

Review of Elder, N.A. *The media matrix of early Jewish and Christian narrative*, London: T&T Clark, 2019

In this study, Elder questions an over-polarised distinction between orality and literature as he approaches Mark's Gospel and Joseph and Aseneth as examples of "textualized oral tradition", unpolished "memoirs" created by dictation. Engaging with both ancient sources and contemporary media theory, Elder identifies three linguistic signs of "residual orality", namely parataxis, repetition, and verbal preferences (e.g. the historic present), as well as higher numbers of variants and recensions, and more allusive intertextuality (ch.1). After testing these on two contemporary papyri (ch.2), Elder applies them to his principal texts (chs.3 & 4), finding strong although not identical fits. In ch.5, Matthew and Luke's relationships to Mark are compared with the extended, more literary *a*-group recension of Aseneth, suggesting that they may not have been perceived by readers as completely distinct texts.

Backed up by fascinating insights about book production and "lecture-note piracy" by ancient authors such as Galen, Quintilian and Lucian, anyone struggling with this conundrum in NT studies will instantly welcome the fruitfulness of this suggestion. Not only does it help explain features formerly understood only in terms of Semitisms or poor education, and later textual fluidity, but also suggests that the patristic use of the term *hupomnēmata* may constitute a far more precise designation for early Gospels than hitherto imagined. Although Elder does not focus on the works' contents, he observes a number of places where this picture of production makes better sense of what we see. This must surely rank as a useful contribution to the field.

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