⁶

Surveying the literature which sprang up in the wake of Gunkel and Mowinckel, there is little doubt that great progress has been made in understanding the relationship between the forms of Israel's poetry and the cultic life of the pre-exilic community in which these songs and poems found their original setting. As Gerstenberger has observed, "All the evidence gathered until now... points to the fact that cultic performances of some kind have been background and fertile soil for most of the OT psalms."¹⁷ One of the main characteristics of these approaches has been to read psalms independently of one another, with little to no attention given for the collection as a whole or its arrangement.¹⁸ While Claus Westermann did some initial work in this area, the turn towards the canonical shaping of the book by its final editors is usually attributed to Brevard Childs.¹⁹

As Childs had noted, by the late 1960s the methods of form-criticism and cult-functional criticism had begun to produce diminishing returns.²⁰ Exegetical understanding of the text was resting on an increasingly fragile and hypothetical base, and he sought the secondary setting of the book of Psalms itself as more significant for exegesis. In his view, individual psalms had been loosed from their original cultic context and subsumed (or, subordinated) into a new "canonical" context with a new theological function for the future generations of worshipping Israelites. In this new setting, as part of a canon of sacred Scripture, psalms began to function normatively within the various parts of the early Jewish community.²¹ Childs thought that one of the keys to

¹⁵ Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 1:136–39.

¹⁶ See Artur Weiser, *The Psalms: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962); H.-J. Kraus, *Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament*, BZHT 13 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1951). Perhaps the most developed view of the Autumn Festival is represented by the work of the so-called "Myth and Ritual School." See Johnson, "The Psalms"; John H. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 2nd ed (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986); Steven J. L. Croft, *The Identity of the Individual in the Psalms*, JSOTSup 44 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987).

¹⁷ Gerstenberger, "Psalms," 197.

¹⁸ Gordon Wenham, "Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew, et al. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 334.

¹⁹ See Westermann, *Praise and Lament*; Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979).

²⁰ See Brevard S. Childs, "Reflections on the Modern Study of the Psalms," in *Magnalia Dei, the Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright*, ed. Frank Moore Cross, Werner E. Lemke, and Patrick D. Miller, Jr. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 378.

²¹ Childs, "Modern Study," 382.

determining this function lay in how the editor(s) of the Psalter collected psalms and organized them into the final form of the book. This included both the shape of the book—its fivefold division, doxologies marking those divisions, the psalms which introduce and conclude the book, and the strategic placement of royal psalms—and the redactions made on individual psalms, resulting in an eschatological orientation given to psalms of mixed forms, corporate reference, and the addition of biographical titles to several Davidic psalms.

In observing these editorial markers, Childs concluded that the development of the Psalter was a long and complex process, one that was not simply the result of liturgical influence.²² Beyond being a fresh articulation of praise to God through the medium of older forms, the traditional prayers of Israel now assumed a new role, and were made immediately accessible to every faithful generation of suffering and persecuted Israel, testifying to all the common troubles and joys of human life.²³ Without a need for cultic actualization psalms could be used in a variety of new situations without losing their meaning.²⁴ Most importantly, the Psalms no longer address God alone, but are the medium through which God speaks to his people.²⁵

This new understanding of the purpose and function of psalms within the life of the people of God was quite a turn from previous scholarship. The first sign that the study of psalms had taken a new direction was the success of a monograph by Childs's student, Gerald H. Wilson.²⁶ Wilson touched on a number of concepts and themes which would themselves become foundational for contemporary studies of the Psalter. In the first part of his monograph, he argued that the book of Psalms was a purposefully organized collection, using a comparative study of the Psalter with other ancient song collections. In the second half, he sought to show what editorial purpose lay behind the Psalter in its final form, paying close attention to how royal and wisdom motifs were developed along the so-called "seams" of the book.

In his further work, Wilson countered Childs's claim that the Psalter was edited towards a more eschatological orientation. This was achieved, in part, by his understanding of the introduction to the book. For him, the Psalter can be divided into two interlocking frameworks: a royal frame (Pss 2–89) which has been enclosed by a sapiential frame (Pss 1, 90–150). There is a notable difference in orientation between these two frames, and thus, between Pss 1–2. Books 1–3 (Pss 2–89) are historical in nature, using royal psalms to affirm and uphold יהוה's commitment to the Davidic promises (Pss 2, 72, 89). The experience of the exile, however, raised important questions concerning the future of the

²² Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 512.

²³ Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 521.

²⁴ Childs, "Modern Study," 584; Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 515.

²⁵ Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 513. He wrote: "The prayers of Israel directed to God have themselves become identified with God's word to his people."

²⁶ Gerald H. Wilson, *The Editing of the Hebrew Psalter*, SBLDS 76 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1985).

Davidic dynasty, and the ancient Israelite community sought a more fundamental foothold for hope. The answers, argued Wilson, can be found in Books 4–5. Here, one finds a strong call to repentance and an exhortation towards faith in YHWH alone as the true king of Israel. Israel is urged back to its more fundamental and simple Mosaic faith, with the figure of David emerging in Book 5 as an exemplary (literary) figure of repentance and faith for the postexilic community. Hope for a future under a reigning Davidide fades into the background—and may even disappear altogether—while a call for repentance enters the foreground. With repentance, YHWH will bring Israel back from exile, restore their fortunes, and rebuild Zion (cf. Ps 102). Psalm 1, as introduction to the whole book, aligns well with the focus of Books 4–5, urging meditation on the Torah of Moses (1:2).

In the thirty years since his initial monograph, dozens of important contributions have been made within this new approach of “reading the Psalms as a book.”²⁷ Perhaps a great indication of the value of the canonical approach to the study of the Psalter is the growing number of commentaries which take seriously a psalm’s setting in the book as a clue to its meaning.²⁸

²⁷ See J. Clinton McCann, Jr., ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, eds., *The Book of Psalms: Composition & Reception*, VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005); David Firth and Philip S. Johnston, eds., *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2005); Erich Zenger, ed., *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010); William P. Brown, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Nancy L. deClaisse-Walford, ed., *The Shape and Shaping of the Book of Psalms: The Current State of Scholarship*, AIL 20 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Beyond edited volumes, note the following summaries of recent research: David Howard, “Recent Trends in Psalms Study,” in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches*, ed. David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 329–68; Patrick D. Miller, “Current Issues in Psalms Studies,” *WW* 5 (1985): 132–43; James Nogalski, “From Psalm to Psalms to Psalter,” in *An Introduction to Wisdom Literature and the Psalms: Festschrift for Marvin E. Tate*, ed. Harold Wayne Ballard and W. Dennis Tucker (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 37–54.

²⁸ See especially Frank-Lothar Hossfeld and Erich Zenger, *Die Psalmen, Vol. 1: Psalmen 1–50*, NechtB (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1993); Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51–100*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005); Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101–150*, trans. Linda M. Maloney, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011); James L. Mays, *Psalms*, IBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994); J. Clinton McCann, Jr., “The Book of Psalms: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *New Interpreter’s Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 4 (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 641–1280; Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms: Volume 1*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002); Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003); Geoffrey Grogan, *Psalms, Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008); Howard N. Wallace, *Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009); and Walter Brueggemann and William H. Bellinger, Jr., *Psalms*, NCBC (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

1.2. Psalms 3–14 and the Figure of David

Given the above description of the state of psalm scholarship, it may appear that Pss 3–14 are an odd place to begin one's investigation of the role of the figure of David within the Psalter. Considering psalm studies more generally, the leading reason for choosing to work with this group of psalms is its significant placement at the beginning of Book 1. Its positioning within the shape of the Psalter intensifies its hermeneutical significance and pressure on the reader. In psalm scholarship, it is well-acknowledged that Pss 1–2 are introductory, setting the agenda for the book and introducing the reader to its larger theological concerns. As will be discussed below, while scholars have had some difficulty dividing Book 1 into smaller groupings of psalms, there is a strong majority who consider Pss 15–24 as forming a distinct grouping of psalms. This, at the very least, sets Pss 3–14 off at the beginning of Book 1.

Given this position, one might have expected that research on Pss 3–14 (or some grouping of psalms that resembles it) had been undertaken to explore the development of the themes and topics within this context. It is surprising, then, that so few studies on these psalms have actually carried this hermeneutical insight through.²⁹ One peruses the available resources to find that, having dealt with Pss 1–3, an author will usually skip to Ps 41, perhaps touching on one or two additional psalms along the way; such studies speak in generalizations and are not much help in showing development from psalm to psalm, or even from one cluster of psalms to another.³⁰ This is not to say that the contributions have thus far been unhelpful—far from it. But one of the shortcomings has been that, in articulating a larger editorial purpose for the book of Psalms, they have

²⁹ Joseph P. Brennan, "Psalms 1–8: Hidden Harmonies," *BTB* 10 (1980): 25–29; Friedhelm Hartenstein, "'Schaffe Mir Recht, JHWH!' (Psalm 7, 9): Zum Theologischen und Anthropologischen Profil der Teilkomposition Psalm 3–14," in Zenger, *The Composition of the Book of Psalms*, ed. Erich Zenger, BETL 238 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), 229–58; Patrick D. Miller, "The Beginning of the Psalter," in *The Shape and Shaping of the Psalter*, ed. J. Clinton McCann, JSOTSup 159 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 83–92; Miller, "The Ruler in Zion and the Hope of the Poor: Psalms 9–10 in the Context of the Psalter," in *David and Zion: Biblical Studies in Honor of J. J. M. Roberts*, ed. Bernard F. Batto and Kathryn L. Roberts (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 187–97; Rolf Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms," in *The Book of Psalms: Composition & Reception*, ed. Peter W. Flint and Patrick D. Miller, VTSup 99 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 53–64; Howard N. Wallace, "King and Community: Joining with David in Prayer," in *Psalms and Prayers*, ed. Bob Becking and Eric Peels, OTS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 267–77.

³⁰ See W. Dennis Tucker, Jr., "Beyond Lament: Instruction and Theology in Book 1 of the Psalter," *Proceedings EGL & MWBS* 15 (1995): 121–32; J. Clinton McCann, Jr., "The Shape of Book I of the Psalter and the Shape of Human Happiness," in *The Book of Psalms* (ed. Flint and Miller), 340–48; William H. Bellinger, Jr., "Reading from the Beginning (again): The Shape of Book I of the Psalter," in *Diachronic and Synchronic: Reading the Psalms in Real Time*, ed. Joel S. Burnett, W. H. Bellinger, Jr., and W. Dennis Tucker, Jr., LHBOTS 488 (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 114–26.

largely ignored how the concerns of Pss 1–2 have been initially developed in Pss 3–14. It is time for Pss 3–14 to receive a proper treatment, one which may perhaps reorient (or at the very least *inform*) the discussion which has already taken place.

Another significant reason for choosing these psalms is the lack of consensus concerning the function or role the figure of David plays within the book of Psalms. Two views are influential, but no one has yet been able to show how they relate to one another, or even if they can be held together. The first view, following Gerald Wilson (cf. my brief review above), considers Books 1–2 as historically-oriented and concerned with promoting the faithfulness of YHWH towards the reigning Davidic king and the Davidic promises. For him, Book 3 raises theological questions regarding YHWH's commitment to David given the ultimate failure of the Davidic dynasty, with Books 4–5 exhorting Israel towards faith in YHWH as the universal king. In this scheme, the figure of David is understood as an historical figure in Books 1–2, and becomes an exemplary (bygone) figure of repentance and faith in Book 5.³¹ A second view, building off the work of Childs, constructs the figure of David not through the shaping of the book *per se*, but in how several Davidic psalms were given expanded biographical titles pointing to various episodes in his life as recounted in 1–2 Samuel (and perhaps Chronicles).³² In these studies, the expanded titles help to unite the narratives of David with the Psalms, giving the reader a privileged glimpse into the mind of David.

While there is something to be said for both of these views, each needs to be reworked to provide a more lasting contribution to psalm studies. Wilson argued that the voice of David in Book 1 is a past voice, a voice that can only speak concerning the unique relationship David enjoyed with YHWH. This is due to his understanding of the introductory psalms, since for him they set up the Davidic voice within a particular historical setting in relationship to the ascension of David and the time of the united monarchy. Thus, the voice of David

³¹ Wilson, *Editing*, 220–28.

³² A number of contributions can be noted here: Brevard S. Childs, "Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis," *JSS* 16 (1971): 138–51; Elieser Slomovic, "Toward an Understanding of the Formation of Historical Titles in the Book of Psalms," *ZAW* 91 (1979): 350–80; Alan M. Cooper, "The Life and Times of King David according to the Book of Psalms," in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism*, ed. Richard Elliot Friedman, HSS 26 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1983), 117–31; James L. Mays, "The David of the Psalms," *Int* 40 (1986): 143–55; Jean-Marie Auwers, "Le David des Psaumes et les Psaumes de David," in *Figures de David: À Travers la Bible*, ed. Louis Desrousseaux and Jacques Vermeylen (Paris: Cerf, 1999), 187–224; Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, "The Psalm Headings: A Canonical Relecture of the Psalms," in *The Biblical Canons*, ed. Jean-Marie Auwers and H. J. de Jonge (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 247–54; Rendtorff, "The Psalms of David: David in the Psalms"; Vivian L. Johnson, *David in Distress: His Portrait through the Historical Psalms*, LHBOTS 505 (London: T&T Clark, 2009).

is unique and historical.³³ In this book, however, I will argue that the voice of David has not been relegated to the past, but, through the introductory setting (Pss 1–2) and the use of biographical headings, speaks with a present and future voice. That is, in Pss 3–14 we meet a “voice without end” who speaks to the present and future of God’s people.³⁴

Concerning Childs’s view of David, it is significant that the expanded psalm titles are not believed to inform one’s reading of the Psalms, but one’s reading of “David” within a united, complementary portrait of the figure of David in 1–2 Samuel. In doing this, scholars have failed to appreciate how the intertextuality of the psalm titles hermeneutically shapes one’s reading of psalms themselves in the context of the Psalter. In my view, the hermeneutical move must be flipped, with 1–2 Samuel being used to shape the Psalms via the superscriptions, and not *vice-versa*.³⁵ By turning the formula around, I will show that the figure of David in the book of Psalms is not appropriated to give us a glimpse into the mind of David but in order to set up the Psalter’s own “David,” which has a significant impact on the theological movement of the book.³⁶

1.3. A Canonical Approach to Psalms 3–14

As I noted above, the canonical approach to the Psalms proposes that “the ordering and placement of the psalms is not entirely random, but that the Book of Psalms has been shaped by the work of editors in order to emphasize the importance of certain theological themes.”³⁷ The implications of this shift for interpreting individual psalms are significant. As Wenham explained: “If the psalms have been arranged thematically, by title, and by keywords to form a

³³ In his commentary, Wilson never draws out these earlier observations and is satisfied with a more generic psalmic voice in his interpretation of Books 1–3. See Wilson, *Psalms*.

³⁴ See Brevard S. Childs, “Analysis of a Canonical Formula: ‘It Shall be Recorded for a Future Generation,’” in *Die Hebräische Bible und ihre zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift für Rolf Rendtorff zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. E. Blum, C. Macholz, and E. W. Stegeman (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 357–64.

³⁵ For the larger discussion, see Christopher R. Seitz, “Psalm 34: Redaction, Inner-biblical Exegesis and the Longer Psalm Superscriptions—‘Mistake’ Making and Theological Significance,” in *The Bible as Christian Scripture: The Work of Brevard S. Childs*, ed. Christopher R. Seitz and Kent Harold Richards, BSNA 25 (Atlanta: SBL, 2013), 279–98.

³⁶ I was delighted to find the publication of Stefan M. Attard, *The Implications of Davidic Repentance: A Synchronic Analysis of Book 2 of the Psalter (Psalms 42–72)*, AnBib 212 (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical, 2016). In this work, Attard reads Book 2 in much the same way as I have advocated reading Pss 3–14 (pp. 25–28). He writes, “Our working hypothesis is that the resulting ambiguity suggests that these Davidic psalms are not merely meant to fill out lacunae in Samuel and Kings, but are rather meant to create a body of literature in its own right that possesses its own logic, namely the Book of Psalms” (27).

³⁷ Jamie A. Grant, *The King as Exemplar: The Function of Deuteronomy’s Kingship Law in the Shaping of the Book of Psalms*, AcBib 17 (Atlanta: SBL, 2004), 13.

deliberate sequence, it is imperative to read one psalm in the context of the whole collection and in particular in relationship to its near neighbors.”³⁸ As such, this new literary context has subordinated the original *Sitz im Leben* of the psalms in the cult under its canonical situation as part of Israel’s scriptural traditions. Here,

the net effect of the canonical reading of the Psalms is that each composition is now read within a literary context.... The Psalms are no longer to be read as the song book of Israel, they are instead to be read as a book like any other book of the Bible.... This means that each poem is influenced by the context within which it is found—either simply by its juxtaposition alongside a neighbouring psalm or neighbouring psalms, or by its inclusion in a collection such as the Song of Ascents, or by its placement and positioning within one of the five books of the Psalter.³⁹

In a 1993 essay, Gerald Wilson articulated succinctly the four methodological components of a canonical approach to the book of Psalms.⁴⁰ For him, “Any progress in understanding the purposeful arrangement of the psalms in the Psalter must begin...with a detailed and careful analysis of the linguistic, literary and thematic linkages that can be discerned among the psalms.” First, then, one must attempt “the recognition of clear indications of psalms groupings where discernible.” Second, one must make a “detailed and systematic investigation of linguistic and thematic connections between psalms within these groupings and their subgroups.” Third, and only after finishing the above steps, one can begin a “judicious speculation...regarding the purpose or effects of the arrangement of the whole Psalter.” And fourth, with less certainty, one can “make suggestions as to the appropriate social/historical matrix that may illuminate the theological function and purpose revealed by the editorial arrangement.” These methodological concerns will be utilized in my analysis of Pss 3–14.

1.3.1. *Psalms 3–14 as a Distinct Group*

Wilson’s initial call is for the recognition of clear indications that Pss 3–14 are in fact a distinct group of psalms in the Psalter, with a subsequent investigation into the shaping of this group of psalms to discern any smaller sub-groupings or psalm clusters. Beginning at the macro-level, biblical commentators stretching back to antiquity have observed that the book of Psalms has been divided into

³⁸ Wenham, “Towards a Canonical Reading of the Psalms,” 347. See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 51–100*, 7. They write, “Each psalm is a text in itself with an individual profile, and at the same time it is open to the context in which it stands within the book of Psalms, which gives it an additional dimension of meaning.”

³⁹ Jamie A. Grant, “Determining the Indeterminate: Issues in Interpreting the Psalms,” *Southeastern Theological Review* 1 (2010): 11–12.

⁴⁰ Gerald Wilson, “Understanding the Purposeful Arrangement of Psalms in the Psalter: Pitfalls and Promise,” in McCann, *Shape and Shaping*, 50–51.

five separate sections, usually referred to as “books.”⁴¹ The marks of division occur in doxological formulae found at the end of four psalms: Pss 41:14; 72:18–19; 89:53; and 106:48. In virtually all modern introductions and commentaries, this fivefold shape of the book of Psalms is given account. Modern accounts usually consider Pss 1–2 and 146–150 as introduction and conclusion, respectively, dividing them off from Books 1 and 5.⁴² Using this framework, a common way to divide the book of Psalms is as follows: Introduction (Pss 1–2), Book 1 (3–41), Book 2 (42–72), Book 3 (73–89), Book 4 (90–106), Book 5 (107–145), and Conclusion (146–150).

Within this fivefold shape smaller groupings of psalms can be observed, usually based on genre considerations and/or elements within the psalm headings. For instance, in Book 5 there are a several groupings of psalms based on associations with David (Pss 108–110; 138–145), ancient liturgical practices (113–118), and the Songs of the Ascents (120–134). Book 1, however, has been notoriously difficult to divide into smaller groups of psalms. This is largely because these principal factors of division offer meagre guidance. Nearly every psalm in Book 1 has been associated with David, leaving little to no room based on this criterion, and of the thirty-nine psalms in Book 1, twenty-three are typically classified as laments (Pss 3–7, 9/10, 12–14, 17, 22, 25–28, 31, 35, 36, 38–41), and do not seem to offer any satisfactory division into smaller groups. Without such guides, scholars have been forced to consider other clues concerning its shape.

As a starting point, many consider Pss 15–24 to be a grouping of psalms, based on their chiasmic structure: 15 and 24 are paired up as psalms of a temple entrance liturgy, 16 and 23 as psalms of confidence (trust), 17 and 22 as psalms of lament, 18 and 20–21 as royal (kingship) psalms, and 19 receiving the focus of the chiasm as a hymn about the benefits of Torah.⁴³ In fact, Hossfeld and Zenger aver the chiasmic pattern observed for Pss 15–24 provides a template for understanding the structure of Book 1 as a whole.⁴⁴ For them, Book 1 divides into

⁴¹ See William G. Braude, *The Midrash on Psalms*, YJS 13 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 1.5 (on Ps 1:2); Eusebius of Caesarea, “Hypothesis on the Psalms” (PG 23.66); Gregory of Nyssa, *Treatise on the Inscriptions of the Psalms*, trans. Ronald E. Heine (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴² See Hossfeld and Zenger, *Psalms 101–150*, 1–7, 605–7; Brueggemann and Bellinger, *Psalms*, 2.

⁴³ Pierre Auffret, *La sagesse a bati sa maison: Etudes structures litteraires dans l’Ancien Testament et specialement dans les Psaumes*, OBO 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 407–38; Patrick D. Miller, “Kingship, Torah Obedience, and Prayer: The Theology of Psalms 15–24,” in *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung: Festschrift für W. Beyerlin zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. K. Seybold and E. Zenger, HerdBS 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1994), 127–42; Jamie Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 235–36; Matthias Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, FAT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 24–25.

⁴⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 12–14. The same divisions are also used in Gianni Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit: Eine synchrone Analyse von Psalm 1–41*, OBS 16 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1999).

four sub-groupings: Pss 3–14; 15–24; 25–34; and 35–41. In each grouping, the “corner psalms” (*Eckpsalmen*) are correlated, with a third psalm marked out as the thematic center. These marked psalms in turn project the form and content of the psalms which surround them. For instance, Pss 3 and 14 are identified as *Eckpsalmen*, each asking YHWH for help and blessing for God’s people Israel from the God of Zion.⁴⁵ Psalm 8, then, is marked out as the thematic center of the group, a hymn within a grouping of lament psalms.⁴⁶ Not all, however, are convinced by Hossfeld and Zenger’s concept of *Eckpsalmen* and “center” psalms.

Jamie Grant, for example, has argued that in order for their divisions to hold any weight, they must be able to identify elements of disjuncture and conjuncture to show that one group of psalms can and should be distinguished from another group of psalms.⁴⁷ The concept of *Eckpsalmen* at best offers proof of disjunction, marking off the group from other groups. In order to give definitive proof of division, elements of conjunction within a group must also be observed. This, Grant argues, can *only* be detected within Pss 15–24.⁴⁸ From his analysis, a tentative structure within Book 1 would yield three sections, not four: Pss 3–14; 15–24; and 25–41.⁴⁹ These two theories on the structure of Book 1 illustrate both the complexity of the issue as well some of the major concerns regarding conjuncture and disjuncture.

Turning to Pss 3–14, the methodological need is to establish points of conjunctive editorial activity and elements of disjuncture which may indicate further sub-divisions into smaller psalm clusters. Scholars have currently only taken seriously two theories about the shape of Pss 3–14, those of Hossfeld/Zenger and Matthias Millard. After reviewing them, I will offer an alternative third theory, which will serve as the foundational building block of my later analysis.

1.3.1.1. Hossfeld and Zenger on the shape of Pss 3–14. According to Hossfeld and Zenger, Pss 3–14 is an independent grouping of psalms which has been marked out by two corner psalms (Pss 3 and 14) and a thematic center (Ps 8). For them, the entire unit has been thematically oriented towards the poor and the suffering of the righteous by “outside threats.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, hope remains, as seen in the closing prayers of Pss 3 and 14, which petition for YHWH’s help and God’s blessing upon his people (3:9; 14:7).⁵¹ Similarly, in Ps 8, despite the threat of persecution, human “honor” is indestructible for it is a participation in divine honor, the mightiness of YHWH himself.⁵²

⁴⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 56.

⁴⁶ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 12.

⁴⁷ Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 234–40.

⁴⁸ Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 238.

⁴⁹ Grant, *King as Exemplar*, 239.

⁵⁰ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 13–14.

⁵¹ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 14, 56.

⁵² Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 12, 14.

For them, to truly understand the inner relationships between the psalms in the group one must also understand something about the diachronic processes which brought them together. They explain that Pss 3–14—as well as Book 1 as a whole—is the result of a four-stage “growth process” (*Wachstumsprozesses*) spanning the late pre-exilic to Hellenistic periods.⁵³ The first stage comes in the composition of independent prayers of request, lament, and thanksgiving, written within the late pre-exilic period. This would have included Pss 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 14, and perhaps an early version of Ps 8. In the late exilic or early post-exilic period, a second stage consisted of the compilation of these psalms into small groups, incorporating with them additional late pre-exilic or exilic psalms, expansions within individual psalms, and psalms written by the redactors themselves.

The first small grouping of psalms, Pss 3–7, forms a series of laments of someone being pursued. As an outside bracket, Pss 3 and 7 provide a paradigm for the situation of distress (*Notsituationen*), with the petitioner praying as a (politically-)pursued worshipper using regal language. Inside this bracket, Ps 4 illustrates the invocation of a poor person, Ps 5 one who is in need of justice (*Rechtsnot*), and Ps 6 that of a sick person. These specific kinds of afflictions are meant to be paradigmatic for various aspects of a sorrowful or painful human existence. The second small grouping, Pss 11–14, has been brought together in order to focus on a “theology of the poor.” As a group, these psalms are arranged as a process of prayer which one undertakes to practice “the certainty that YHWH is the patron-God [*Schutzgott*] of the poor.”⁵⁴ Psalms 11 and 14 form a frame, using the image of YHWH as the king who brings justice amidst a chaotic world (11:7; 14:1–3; cf. 12:13). Within this frame, Ps 12 is a lament depicting the heavenly judge as a patron God of the poor, while Ps 13 is placed after Ps 12 in a purposeful response to its promises: that YHWH would “now arise” (12:6) is answered with a fourfold question of “how long?” In this literary position, it can be read as a lament of one who is poor and oppressed, who desires to be included amongst the poor named in Ps 12.

Within this same late exilic redaction, Ps 8 was included between these two groups of psalms as its center, spreading throughout the entire grouping a theology of human dignity. As part of the redaction process, verse three was added to better fit the psalm into its place, picking up on themes of YHWH as heavenly king found in both Pss 7 and 11. This edition of Pss 3–14* articulated an awareness of the poor and persecuted with an acute perception of their

⁵³ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 14. The following discussion has relied principally on their introduction to the commentary (pp. 14–16), as well from comments in the preface to each psalm (pp. 56, 59, 64, 68, 72, 77, 82–83, 89, 93, 96, and 100). It should be noted that their treatment of the diachronic growth of Pss 3–14 is related on a larger scale to the growth of the entirety of Book 1. For our concerns, I have only summarized that material relevant to Pss 3–14.

⁵⁴ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 100.

distresses, which have been named according to their causes (e.g., persecution, poverty, slander, false accusation, the brutality of the rich, etc.).

The third stage took place in the post-exilic period, likely in the fifth or fourth century BCE. The focus of this expansion is not Pss 3–14 but other groupings in Book 1, altering our understanding of Pss 3–14 by emphasizing the “piety of the poor” (*Armenfrömmigkeit*), who are no longer understood simply as a social entity, but now have their own religious category. By changing the perception of the “poor” in the Psalms, this edition of Book 1 attempts to use the poor as representative of the “true Israel.” Just like the poor, Israel itself is treated with hostility, and by identifying with the poor is able to lay claim to יהוה’s close relationship to the righteous (“the poor”), knowing that God’s authority and rule will prevail.

A fourth (and final) stage of redaction occurs during the Hellenistic period, which again broadens the notion of the “poor” (and its synonyms) to include all Israel in its threats from within and without. It is at this time that Pss 9–10 (as a single psalm) are included within Pss 3–14, transforming the group into its present shape. Though Ps 9/10 had already been written prior to its inclusion, its editors had adapted the original “to a new historical situation and opens up the entire Davidic Psalter as prayers of the poor and of the poor people Israel.”⁵⁵ In its final redaction, Book 1—including Pss 3–14—attempts to define the whole of Israel as the “poor,” threatened from both internal and external enemies.

The most striking element of this proposal for understanding Pss 3–14 is its sheer comprehensiveness. Hossfeld and Zenger’s attempt to understand the dynamics of how these texts function in view of their redactional growth is both laudable and exceptional. Even so, it is remarkable that they have not concluded their analysis with an attempt to describe the text synchronically as it now stands. Their comments, as such, are incomplete.⁵⁶ In my view, this is not due to their redactional model, but their understanding of the final form (or lack thereof). In their view, Ps 9/10 was added alongside the previous center of the group (Ps 8) and establishes lexical and thematic connections with psalms on

⁵⁵ Hossfeld and Zenger, *Die Psalmen 1–50*, 83.

⁵⁶ On this point, even though Hossfeld and Zenger identified themselves with an approach akin to that of Childs, they fail to do final form analysis of Pss 3–14. See Childs, “Analysis of a Canonical Formula,” 363–64. The emphasis of a canonical approach is not simply to track with the developmental growth of a certain collection of texts, but also to see how this “reconstructed depth dimension” actualizes the tradition for its own ends. A canonical approach accounts for diachronic development, but only as this better helps to inform the text in its received shape. While Hossfeld and Zenger expertly trace the development of various themes throughout the different stages of the text—and even note how Pss 9/10 attempts to redefine the identification of the “poor” from previous stages of redaction—they fail to account for how all of these elements work together in the received text. To see how a synchronic reading might apply to the redactional-critical work of Hossfeld and Zenger for Pss 3–14, see Barbiero, *Das erste Psalmenbuch als Einheit*, and Hartenstein, “Zum Theologischen und Anthropologischen Profil.”

both sides of its placement. But there is no discussion of how the inclusion of the psalm might have affected the overall balance of the grouping which, in my assessment, has been thrown off. While Pss 3–7 may have formed a sub-unit in its original grouping, the clear binding together of Pss 7–9 (cf. 7:18; 8:2, 10; 9:2–3) shows that Ps 7 has been reassigned a different role in the structure of the group. Instead of forming part of the frame surrounding Pss 4–6, it now functions as the beginning psalm in a new grouping of psalms (Pss 7–14). This new function is at least partially marked by the biographical elements in the superscriptions of Pss 3 and 7.

1.3.1.2. *Matthias Millard on the shape of Pss 3–14.* A second important theory on the structure of Book 1 has been put forward by German scholar Matthias Millard.⁵⁷ In his view, the book of Psalms is made up of a series of “compositional arcs” (*Kompositionsbögen*). Against Hossfeld and Zenger, Millard argued that Book 1 is composed of three major *Kompositionsbögen* (Pss 1–10; 11–31; and 32–41), divided by psalms without superscriptions.⁵⁸ While he does not speak much about Pss 11–14 in his monograph, he devoted an entire section to Pss 1–10. For him, Pss 1–10 fit into the category of “post-cultic sapiential liturgy of thanksgiving” (*weisheitlich-nachkultischen Dankliturgie*).⁵⁹ Like Hossfeld and Zenger, he argued that the first major sub-grouping of psalms in this section is the lament cluster of Pss 3–7. Before this group, Pss 1–2 form an introduction (*Einleitung/Anfang*) to the entire book (not just Pss 1–10), and have been given a sapiential shape (cf. 2:12). Following the group is a hymn (*Lob/Hymnus*, Ps 8), a song of thanksgiving (*Dank*, Ps 9), and a concluding lament (*Klageschluß*) which also evidences a sapiential setting (Ps 10).⁶⁰

Unlike Hossfeld and Zenger, Millard took the biographical superscriptions seriously as clues to the interpretation of psalms, as a “midrash of the Davidic history.”⁶¹ In his view, the principal role of biographical titles in Pss 1–10 is to set up David as one who prays (*Beter*), introducing direct speech to God within the episode of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam 15–18). Concerning structure, Millard argued that Pss 3–7 form a chiasmic pattern: Pss 3 and 7 have Midrashic superscriptions, Pss 4 and 6 share the element בְּגִיטוֹת, with Ps 5 as the center point.⁶² Supporting this structure, he noted that Pss 3–6 contain a morning/evening motif, which highlights the critical nature of David’s extra night in the desert:

The motif of laying himself down and getting up in Ps 3–6 is, therefore, a central component of the interpretation of the context

⁵⁷ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*. See also the helpful exchange between Millard, Rendtorff, and Hossfeld and Zenger in *BibInt* 4 (1996).

⁵⁸ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 127.

⁵⁹ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 127.

⁶⁰ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 127. See his charts on pp. 163 and 168.

⁶¹ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 131.

⁶² Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 131.

of Ps 3ff. as midrash to the history of Absalom. Accordingly, this motif is lacking in Ps 7, where the victory of David is already referred to in the superscription. From this interpretation of Ps 3ff., David prays in this night, which is crucial for his victory.⁶³

There is, then, a kind of story being told through the biographical superscriptions, working from David's flight in Ps 3 through the death of Absalom in Ps 7. In Millard's view, the "Midrashic" superscriptions bookend a *Kompositionsbögen* which opens up the Psalter with a particular textual context.

Perhaps indicative of the problems with his theory, however, Millard observed that Ps 8 is "unwieldy" (*sperriger*), since it is "a hymn of the individual and has relatively little connection with the context."⁶⁴ While it does share some thematic links with Pss 3–7 in terms of the enemy, its reflection is not on an adult son, but children. It does not, then, fit very well into Millard's thesis that Pss 1–10 are concerned primarily with the story of Absalom's rebellion. The story continues into Ps 9, which he interpreted as a thanksgiving that the psalmist's enemies have retreated and were killed (vv. 4, 7), with the superscription again offering a midrash of Absalom.⁶⁵ The compositional arc closes with Ps 10, which is read as separate from Ps 9. In it, Millard observed a sapiential bookend with Pss 1–2, and a close relationship to Ps 2 since both psalms lack a superscription and begin, as a rarity in the Psalter, with the interrogative (למה).

In assessing Millard's view, I find his connections between psalms insightful, especially his argument that the superscriptions of Pss 3 and 7 carry a weight that moves beyond the individual psalm, setting a context for the whole *Kompositionsbögen*. His theory suffers, however, in its attempt to overlay modern notions of genre on an ancient collection whose editors simply did not work with our categories. His overarching theory that Pss 3–9 correspond chronologically with the Absalom narrative (2 Sam 15–18) also leads him into trouble with Ps 8, which has difficulty fitting into his scheme. Moreover, he never addresses how Pss 11–14 fit into his chiasmic understanding of Pss 11–31. In my view, he has neglected some important lexical and thematic links between Ps 10 and Pss 11–14, of which I will speak in a later chapter.⁶⁶

⁶³ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 131–32.

⁶⁴ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 132.

⁶⁵ Millard, *Die Komposition des Psalters*, 133. He reads the superscription, "wegen des Sterbens, in Bezug auf den Sohn, ein Psalm Davids."

⁶⁶ I would offer a similar criticism of the redactional model in Kevin G. Smith and William R. Domeris, "The Arrangement of Psalm 3–8," *OTE* 23 (2010): 367–77. They argue that Pss 3 and 7 may have been juxtaposed at one time, after which Pss 4–6 were inserted, and Ps 8 even later as a conclusion. While I appreciate a number of points they make in the article, particularly concerning the verbal links between psalms, they fail to take into account verbal links which extend into Pss 11–14, while also admitting that Ps 7 is the "odd one out" (369) in their understanding of the superscriptions. Their justification of the placement of Ps 7 within Pss 3–10 (interrupting a sequence of *מזמור* psalms) and Pss

1.3.1.3. *Two psalm clusters: Pss 3–6 and 7–14.* In view of the problematic areas in both previous accounts of the structure of Pss 3–14, I argue for an alternative theory which is built on the editorial value of the superscriptions. This theory is closely related to that of Hossfeld and Zenger but shifts the placement of Ps 7. Rather than closing an initial group as a “corner psalm” (Pss 3–7), I argue that it begins a second psalm cluster (Pss 7–14). This would create two psalm clusters within Pss 3–14, with no center psalm: Pss 3–6 and Pss 7–14. These two sub-groupings account for elements of continuity within a given set of psalms and discontinuity with previous and subsequent groups of psalms, following Grant’s earlier criterion. As with other portions of the Psalter, the best place to look for shaping begins in the editorial superscriptions. Using the headings of Pss 1–17, we can make several observations about the shape of Pss 3–14 (cf. chart on next page).

In terms of discontinuity, our first observation is that Pss 1–2 have been set apart from Pss 3–14 by their lack of a superscription. Second, on the other side of the group, there are clear markers of disjuncture between Pss 3–14 and 15–17. Even though we continue to find a Davidic association in Pss 15–17 (לְדָוִד), Ps 15 breaks patterns found in Pss 3–14. In Pss 3–14, every psalm besides 3 and 7 begins with לְמִנְצָח, and only 7, 11, and 14 lack מְזֻמָּר.⁶⁷ While Ps 15 is a מְזֻמָּר לְדָוִד, Pss 16 and 17 are designated לְדָוִד מִכְתָּם לְדָוִד and תְּפִלָּה לְדָוִד, respectively. The introduction of these alternate types indicates some kind of break, which is further marked by the absence of לְמִנְצָח in Pss 15–17.⁶⁸ On top of this, one must also note the widely-held chiasmic structure which holds Pss 15–24 in a tight unity.⁶⁹

In terms of continuity, we can first observe that nearly every psalm begins with לְמִנְצָח. On its own, this might not appear to be significant,⁷⁰ but the only two places it is absent in Pss 3–14 are where we find biographical superscriptions related to the life of David.⁷¹ Psalms 3 and 7, then, are marked within the larger

4–14 (interrupting a sequence of לְמִנְצָח psalms) as due to redaction history is not sufficient (371–72).

⁶⁷ Several Hebrew manuscripts and the LXX include מְזֻמָּר for Pss 11 and 14 (cf. BHS).

⁶⁸ See Gerald H. Wilson, “Evidence of Editorial Divisions in the Hebrew Psalter,” *VT* 34 (1984): 337–52, esp. 340–44.

⁶⁹ See Philip Sumpter, “The Coherence of Psalms 15–24,” *Bib* 94 (2013): 186–209; Sumpter, *The Substance of Psalm 24: An Attempt to Read Scripture after Brevard S. Childs*, LHBOTS 600 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 185–202; Carissa M. Quinn Richards, *The King and the Kingdom: The Message of Psalms 15–24* (PhD diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).

⁷⁰ Over half the psalms in Books 1–3 have לְמִנְצָח in their superscriptions: Book 1 (Pss 4–6, 8, 9/10, 11–14, 18–22, 31, 36, 39–41), Book 2 (42/43, 44–47, 49, 51–62, 64–70), and Book 3 (75–77, 80–81, 84–85, 88). Only three psalms have it in Books 4–5 (109, 139, 140).

⁷¹ When considered as a group, the presence of לְמִנְצָח for the thirteen biographical superscriptions does not appear significant: five lack it (Pss 3, 7, 34, 63, 142), and eight

whole. According to both Hossfeld-Zenger and Millard, such marking indicates that they are *Eckpsalmen* framing Pss 4–6 as a unit. In both arguments, modern form-critical analysis is the primary factor of psalm grouping, complemented by the presence of biographical headings. This, however, is not the only option. One could also argue that Pss 3 and 7 begin their own psalm clusters. To support this alternative view, we must turn to the superscriptions themselves.

The Superscriptions of Pss 1–17

| Pss 1–2 (none) | | | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Psalm Cluster (3–6) | | Psalm Cluster (7–14) |
| Ps 3 | A <i>mizmôr</i> of David, when he fled from before Absalom his son. | Ps 7 | A <i>šiggayôn</i> of David, which he sang to YHWH on account of the words of Cush, a Benjamite. |
| Ps 4 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , <i>bingînôt</i> . A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. | Ps 8 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , 'al-haggittî. A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. |
| Ps 5 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , 'el-hann ^e hîlôt. A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. | Ps 9/10 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , 'almût <i>labbēn</i> . A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. |
| Ps 6 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , <i>bingînôt</i> , 'al-hašš ^e mînî. A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. | Ps 11 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> . Of David. |
| | | Ps 12 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> , 'al-hašš ^e mînî. A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. |
| | | Ps 13 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> . A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. |
| | | Ps 14 | <i>lamnaššēah</i> . Of David. |
| New Section (Pss 15ff.) | | | |
| Ps 15 | A <i>mizmôr</i> of David. | | |
| Ps 16 | A <i>miktām</i> of David. | | |
| Ps 17 | A <i>t^epillâ</i> of David. | | |

In Pss 3–6, each psalm is titled with the elements “A psalm of David” (מזמור לדוד), with Pss 4–6 also including liturgical and musical elements. These performance elements always precede the ancient literary indication (מזמור) and association with a biblical figure (לדוד). Psalm 7, however, breaks this line of continuity. Not only is למנצח absent, but instead of מזמור, Ps 7 has been designated a שגיון, and includes a different biographical notice.

include it (18, 51, 52, 54, 56, 57, 59, 60). Ancient literary type does not appear to be significant either: four are מכתם (56, 57, 59, 60), three are מזמור (3, 51, 63), three are משכיל (52, 54, 142), one is שגיון (7), one is שיר (18), and one lacks a literary type (34).

After this break, we again find very strong continuity within Pss 8–14. Each includes *למנצח* and *לדוד*, and only Pss 11 and 14 are missing *מזמור*.⁷² As with Pss 3–6, the ordering of elements within the superscriptions may also have value, as performance elements again precede the ancient genre designation and association with David.⁷³ Further marks of continuity will be noted in my later analysis between Pss 7–8–9 and Pss 8 and 14, which strengthen the bond in this grouping. Here, it should be noted that form-critical categories have been overshadowed by the editors of the Psalter. The hymnic bridge focusing on the name of YHWH (Pss 7:18; 8:2, 10; 9:2–3) has neatly allowed Ps 8, as a psalm of praise, to fit seamlessly into a group of lament psalms (7–14). On top of this, further lexical and thematic continuity will be noted in both Pss 3–6 and 7–14.

In sum, Wilson’s method for canonical analysis initially called for the recognition of clear markers that a group of psalms are distinct from previous and subsequent psalm groupings, followed by an investigation into the how this group of psalms has been shaped. I conclude that Pss 3–14 stand apart from Pss 1–2 and Pss 15–17 through elements of disjuncture, but also show elements of conjuncture within the group. I have also argued that the biographical elements of Pss 3 and 7 mark out these psalms as beginning two different psalm clusters within Pss 3–14: Pss 3–6 and 7–14.

1.3.2. *Psalms 3–14 and Canonical Analysis*

Wilson’s second methodological concern is for an investigation of linguistic and thematic connections between psalms. While I have already noted some of these connections in the previous section, my own analysis will be found below in chapters four and five. Since Pss 3–14 are the first exploration within the Psalter of the themes and textual world presented in Pss 1–2, establishing their relationship to these psalms is also a pressing concern. The study of such links between psalms (*concatenatio*) is an established practice in the analysis of juxtaposed psalms, especially when the links contain noteworthy “catchwords” (*Stichwort*). But the significance of lexical parallels (*Wortverbindungen*) and thematic parallels (*Motivverbindungen*) beyond immediate juxtaposition is much doubted in current research. This is not a new concern but had already been raised by Gunkel in his introduction: “The danger of arbitrariness is suggested by the exposition of a thoughtful relationship as when seeking the alleged connecting catchwords.... Connections by catchwords and similarities can therefore perhaps be recognized in individual cases, but the principle fails in relation to the whole psalter.”⁷⁴ Likewise, Norman Whybray expressed his own concerns for the contemporary canonical approach:

⁷² As noted before, while *מזמור* lacks in the MT in Pss 11 and 14, LXX includes ψαλμὸς. The LXX, then, further tightens the continuity in this group of psalms.

⁷³ Incidentally, this might be an indication that Millard’s interpretation of Ps 9’s superscription, while ingenious, is not correct. It is not another biographical reference, but an indication of an ancient melody.

⁷⁴ Gunkel, *Introduction*, 334–35.

Such attempts to force psalms into a pattern of meaning that does not exist in the text illustrate the great danger of subjectivity in psalm interpretation and also show how a psalm that contains mixed, not to say contradictory, statements can be interpreted quite differently depending on the stress that is placed on particular verses. The impression is given that with a sufficient amount of ingenuity it would be possible to find links between almost any pair or group of psalms selected at random.⁷⁵

These criticisms are constructive and need careful consideration.⁷⁶ It is clear that a methodology which works with the idea of sequence must have some safeguards in place.

On the one hand, historical-critical scholarship has proven the value of understanding a psalm on its own terms, with its own genre, intentions, concerns, and *Sitz im Leben*. On the other hand, it is equally clear that the editor(s) of the Psalter saw reason to group (or leave grouped) particular psalms in the final form of the book. Each psalm, then, has a place within its literary context. The sense of this literary whole takes on a cumulative weight, with recurring vocabulary, phrases, motifs, and themes, all contributing to the meaning and trajectory of the larger picture. There is justification, then, for thinking that once we have established these more general connections, we may move into a closer analysis of how particular elements build off one another and create new meaning through their juxtaposition. I adopt the hypothesis that *concatenatio* could very well be at work beyond immediately neighboring psalms, but is limited to psalms only within the same sub-grouping or cluster. Rather

⁷⁵ Norman Whybray, *Reading the Psalms as a Book*, JSOTSup 222 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 82. He did not dismiss the idea that the book of Psalms is an editorial collection, but that current methods try to do too much and ultimately fail. His own suggestion was as follows: “There is, however, another method by which the Psalter may be shown to have a kind of literary unity. This does not require a minute examination of each psalm and its relationship with its neighbors, but is concerned with a much broader treatment of the material. It is well known that one effective way of reinterpreting collections of heterogeneous literary material used by ancient Near Eastern and Old Testament scribal editors was to enclose such material within an introduction and a conclusion to the whole work” (84). Thus, Whybray appears to value a broader understanding of editorial purpose which does not extend normatively to the relationship between each psalm in the final form of the book. In my own approach, I see the psalm cluster as the main object of interpretation, with each psalm in the cluster performing its own role. In Pss 3–6, I argue that this happens in a parallelistic fashion, while in Pss 7–14 there appears to be more of a trajectory to the cluster, with some psalms appearing to respond directly to others (e.g., Ps 9/10, or Ps 13 to Ps 12).

⁷⁶ Harry Nasuti has been quite helpful in this regard. See Harry P. Nasuti, *Defining the Sacred Songs: Genre, Tradition, and the Post-Critical Interpretation of the Psalms*, JSOTSup 218 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 128–62; Nasuti, “The Interpretive Significance of Sequence and Selection in the Book of Psalms,” in Flint and Miller, *Book of Psalms*, 311–39.

than focusing exclusively on the individual psalm, one can look to psalm clusters as meaningful units for interpretation.⁷⁷

The final two steps advocated by Wilson create a concern for a judicious discernment of the relationship between Pss 3–14 and the book of Psalms as a whole, as well as the social matrix which may be responsible for the final form of the book. While the latter will always be a product of speculation, and is not my focus, I will make a number of suggestions in later chapters on ways in which Pss 3–14 inform a reading of the book as a whole.

1.4. The Concept of Literary Persona

A second major methodological concern is the identification of the speaker in a psalm, or literary persona. In addressing this concern, I will spend the second chapter reviewing representative interpreters in the history of interpretation, and will make an argument in the third chapter that the book of Psalms itself is an important component in identifying the speaker in a given psalm. To make this argument, I will be drawing upon a theory of literary persona used by Nathan Maxwell in his recent doctoral dissertation at Baylor University.⁷⁸ This concept has a rich and diverse history in the literary tradition, and proves helpful when applied to the book of Psalms. At the core of literary persona theory is a distinction between the historical author of a text and the literary voice of that text.⁷⁹ Their relationship is complex, and Maxwell's lengthy treatment of its history can hardly be summarized here.⁸⁰ His conclusions, though, form part of the basis of my own method.

He argues that two constants are critical for a responsible theory of literary persona. First, a literary persona "is always derivative and can never be wholly separate from the poet"; and second, it is "always a voice created for the world of the poem and can never be fully equated with the poet."⁸¹ Given these constants, Maxwell develops a fourfold definition of literary persona:

- A literary persona is the creation of the poet. It is a "formalized representation of the poet's cognition and result of the poet's aesthetic design that functions to govern, regulate, and manipulate the imagery, affective qualities, and language that constitute the 'subject' or material of the poem." Here, the poet uses a literary voice to achieve a desired effect.

⁷⁷ See Attard, *Implications of Davidic Repentance*, 27–28. See also above comments.

⁷⁸ Nathan Dean Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm: A Persona-Critical Reading of Book IV of the Psalter" (PhD diss., Baylor University, 2007). Within biblical studies, Maxwell noted two works which have also employed the concept of literary persona: Michael V. Fox, *The Song of Songs and the Ancient Egyptian Love Songs* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985); Fox, *Ecclesiastes* (Philadelphia: JPS, 2004).

⁷⁹ Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm," 14.

⁸⁰ Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm," 8–95.

⁸¹ Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm," 88, 89.

- A literary persona lives and survives within the text, such that, long after the historical author passes away or is even forgotten, the literary persona can be realized in the experience of the reader.
- Even though a literary persona derives from an historical author, it is yet autonomous from the author. This is a product of the creative process in which the author used the literary persona to achieve a rhetorical or aesthetic end. Through the persona the author produces something derivative of one's self, but also other than one's self.
- A literary persona is hermeneutically bound to the text, relying on the world of the text rather than the reader's knowledge of or access to the world of the historical author.⁸²

When applied to the book of Psalms, one first must acknowledge that the voice of the speaker in a psalm is, though derived from the historical author, distinct from him. Interestingly, this idea was a key component of Mowinckel's cult-functional criticism, where the "I" of the psalm is not the composer himself, but the person for whose use he has written the psalm.⁸³ For cult-functional criticism, social context played a key role in identifying the speaker as an official in the temple. In my appropriation of literary persona theory, however, this context is different.

As discussed above, in the canonical Psalter the original cultic prayers "are changed into liturgical pieces of scriptural meditation and devotion."⁸⁴ In this new setting, its collectors and editors have given the literary persona of a psalm a new contextual setting, one distinct from the historical author of the psalm. Thus, the question about the identity of the speaker, even though it may be informed by historical-critical approaches of the last few centuries, is ultimately one which rests on the context given to the psalm in the final form of the text. Practically, this means that a psalm does not have to be written by David in order for the psalm to use the voice of the Davidic figure in its canonical context. It also shows us that the pursuit of the "historical" voice of a psalm in its original *Sitz im Leben* is not the only avenue available to give voice to a psalm.⁸⁵ The value

⁸² These four points are my own summaries. See Maxwell, "The Psalmist in the Psalm," 92–93.

⁸³ Mowinckel, *Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 2:133. He wrote, "The psalm has been composed and put into the mouth of the one who has to use it." And later in the same work, "Even if it was the task of the psalm composer to enter into the situation for which the psalm was composed, in such a way that he could give expression to that which the ill-fated king then felt and ought to feel and say, still the poet was in fact a part of it" (2:134).

⁸⁴ Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms: Part 1 with an Introduction to Cultic Poetry*, FOTL 14 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 52.

⁸⁵ The history of interpretation in both Jewish and Christian traditions amply shows that commentators were willing to hear, and advocated hearing, different literary personae in their understanding of the Psalms. Modern approaches are but one avenue on which psalm interpretation has traveled over the past 2,500 years, and its conclusions are not definitive.

of Maxwell's method is that it steps back from the simple identification of author with voice, and allows one to consider just what voice is being used in a psalm.

Literary persona theory allows one to open the door to hearing Pss 3–14 within the literary context of the book of Psalms. At the same time, it raises questions about how to identify its literary setting: what is the textual world of the book of Psalms? How is this textual world similar to or different than other books in the Old Testament? Does each psalm work within its own textual world, or is there one overarching textual world for the book within which each psalm plays a role? What are the indicators in the book about how psalms relate to one another, if any? These and other questions play an important part in our identification of the literary persona(e) in Pss 3–14.

1.5. Psalm Titles and Inner-Biblical Interpretation

In an earlier section, I briefly discussed modern developments in how to approach the psalm headings (superscriptions). Generally speaking, modern scholarship has understood the superscriptions in two different ways. The earlier tendency was to reject them as late additions to the book, concluding that they had little to no use for understanding the original setting of a psalm. More recent scholars, however, have understood them not in terms of their historical value, but in terms of their exegetical or hermeneutical value, in how they set up a psalm for interpretation.⁸⁶ Following Childs, the biographical superscriptions connect the “David” of the psalm titles to the “David” we find in narratives of the Old Testament. The goal is not to understand the “David” of the psalm titles *per se*, but to obtain a clearer picture of the mind of “David” within the historical narratives. Having gained this understanding, the reader can better identify with him in his suffering and persecution, and in imitation of him is better enabled to respond with faithful trust in YHWH regardless of her situation. In the fifty years since Childs's article, however, the function of a “title” in literature has been much discussed by literary scholars. Their conclusions have yet to be included in Psalms research, but there is much to gain by incorporating them into how we understand the hermeneutical value of psalm superscriptions.

G rard Genette has noted that at the very least a title in a work of literature is composed of three different elements: the title itself (the “message”), a sender (its author), and an intended recipient.⁸⁷ The sender does not necessarily need to be the producer of the work, as an editor could give a title to a previously untitled work; but regardless of authorship, the sender of the title (the “intitulator”) adopts the title. The intended recipient of the title is

⁸⁶ See Childs, “Psalm Titles and Midrashic Exegesis.”

⁸⁷ G rard Genette, “Structure and Functions of the Title in Literature,” *Critical Inquiry* 14 (1988): 705–6.

generally some notion of the public, and could potentially be greater than the sum of its readers, including those who contribute to the diffusion and reception of a work without ever reading it.⁸⁸ Considering the canonical Psalter, one could conclude that the intended recipient includes the entirety of God's people, and more broadly, any who are willing to sit under the authority of sacred Scripture.

Genette also details three main functions for titles, some of which are mandatory and others optional.⁸⁹ The first is designation or identification. This sets the work apart from other similar works, and can take many forms (e.g., a serial number, or a multi-line description of a treatise). In the Psalter, the title of the work is given in order to allow one to reference the work in an efficient way. As Stephen Kellman points out, numbers can be efficient ways of identifying a work, and perhaps the various enumerations of psalms throughout reception history are an example of this kind of titling.⁹⁰

A second main function of titles is description. Genette notes that this function is optional but is often inescapable in practice. The descriptive function identifies how the title of a work can provide rhematic (generic) and thematic descriptions of the piece of literature. For instance, in the title, *A Treatise on Human Understanding*, the rhematic element indicates that the work is a "treatise." For psalms, ancient type distinctions (e.g., מזמור, סיר, מכתם, משכיל, תפלה) are perhaps examples of rhematic description. Thematic description is more complex but is used to designate the central theme or subject of the work through literal, symbolic, or ironic descriptions. Using the above example, *On Human Understanding* is a literal thematic description which identifies the central subject matter of the treatise. With sacred texts (such as the Psalms), opening and closing formulae function as "an intertextual framework that allows people to identify the kind of textual situation they are about to enter."⁹¹

The third main function of a title is its connotative function. Here, the title reminds the reader about other works, whether to recall other authors, other periods of writing, or other works of a specific genre. This information is always attached to the title of a work, willingly or not. It also seems to have the most direct impact on the study of psalm superscriptions since the connotative function is hermeneutical in its orientation.⁹² As Jerrold Levinson has argued, one of the main hermeneutical roles of titles is how they "focus" a work: "What a focusing title does is select from among the main elements of core content one theme to stand as the leading one of the work.... [suggesting] which of the

⁸⁸ Genette, "Title in Literature," 706–7.

⁸⁹ Genette, "Title in Literature," 712–19.

⁹⁰ Steven G. Kellman, "Dropping Names: The Poetics of Titling," *Criticism* 17 (1975): 156–57.

⁹¹ Wolfgang Karrer, "Titles and Mottoes as Intertextual Devices," in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 128.

⁹² John Fisher, "Entitling," *Critical Inquiry* 11 (1984): 288.

contending themes should be given center place in interpreting the work and organizing one's appreciation of it."⁹³

Technically, the superscriptions or headings are not "titles" in the modern sense, at least in how we think about literary works. They are not identifications (e.g., the numerical numbers given in MT and LXX), nor are they the focusing titles given to various psalms as, for example, in many English translations.⁹⁴ Rather, their associative value focuses the psalms by connecting them to the cultic life of Israel through musical and ancient genre indication and their association with leading figures in the establishing of the cult during the reign of David (e.g., David, Asaph, the sons of Korah). Moreover, the biographical headings given to Davidic psalms "pressure" interpretation in certain directions. Such headings are "allusive" and are "dependent on our collective memory, our sense of tradition"; and as far as we can identify them, "activate potential references."⁹⁵ Kellman explains several literary titles which are illustrative: "Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* insists that we recall our experience of *Hamlet* before encountering this new work. Huxley's title *Brave New World* obliquely signals Miranda's innocence in *The Tempest*, but it in any case points both outward and inward."⁹⁶ In my view, this well illustrates what is happening with the biographical elements associated with David. Indeed, Kellman describes perfectly the effect of the inclusion of the Psalter within Israel's scriptural traditions: "A large class of books achieves this effect by plucking bits of earlier works out of their familiar surroundings and pressing them into service on a new title page."⁹⁷ The effect is that the present text utilizes the earlier text to create something new.

This means that biographical superscriptions do not actualize the stories of David in order to fill in the blanks about David's inner thoughts; rather, their primary purpose is to "press" the narratives "into the service" of a new literary work, the book of Psalms. This point will be expanded later, but, for now, my argument is that this "pressing into service" is the development of the Psalter's own figure of David. The "David" described in the narratives of Samuel certainly informs that figure, but the figure of David in the Psalms is the "David of the Psalms," not the "David" of Samuel or Chronicles or Kings or the New Testament (or some combination thereof). They supply an initial context in which the figure of David can be heard and developed.

In Pss 3–14, the initial psalms in each psalm cluster are critically important as they both contain biographical elements in their superscriptions, calling into service different episodes in the life of David from 1–2 Samuel. In Ps 3, the

⁹³ Jerrold Levinson, "Titles," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 44 (1985): 35.

⁹⁴ For example, the English Standard Version entitles Ps 3, "Save Me, O My God," and Ps 4, "Answer Me When I Call." One is reminded of the Syriac tradition of psalm headings, which are also thematically titled.

⁹⁵ Kellman, "Dropping Names," 163.

⁹⁶ Kellman, "Dropping Names," 163.

⁹⁷ Kellman, "Dropping Names," 163.

episode is the rebellion of Absalom, found in 2 Sam 15–18. The goal is not to identify the exact moment David composed or sang this psalm, but how the Absalom narrative sets up a literary context within which to hear the literary persona of Ps 3, which is literarily bound *not* by the Deuteronomistic History, but by Pss 1–2. Similarly, while Ps 7’s title has been notoriously difficult to understand, I will argue that it could fit several different episodes in the story of David associated with the cursing words of the Benjaminites, and each could provide a context in which to hear the psalm.

For both Pss 3 and 7, one must bear in mind the “allusive” narrative text, reading it alongside and in comparison with the psalm, to see which elements are fitting and which are incongruous. That a psalm does not fit perfectly in the context of the life of David is not an indication that the biographical titles are shortsighted or historically useless, but that their main purpose is not to help us understand the episodes of David in Samuel or the historical David.⁹⁸ The work of Wolfgang Müller has been particularly helpful in thinking through this process, which he calls “interfigurality.”⁹⁹ He has argued that when an author utilizes “a figure from a work by another author into his own work, he absorbs it into the formal and ideological structure of his own product, putting it to his own uses, which may range from parody and satire to a fundamental reevaluation or re-exploration of the figure concerned.”¹⁰⁰ He emphasized the necessity of recognizing that “such figures are more than mere duplicates and that they are marked by a characteristic tension between similarity and dissimilarity with their models from the pre-texts.”¹⁰¹ Though they may bear the same names, “it would be wrong to take for granted an identity of the figures from the pre-text with the corresponding figures in the subsequent text.”¹⁰² For the book of Psalms, then, points of incongruity are extremely valuable. They show us that the Psalter is developing its own portrayal of David, and as readers, we are to attempt to understand this new literary persona within the context of the Psalter itself.

In this endeavor, recalling the summary of Matthias Millard earlier, we must ask whether the biographical titles are meant to provide a literary context only for the psalm to which they are ascribed, or could they rather stand behind an entire sub-group or cluster of psalms? Should we understand, for example, Pss

⁹⁸ As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, an untidy fit between the psalm and the narrative may also indicate that the psalm has been given a secondary setting which could be different than its original purpose within a cultic and/or social context in ancient Israel. The final form of the text provides a new frame of reference for the psalm, adding diachronic depth, showcasing its new function using the persona of the figure of David.

⁹⁹ Wolfgang G. Müller, “Interfigurality: A Study on the Interdependence of Literary Figures,” in *Intertextuality*, ed. Heinrich F. Plett (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 101–21.

¹⁰⁰ Müller, “Interfigurality,” 107.

¹⁰¹ Müller, “Interfigurality,” 109.

¹⁰² Müller, “Interfigurality,” 110.

4–6 to have the same setting in Absalom’s rebellion as Ps 3? When I began my research, I had assumed that the title of a psalm governs *only that psalm*; that is, the title for Ps 3 is the title for Ps 3, not Ps 4. After completing my analyses, however, I have become convinced that one can propose the same kind of setting for subsequent psalms in the same psalm cluster.¹⁰³ In fact, for Pss 3–14, the overwhelming number of linguistic and thematic connections between psalms justifies a reading of Pss 4–6 within the same biographical context as Ps 3, and Pss 8–14 as Ps 7.

¹⁰³ See Gary A. Anderson, “King David and the Psalms of Imprecation,” *ProEccl* 15 (2006): 267–80. He applies a similar theory of the superscriptions in his account of the imprecatory psalms.