

Authorship, Authority and Attribution: Children's Bibles, David and Psalms

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ABSTRACT

Historically, Bibles for children are dynamic and remarkably diverse interpretive vehicles. The Bibles give preference to the context of the immediate reading communities above that of the canonical source text and they are therefore highly responsive to change. They tend to delimit the Bible to a selection of the narrative sections considered child appropriate, thus excluding poetry, including psalms and wisdom literature. This article compares popular examples of children's Bibles from two distinct traditions (Jewish American children's Bibles and Afrikaans children's Bibles). It remarks upon the manner in which a return of psalms in some present-day children's Bibles takes place, arguing that a tradition of Davidic attribution is significant for thinking of children's Bibles as embedded firmly in existing traditions of Bible interpretation. Their relevance to modern readerships, the deceptive simplicity of textual engagement and its close alliance to the everyday warrant our attention and the focus of our study beyond the scope of religious pedagogy.

KEYWORDS: Children's Bibles, authority, David, Psalms.

A INTRODUCTION

Athalya Brenner-Idan and David Gunn, two leading figures in Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, were lauded recently in work thematically dedicated to children's Bibles. It hopefully means that this burgeoning literature on the margins is gradually gaining the attention it long deserved from mainstream scholarship. Children's Bibles have become increasingly the focal point (*vis-à-vis* the "adult" Bible) for twenty-first century religious discourse in both adult and juvenile reading communities. These Bibles' relevance to modern readerships, their deceptive simplicity of textual engagement (belying a sophisticated interpretation imbedded in ancient tradition, as this article will show) and their close alliance to the everyday, warrant our attention and the focus of our study beyond the scope of religious pedagogy.¹

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¹ See Jaqueline S. du Toit, "Fixing God's Torah in Small Caps: Children's Bibles, Bible Scholarship and Contemporary Judaism," in *To Fix Torah in Their Hearts:*

Text, Image & Otherness in Children's Bibles, Athalya Brenner-Idan's 2012 Festschrift, illustrates how an "array of different approaches and theoretical lenses" may be rigorously brought to bear as productively on juvenile renderings (text and image) of the Bible, than on the source text/s and iterations reserved for adults.² It also highlights that the child as the societal other denotes a designation of disadvantage *vis-à-vis* the status quo (adults, but also social elites including educators and religious functionaries) that has only a tenuous relationship to age. "Childhood" is a category reserved for those on the margins of religious collectives, which may include children but also those new to, or on the periphery of, the religious community. "Children in faith" thus include converts, women, the poor, disabled people, foreigners, "simple folk," and so forth. An important outcome of this recognition is the greater awareness and sensitivity to target audience and reception, especially noticeable in contemporary, child-friendly renderings of the Bible. It finds expression in carefully curated presentations of the Bible adapted to appeal to a designated audience. In addition, it makes allowances for contemporary context even to the detriment of strict adherence to source text. In some instances forewords, notes, or dedications accompany these renderings of the Bible. They represent descriptions of approach, purpose and target audience in the interests of justification, as much as transparency. I will use two representative twenty-first-century texts to illustrate much of my argument. In both instances, the authors use the equivalent of a translator's brief to fulfil this task. It takes the form of an "author's notebook" at the back of Ellen Frankel's *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible* and a journal article on the "scientific foundation" of *dieBybel@kinders* by one of its collaborators, Hennie Stander.³ The self-reflection and self-awareness incorporated in the additional material allow an easy entry into the complex and deliberative design underlying a rendering of the Bible intended for a child in simple and understandable, everyday language.

The 500th volume in the series Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies (LHBOTS, formerly JSOTSup) is dedicated to David Gunn.⁴ Here Cheryl Exum used an evaluation of five contemporary children's Bibles to

Essays on Biblical Interpretation and Jewish Studies in Honor of B. Barry Levy (ed. Jaqueline S. du Toit et al.; Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 2018), 409-430.

² Caroline VanderStichele and Hugh S. Pyper, "Introduction," in *Text, Image, & Otherness in Children's Bibles: What is in the Picture?* (ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Hugh S. Pyper; SemeiaSt 56; Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 1.

³ Cf. Ellen Frankel, *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, ill. Avi Katz (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2009), 227-234 and H. F. Stander, "Die wetenskaplike onderbou van DieBybel@kinders.co.za," *VeE* 24/2 (2003): 474-492.

⁴ Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp and Timothy Beal (eds.), *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon* (LHBOTS 500; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2010).

honour Gunn's contribution on David and biblical reception history, respectively.⁵ Taking my cue from Exum and the contributors to the Brenner-Idan volume, I would like to use children's Bibles in this article dedicated to Phil Botha, our esteemed colleague. Here much ink will be spilt dedicated to his notable legacy and indelible contribution to the South African and global academies. However, I venture to suggest that few, including Phil, would think to remark on his contribution to the production of a popular Afrikaans children's Bible, now in its fourth edition since 2002.⁶ This article aims to present *dieBybel@kinders* as an important milestone for contemporary South African biblical scholarship, and hence an appropriate and notable point of reflection on Phil Botha's legacy.

dieBybel@kinders and the *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible* represent what the historiographer of American Jewish children's Bibles, Penny Gold, refers to as "a new generation of texts" that emerge by the end of the twentieth century. They value faithfulness to the source text as an important marker of authenticity and authorship.⁷ Ruth Bottigheimer calls this late twentieth century development, a "return to the canon", for a genre that historically had much leeway in the selection and interpretation of the Bible in the interests of producing a child-friendly version. She acknowledges the hand of the anonymous editor/re-teller in her description of responsibility and purpose: "[It is] an editorial imperative to rein in straying narratives and draw them back to the Bible's words."⁸ Hence, both Gold and Bottigheimer explain in historical context the emphasis on fidelity to authoritative translation found in the texts examined. *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible's* authority comes from close adherence, despite heavy editorializing, to the text of the 1985 JPS English translation of the Hebrew Bible.⁹ *DieBybel@kinders* combines an explicit description of the scholarly credentials of its "collaborators" with assurances in the preface that the translation to follow is a simplified, easy to understand Afrikaans translation produced with great fidelity to the source text. It is truly remarkable in that this is a translation directly from the Hebrew and Greek source

⁵ J. Cheryl Exum, "A King Fit for a Child: The David Story in Modern Children's Bibles," in *The Fate of King David: The Past and Present of a Biblical Icon* (ed. Tod Linafelt, Claudia V. Camp, and Timothy Beal; LHBOTS 500; New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2010), 241-259.

⁶ *dieBybel@kinders: Ou en Nuwe Testament*, 4th ed. (Vanderbijlpark: Carpe Diem, 2018). I thank Hanneke van Coller, Content Manager for Carpe Diem Media, for her assistance and making available a copy of the latest edition.

⁷ Penny Schine Gold, *Making the Bible Modern: Children's Bibles and Jewish Education in Twentieth-Century America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 2004), 199.

⁸ Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present* (New Haven; CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 214.

⁹ Frankel, *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, 227.

text without an adult translation in the vernacular or adult register, as an intermediary - which is the norm for children's Bibles.¹⁰

B ON AUTHORSHIP

Children's Bibles' standing in religious communities derives from a claim to God's authorship. This characteristic refers explicitly to the corpus of children's *Bibles* to be distinguished from "just selections from the Bible."¹¹ As Exum explains, these Bibles "aim to give a reasonable overview of the entire biblical 'story,' ... which they retell in a straightforward and quasi-authoritative way."¹² Authority and legitimacy rely on the genre's durable association with divine authorship. As sober, no-nonsense versions in the nineteenth century gave way to editions that experimented freely with colour and illustration, alternative presentation, commentary and rearrangement, inclusion of extra-biblical material, expansion of characters, and so forth, divine attribution remained the one constant to the genre's increasing popularity and attendant commercialization.¹³ This is at least in part because children's Bibles' very popularity is tied up in what Robert Carroll referred to as "centuries of preoccupation with the Bible when the Book was a formative influence in the construction of Western culture."¹⁴ The two children's Bibles discussed here,

¹⁰ Stander, "Die wetenskaplike onderbou van DieBybel@kinders.co.za," 476.

¹¹ Frankel chose 53 stories from the Hebrew Bible but the stories are arranged and curated to mirror and mimic the Jewish canon. This is validated by text references below each of the story titles and by a section in which the stories are visually presented as part of the larger structure of the formal Jewish canon (cf. Frankel, *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, 235-236).

¹² Exum, "A King Fit for a Child," 242-243. On the authority this conveys, see also p. 244.

¹³ Robert Carroll's dystopian treatise on the commodification of the Bible contains the following account of his first awareness of the full extent of the commercial success of the Bible (and children's Bibles) in modern culture: "I did some limited market research by going ... to the bible shops ... and also to some of the commercial bookshops, in order to see what bibles [*sic.*] were commercially available in our consumerist society. ... To be honest, there were in fact *far too many different versions of bibles* [*sic.*] for me to be able to do justice to the subject of the Bible as cultural object and commodity. The sheer number of different editions and translations of the Bible, not to mention the varieties of size, shape, colour and price, defeated me and frustrated any attempt to provide a comprehensive schema of the matter. ... Such amazement was especially generated by the sections devoted to children's bibles, where there appeared to be yet a further range of objects for sale. Such a cornucopia of bibles left me gasping open-mouthed at the variety and inventiveness of publishers," ("Lower Case Bibles: Commodity Culture and the Bible," in *Biblical Studies/Cultural Studies: The Third Sheffield Colloquium* [ed. J. Cheryl Exum and Stephen D. Moore; JSOTSup 266; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998], 52).

¹⁴ "Lower Case Bibles," 49.

dieBybel@kinders and *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, were published more or less contemporaneously and targeted the children of well-delineated religious traditions and communities. Both have clear commercial foci, which do not detract from their commitment to divine attribution.¹⁵ Despite the clear target audience, these texts were selected because they are representative of the contemporary corpus of children's Bibles, irrespective of language or Judaeo-Christian creed and in both instances, a case can be made for the authors' and publishers' intent to broaden the commercial success of the publication outside the immediate target audience. Importantly, both belong to religious traditions that foreground adherence to a fixed canon.

The authors and illustrators responsible for children's Bibles are most often not acknowledged or overtly attributed, despite their importance, other than as negotiators of simplification and elucidation of the "adult" text into child-friendly renditions. These agents and interpreters of meaning are designated as re-tellers, translators, illustrators, and, in the case of *dieBybel@kinders*, as "collaborators" (*medewerkers*). The alliance of "scholarly authority with biblical authority"¹⁶ of which the latter children's Bible is an example, does occur, but it is not common.¹⁷ The culture of subsidiary attribution is by design. Ellen Frankel (indicated as "re-teller" of *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*), for example, in her "editor's notes" eschews any interpretive responsibility and describes her role as, "I want the Bible to speak for itself. My interpretations and commentary do not belong in this book."¹⁸

¹⁵ See Jonathan Sarna, for example, for the history of the Jewish Publication Society's (JPS) growing awareness of the commercial viability of the children's Bible (Mortimer Cohen's *Pathways through the Bible*) they had in development by the middle of the twentieth century and its subsequent success story (*JPS: The Americanization of Jewish Culture 1888-1988. A Centennial History of the Jewish Publication Society* [Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989], 205-206).

¹⁶ Exum, "A King Fit for a Child," 245.

¹⁷ Even more unusual for children's Bibles, is the detail in which the nature of the scholarly authority of each collaborator has in this case been demarcated individually and very specifically ("Professor of Old Testament," or "Professor of Ancient Languages," etc.). The sphere of responsibility was also carefully delineated according to biblical book – this is unusual. The Old Testament had five collaborators, the New Testament had three, and all collaborators were assigned particular books of the Bible. These assignments did not follow traditional divisions. Phil Botha, for example, was responsible for three of the five books of the Pentateuch (Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers), as well as Judges, Psalms, Proverbs, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Zachariah and Malachi.

¹⁸ Frankel, *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, 232.

This centuries-old convention of deferral to biblical (divine) authority,¹⁹ vastly underestimates the singular influence these agents have in the guise of re-tellers, translators, illustrators and collaborators, on the cross-generational transfer of contemporary Bible and Judaeo-Christian religious discourse and thus on the reception of the Bible in contemporary society. Moreover, if, as it is argued here, children's Bibles are legitimate and historical participants in a tradition of biblical interpretation, then it is also informative to consider the traditions' stance (and how it is transposed into children's Bibles) on the matter of authority. Eva Mroczek's recent work²⁰ on David and the Psalms is a useful illustrative example. The early practice of assigning authorship to ancient figures *in lieu* of the actual authors of a text is a feature of "early Jewish literary practices":

Moses did not write the Pentateuch, David did not write the Psalms, and Solomon did not write the Song of Songs. ... Among the texts that are linked with ancient figures, some, like the Psalms, originate anonymously, and come to be attributed to ancient figures secondarily over time; while others, like *4 Ezra*, are composed from their inception in the voices of old characters.²¹

The assumption is that such instances of attribution had primarily to do with assigning authority and hence assuring acceptance of a text as part of the canonical corpus. However, Mroczek suggests that this approach might limit our reading of these texts. Instead, she argues that the purpose of attribution is far more complex than but legitimization by pseudonymous attribution. One should also be able to "imagine that it is the development of the figure, the desire to expand traditions about a character that generates his links to new texts."²² This is also informative for thinking anew of children's Bibles: assigning authorship to God may, therefore, signify more than a claim to authority within the tradition, acting also as character development for the pseudonymised author. Thus, as Mroczek suggests, by means of poetic motivation, fashioning each successive generation's impression of divinity through "character-driven literary creativity": "[B]orne out of the compulsion and desire to continue telling stories

¹⁹ Indicative of the long tradition of this practice, the first South African children's Bible, published in Dutch in 1851 by Rev. John Murray, appeared for example without reference to the author, simply as *De Kaapsche Kinderbijbel* (Cape Town: N. H. Marais, 1851). For an instance of initial misattribution of authorship because of Murray's deliberate anonymity, see "Een anonieme auteur geïdentificeerd," (Cornelis Houtman, "Drie negentiende-eeuwse kinderbijbels 'uitgelicht'," *Met Andere Woorden* 30/1 [2011]: 16-19).

²⁰ Cf. especially chapter 2 of Eva Mroczek's, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 51-85.

²¹ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 53-54.

²² Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 56.

about a favorite character."²³ Ruth Bottigheimer's historiography of children's Bibles sustains Mroczek's argument, describing the character development of God from "violently wrathful being" until this characterization recedes by the end of the nineteenth century.²⁴ Since the eighteenth century, the characterization of God changes to "an ultimate parental and paternal principle,"²⁵ thus through a particular depiction of the pseudonymised author, enforcing the context of everyday ritual associated with children's Bibles: a text read at bedtime by parents to children.²⁶

C ON AUTHORITY

Intended as gateway literature to the "adult" Bible with as purpose proselytization rather than Bible transmission *per se*, the nature and flexibility of biblical content transfer in children's Bibles have also received little attention. This belies its significance to contemporary religious communities where reading the "adult" Bible, albeit in translation, is no longer central to the everyday existence of Christian or Jewish secular and faith communities. Isabel Hofmeyr's description of the paradoxical authority of another such "near-Bible" in Protestant Christianity, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, is instructive to the import accompanying the authoritative position of children's Bibles in modern-day societies:

[It] functioned as a privileged 'fetish'. ... [It is] a book of extraordinary appeal that had long been scripted into [missionaries'] theology and their conversion narratives. Because of its power, and because it summarized the key message of evangelical Protestantism, the book was widely treated as a substitute for the Scriptures themselves. ... As a near-Bible, it was both secular and sacred; serious and pleasurable; fictional yet also 'true.'²⁷

This paradox is inherent also to children's Bibles. It is largely too what creates scholarly ambivalence to engage in any serious manner with these texts, as Robert Carroll best explained: "[I] think of the Bible as 'an adult book written by adults for adults.' The notion of a 'Children's Bible' has always struck me as

²³ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 58.

²⁴ Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 60-61.

²⁵ Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children*, 69.

²⁶ On the significance of everyday rituals and its importance to Afrikaans Bible interpretation and children's Bibles, see Jaqueline S. du Toit, "Esther, Pious and Brave: Reading Children's Bibles as Commentary on Twentieth-Century Afrikaner Culture," in *The Five Scrolls* (ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan, Gale A. Lee and Archie C. C. Lee; Texts@Contexts 6; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 211-213.

²⁷ Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan: A Transnational History of The Pilgrim's Progress* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2004), 18.

being an oxymoron or a curiously attenuated notion of what a bible [*sic.*] might be."²⁸

As these texts are therefore generally considered outside the lofty consideration of serious scholarly engagement, it explains why Hennie Stander seems to put such extraordinary emphasis on justifications for why an "academic foundation" (*akademiese onderbou*) for the publication of a children's Bible is required. His reasoning mostly relates to how this may help future translators to address the identification and needs of a target reader segment. He also pointedly suggests that the project stands as an exemplar of how to undertake similar projects in other languages. Tellingly, Stander also explains that "an article on the academic foundation of the *DieBybel@kinders.co.za* is important ... because we are in the unfortunate position that scholars often dismiss 'children's books'."²⁹ Thus suggesting that the *raison d'être* of the children's Bible can in part only be justified in terms of mapping a sober, scholarly or "academic" approach. He thus follows the lead of Nida and others in explicating the translation process,³⁰ rather than legitimacy derived from reception history. Literary scholars similarly dismiss children's Bibles as mere religious tracts of little literary value, something Stander also has to counter.³¹ However, Stander underplays the most important contribution of this Bible: the significance of decisions related to content *vis-à-vis* presentation, made by the collaborators, and how this, in turn, highlights reception of the text. Decisions on inclusion and exclusion, rearrangement and presentation have become increasingly significant, as this medium has come to replace the Bible as point of reference in everyday society. As familiarity with the biblical text diminishes in these twenty-first-century communities, children's Bibles and their illustrations, read in Sunday or religious school and as part of religious observance and the daily rituals of bedtime storytelling, have become the only reliable point of reference and authority for Bible content transfer in religious – and also secular - society.

²⁸ "Lower Case Bibles," 52.

²⁹ "Nog 'n rede waarom 'n artikel oor die akademiese fundering van die *DieBybel@kinders.co.za* belangrik is, is omdat ons die ongelukkige situasie het dat akademië dikwels neerkyk op 'kinderboeke," (Standar, "Die wetenskaplike onderbou van *DieBybel@kinders.co.za*," 475). Translation mine.

³⁰ In this vein, see most recently Robert Alter's *The Art of Bible Translation* (Princeton; NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

³¹ Gretel Wybenga and Maritha Snyman's exhaustive guide to Afrikaans children's literature, published in 2005, and therefore following *DieBybel@kinders'* 2002 first edition by three years, does not mention children's Bibles in Afrikaans as either a category or in any other context such as, for example, in discussion of the *oeuvre* of Maretha Maartens, author of juvenile literature and a children's Bible in Afrikaans (*Van Patrys-hulle tot Hanna Hoekom: 'n Gids tot die Afrikaanse Kinder- en Jeugboek* [Pretoria: Lapa, 2005]).

D ON ATTRIBUTION

This privileged position afforded the modern children's Bible explains Bottigheimer's "return to the canon" by the late twentieth century. Children's Bibles were moving away from the highly selective renderings of the Bible in acknowledgement of its growing authority as substitute Bible in everyday society. The greater emphasis on expanded Bible content transfer also resulted in significant changes to the format of the twentieth-century children's Bible. While Frankel's Bible still represents the traditional arrangement (a selection of 53 stories largely reconceived as stand-alone entities³² and beautifully illustrated while adopting the text of the "adult" 1985 JPS translation), *dieBybel@kinders* becomes a stand-in for the "adult" version, stripped largely of extra-biblical extrapolation including illustrations. It reintroduces material and biblical books that have long fallen out of favour in the medium, but uniquely it offers a simplified translation *from the original source text* tailor-made for the target audience. This is different from Bibles masquerading in the trappings of the children's Bible, such as colourful covers, child-like lettering and even illustrations, but including an "adult" translation in full – cynically commercial ventures with little recognition or respect for juvenile readership.³³

As a rule, two matters direct story selection and overrides insistence on canonicity for children's Bibles: 1) the target audience or the translator/re-teller/author's notion of who the target audience is,³⁴ and 2) what the translator/re-teller/author deems most important to impart to an initiate.³⁵ It is based on considerations of simplicity, appropriateness, didactics, and also

³² Thus enabling the use of this literature as bedtime reading by parents to children, a stand-in for fairy tales.

³³ No example better illustrates the disjuncture between these Bibles and *dieBybel@kinders* than concept-Bibles such as *Baby's First Bible*, an unabridged English translation (New King James Version) in a cutesy non-Bible related child-friendly cover (a duckling with childlike lettering in pastel colours). Inside, the Bible contains out-of-context insertions of non-biblically themed pictures in a greeting card aesthetic with quotes from Psalms and other biblical books. This Bible with its titular dedication to babies also contains a table at the back allowing the baby (?) reader to complete a reading of the entire Bible in a year. Even if a parental intermediary is presumably assumed in the reading process, this table speaks to the ridiculousness of the entire concept and confirms Robert Carroll's suggestion of the modern fetishization of the Bible (cf. *Baby's First Bible: The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments* [Nashville, TN: Nelson, 1982]).

³⁴ Stories not considered age appropriate are thus eliminated. Frankel, e.g.: "I eliminated certain passages that contain overly graphic violence or sex," (*JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, 232).

³⁵ Frankel cites two reasons for her story selection, "my sense of what makes a good story for children," and "because they are pivotal to an understanding of the Jewish national story," (*JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, xiii).

entertainment, as both Frankel and Stander's descriptions testify.³⁶ Because of the emphasis on narrative, these Bibles rarely include psalms, as is indeed the case for *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*. Therefore, when it does suddenly reappear, this should be noted as a significant development. Despite the attraction of poetry and rhyme for children, and the popularity of versification in children's literature, children's Bibles have thematically emphasized biblical narratives, hence also a predilection for the Old Testament (in Christian children's Bibles) with its penchant for story. Selection is also accompanied by addition in the form of story titles, *targum*-like interpretive elaboration and illustrations, but most especially character enhancement to encourage relatability between child reader and biblical character.

In this context, the predominant reference point to psalms is the biblical character of David. Davidic authorship of the psalms is often inferred, ostensibly based on an extension of the Davidic superscriptions attendant to 73 of 150 psalms in the canon. The assumption is that this offers a form of legitimization of the book similar to divine authorship attributed to the children's Bible. However, it also works the other way around: the presence of David in a children's Bible becomes a stand-in for an entire corpus that has largely disappeared from children's Bibles despite claims to fidelity to canon.

There is also the added complexity of character development belying the overt simplicity of the text. Cheryl Exum offers a descriptive example from one of the children's Bibles she uses that is typical of how this attributive link is actualized through a combination of the affective (an emblematic means of character development in the medium) and the combination of text and illustration in content transmission: "This description of David's feelings is followed immediately by Ps 23, in the NRSV translation, a psalm well known and widely cherished as a psalm of assurance, and the illustration shows David playing the harp, apparently singing, or even composing, this psalm."³⁷ Character development in the interests also of creating an emotional attachment between child reader and particular characters results here in representative selection (one psalm for the entire Psalter). It is achieved by a combination of simplification, adaptation and reduction of the source text in the interests of the shaping of a central character's (David) development and ostensibly protecting the child from excessive violence (the exception is always the story of David and Goliath) and

³⁶ Frankel (e.g. *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, 232-233) and Stander ("Die wetenskaplike onderbou van DieBybel@kinders.co.za," 476-478) both offer examples of innovative and very contemporary approaches to identify the target audience and also empirically and very actively involved them in the creation, selection and nature of the children's Bible itself in ways previous generations of children's Bibles have not done.

³⁷ Exum, "A King Fit for a Child," 245.

overt sexual content,³⁸ but also of the complexities of poetry and wisdom literature – considered advanced content for the initiate (child). Without exposing the child reader to the emotive and verbal complexities of the psalms, the attribution of certain psalms to David is used to introduce Psalm 23 and burnish the emotive qualities of the character of David *in lieu* of his more abrasive characteristics and actions in the historical books of the source text.

Simplification, the biblical interpretive shorthand for what children's Bibles do all the time in their renderings of the "adult" Bible, belies the sophistication and careful adherence to tradition and authority inherent to children's Bibles and present in the invaluable reflections of Frankel and Stander. Mroczek on early Jewish attribution³⁹ may therefore again be used. Here to illustrate the fact that the attribution of Davidic authorship to all psalms, rather than a perfunctory vehicle for crudely rendering complexity into simplicity (adult register into radically reduced child register), is an example of how children's Bibles are to be read within an interpretive tradition dating from the late eighteenth century and earlier. It indicates how the blossoming of this literary medium reaches its zenith in the nineteenth century contemporaneous to the emergence of historical-critical biblical scholarship. David's authorship legitimizes the psalms as authoritative in much the same manner as children's Bibles' attribution to divine authorship does.

Mroczek's argument for how texts and biblical figures were sometimes linked in the Jewish "literary imagination", informs a sophisticated biblical interpretation at work also in children's Bibles based on the argument that David does not function in the tradition as an author (a "bibliographic function") as such, but, similar to how Exum explains in the above example, as "effusions of historical, ethical, and aesthetic interest in a compelling character – as biography, not bibliography."⁴⁰

E CONCLUSION: THE "INTERSTICES OF READING"⁴¹

David has always been an important biblical character in children's Bibles. Despite concerns over depictions of violence, the story of David and Goliath has remained a firm favourite. This is largely due to the importance of David as a messianic precursor (for Bibles of Christian origin) and David as a conqueror of

³⁸ Cf. e.g. Ruth Bottigheimer's exhaustive discussion of the David and Bathsheba story (2 Sam 11:1-12:25), which does indeed reappear in Frankel's Bible – further evidence of a "return to the canon," (*The Bible for Children*, 127-132).

³⁹ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 51-85.

⁴⁰ Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity*, 53.

⁴¹ Suman Gupta, *Re-Reading Harry Potter* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.

Jerusalem (in Jewish children's Bibles). These are important tropes to a genre primarily focused on offering religious instruction.⁴²

dieBybel@kinders is in many respects an outlier to the above, but it is the exception that proves the rule, namely, that children's Bibles exist respectfully within an existing tradition of Bible interpretation and commentary relying on ancient religious traditions of Bible transfer between the religious centre and the periphery. *dieBybel@kinders* is a translation, a modern-day *targum*, heavily paraphrased and reconceived⁴³ in the interests of facilitating reading and understanding. It presents a new phase of "return to the canon" which Bottigheimer and Gold, in 1996 and 2004, respectively, could only hint at. In addition, it comes at a time when the relationship between Western adult reading communities (where Bible had long been a fixed staple of the literary canon) and Bible content is tenuous at best.⁴⁴ In such circumstances, children's Bibles in the manner of *dieBybel@kinders* may well become the one and only future reference point to Bible content in adult, everyday society. The closest analogy is J. K. Rowling's success in traversing the divide between child and adult audience. Suman Gupta writes:

I have two Bloomsbury copies of each [of the first four volumes of the Harry Potter series]. One of the two copies each is directed at children and the other at adults. I know this because the covers of children's copies . . . have quite different images from the adults' copies of the same titles. This is especially intriguing because that is the only significant difference between the children's copies and the adults' copies. In every other respect the differences are minor: there is a slight price difference (the adults' copies cost a jot more), the print of the adults' copies is marginally smaller, the reviews quoted on the

⁴² Avi Katz, illustrator of *JPS Illustrated Children's Bible*, explains: "The idea [behind the book] is to have a standard, universally acceptable version [of the Bible] for kids to read and learn the basic Jewish stories that every Western child and Jewish child should know," (Felicity Kay, "Illustrated Children's Bible Wins Award," *The Jerusalem Post*, 24 March 2010, <http://www.jpost.com/Jewish-World/Jewish-News/Illustrated-childrens-Bible-wins-award>). And similarly on what they expect the child reader to get out of the reading experience, the collaborators of *dieBybel@kinders*, in their brief preface/dedication, asks for obedience: "We pray that you will understand everything, and that you may be obedient to what you read in this Bible," (*Ons bid ook dat jy alles sal verstaan en dat jy gehoorsaam sal wees aan dit wat jy in hierdie Bybel lees*) (translation mine).

⁴³ Phil Botha, for example, renders Psalm 23 in three paragraphs, combining verses 1-3 and 5-6 in conceptual units.

⁴⁴ Cf. Philip Goff, Arthur E. Farnsley II and Peter J. Thuesen, introduction to *The Bible in American Life* (ed. Philip Goff, Arthur E. Farnsley II and Peter J. Thuesen; New York, NY: Oxford University, 2017), xix-xxi.

back covers are not the same (but similar). The texts within . . . are identical in the children's copies and their adults' counterparts.⁴⁵

Important to note here is that J. K. Rowling's original target audience was children between the ages of 9 and 12, yet the books without any adaptation found an audience among adults.⁴⁶

Robert Carroll may rail against the "infantilization" of the text, but in this context, it is misguided. Times change and the modes of dissemination of the biblical text, despite new and modern guises, are returning in many respects to that of its ancient precursors. Successful extensions of the readership of the Bible, in deliberate and careful meetings of "scholarly authority with biblical authority" are to be celebrated at a time when the Bible as a point of reference in secular *and* religious societies have become but a fetish. In these Bibles, simplification and "easy to understand" represents the supreme skill of its behind-the-scenes collaborators and the sophistication of interpretation underlying a genre of biblical commentary firmly and identifiably within existing traditions.

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⁴⁵ *Re-Reading Harry Potter*, 3-4.

⁴⁶ Cf. Lia Wyler, "Harry Potter for Children, Teenagers and Adults," *Meta* 48 (2003): 5-14.

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