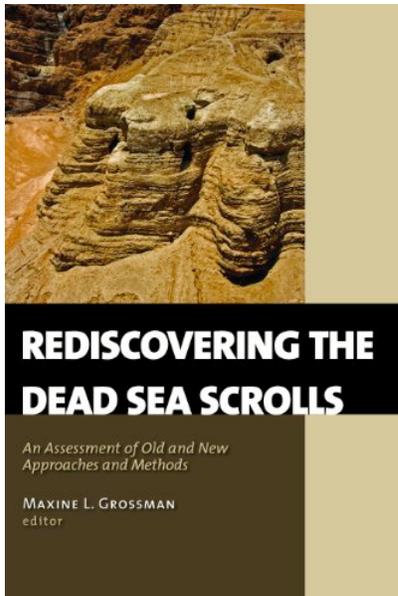


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Grossman, Maxine L., ed.

Rediscovering the Dead Sea Scrolls: An Assessment of Old and New Approaches and Methods

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Laura Quick
University of Oxford
Oxford, United Kingdom

In her introduction to this collection, “Tools for Our Work,” Maxine L. Grossman states her intention for this collaborative effort: to “bring together a range of diverse perspectives on and scholarly approaches to the scrolls” (1). She deserves congratulations for the result: this collection of fifteen stand-alone essays consisting of methodologically diverse approaches to Scrolls research introduces the reader to a wide scope of interdisciplinary techniques, encompassing paleographical, archaeological, literary, historical, and social-scientific tools, and providing hermeneutically informed discussions and concrete examples of each perspective, not only discussing but applying the approach in question to a specific problem or text.

The book opens with Sarianna Metso’s “When the Evidence Does Not Fit,” a cautionary argument against the interpretation of new Scrolls data according to existing knowledge, to what was known (or thought to be known) about the Second Temple community from which the Scrolls stem, and leading to the confrontation of the Scrolls with anachronistic categories (for instance the biblical/nonbiblical binary). Reminding us of the limits of assumed knowledge, Metso’s essay could be said to spearhead the collection as a whole, which, despite the diversity of opinions and approaches therein, unifies under its call for hermeneutically informed investigation. So, too, the following three chapters, dealing

with the manuscripts themselves: Eibert Tigchelaar (“Constructing, Deconstructing and Reconstructing Fragmentary Manuscripts”) reminds us that the Scrolls, as reconstructed documents, are “scholarly constructs” (26) necessarily to be treated with caution, while Martin G. Abegg Jr., in “The Linguistic Analysis of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” provides a primer to the various disciplines with which the language of these manuscripts may be analyzed. The emphasis here upon the reconstruction of Second Temple scribal practices seems a timely reminder to recent biblical scholarship that has sought to understand the formation of the Hebrew Bible through the lens of Mesopotamian scribal culture (David M. Carr, Karel van der Toorn) of the comparative possibilities presented also by the Dead Sea Scrolls. Concluding this section is Bruce Zuckerman, who details “The Dynamics of Change in the Computer Imaging of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Ancient Inscriptions” and calls for the utilization of such techniques in the making of new images of the Scrolls.

The following three chapters deal with the uses and abuses of archaeology and historiography in Scrolls scholarship. Jodi Magness helpfully provides a basic introduction to the “Methods and Theories in the Archaeology of Qumran,” before developing her own interpretation of the data: stemming from her methodological starting point that the Scrolls were deposited in the caves by the inhabitants of Qumran, Magness draws a picture of archaeology and scroll in harmony, reflecting a sectarian system of beliefs and practices. Hayim Lapin’s “Dead Sea Scrolls and the Historiography of Ancient Judaism” might be considered a companion piece to Metso’s opening essay, demonstrating the dangers of interpreting the limited fragmentary data according to the “Essene hypothesis.” Instead, Lapin proposes a move from the manuscript outward (112) and to extend this outward movement beyond the locative boundaries of Qumran: Lapin’s suggestion that we might utilize other contemporaneous library collections in the interpretation of the Qumran collection, such as the library of Philodemus the Epicurean from Herculaneum (126) might yet provide productive possibilities for analysis. Finally, James R. Davila (“Counterfactual History and the Dead Sea Scrolls”) imagines an alternative reality in which the Hodayot Scroll from Cave 1 is known only through a Syriac manuscript based upon a Greek rendering. Utilizing models appropriated in the study of the translation techniques found in the Greek version of Ben Sira, Davila’s hypothetical history demonstrates the limitations of the critical methods available to scholars both of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Old Testament pseudepigrapha alike.

Subsequently the collection turns to the textual analysis of the Scrolls. Eugene Ulrich’s “Methodological Reflections on Determining Scriptural Status in First Century Judaism” denies the cogency of approaching the Qumran scriptural scrolls with modern-day presuppositions concerning the shape and form of the Hebrew Bible, instead advocating an approach “according to the understanding the people had then and the reality they

knew” (151), a reality that we may reconstruct only according to the actual evidence that we have for each book and its successive editions; similar sentiments are also found in Charlotte Hempel’s “Sources and Redaction in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” which, with reference primarily to the variant copies of the Community Rule, shows the methodological appropriateness of the source- and redaction-critical models in interpreting the textual evolution of the Dead Sea Scrolls, a conclusion that is illuminating beyond the confines of the Qumran material in its biblical application, where such tools have fallen largely out of vogue in favor of more synchronic models concerned with the final form of the text (180). Drawing upon criteria developed by Emanuel Tov in identification of literary markers indicative of Qumran scribal practice in conjunction with analogies taken from his own ethnographic studies of scribal practice, Steve Delamarter in “Sociological Models for Understanding the Scribal Practices in the Biblical Dead Sea Scrolls” argues for the improbability that a single community produced the various manuscripts discovered at Qumran: various groups of manuscripts were produced by different communities and only secondarily brought to Qumran (193).

The final five chapters are the most noticeably interdisciplinary in nature, yet united in their application of models gleaned from rhetoric and social-scientific discourses to the study of the Qumran texts. Carol A. Newsom introduces “Rhetorical Criticism and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” with emphasis here on uncovering the rhetorical strategies employed by the Damascus Document, the Community Rule, and the Hymns in the construction of a community (214). Robert Kugler also draws on theories first developed outside of Scrollx scholarship, this time from the field of ritual studies. After briefly recounting the history of the interpretation of the sectarian calendar witnessed by 4QOt, “Of Calendars, Community Rules, and Common Knowledge” develops a reading of this text according to the “rational ritual” theory of Michael Suk-Young Chwe, arguing that this calendar was once shared by an early recension of the Community Rule (4QS^c) but was thereafter only alluded to in the final form of this text (1QS). Noting the possibilities opened up by feminist criticism to “make sense of ‘confusing’ or ‘anomalous’ data” (238), Maxine L. Grossman’s “Women and Men in the Rule of the Congregation” provides such an interpretation of a difficult passage from 1QSa 1:6–16, concerning women as witnesses, while Jutta Jokiranta (“Social-Scientific Approaches to the Dead Sea Scrolls”) is similarly enthusiastic concerning the role of the social sciences in Scrolls research. Concentrating on the sectarian interpretation of Scriptures found in the persharim, Jokiranta demonstrates how the tension in evidence between a sectarian movement and the larger society may be used to help provide a definition of the sectarian movement itself. Closing the volume is “The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Essenes, and the Study of Religious Belief,” in which Jonathan Klawans shares his concern that Scrolls scholars have limited comparative materials merely to the obvious statements of Josephus. Opening the arena

to potentials from the field of religious studies, Klawans proposes that material such as the Calvinist theology of predestination could and should be utilized in explanation of similar theologies within the Scrolls.

While each of these essays may be dipped into to provide a summary of a specific methodological strategy, taken together they provide an excellent illustration of the diversity of approaches in the tools utilized in current Qumran scholarship; as such, this book is an excellent primer for serious undergraduate study. Moreover, in its self-consciously hermeneutical discussions, there is much in this collection for the more experienced scholar, and it is sure to stimulate methodological reflections in even the most expert of readers.