STITCHING JOSEPH'S COAT IN THOMAS MANN'S *JOSEPH UND SEINE BRÜDER*

Vladimir Tumanov
Department of Modern Languages and Literatures,
Western University, London, ON N6A 3K7, Canada
e-mail: vtumanov@uwo.ca

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Abstract:

The argument proceeds from the Documentary Hypothesis in modern biblical studies. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the 1st 5 books of the Old Testament were written by four different authors at different times. These authors are known as J, P, E and D. Their writing was joined in the 5th c. B.C.E. into what became the Pentateuch and the first part of the Old Testament. The result of this joining was a series of contradictions and redundancies in the final text as we have it today. Readers of the Bible who seek to read it as one coherent text try to naturalize these contradictions by what I call "stitching." Stitching involves putting coherence back into the Pentateuch by accounting for the contradictions and redundancies in terms of plausibility and common logic. Modern authors who write versions of Old Testament stories, such as Thomas Mann in his *Joseph and his Brothers*, also engage in stitching. I demonstrate how Mann stitches a number of important episodes from the Patriarch saga. I discuss the effect of this process on the story line. I compare that to two other recent instances of biblical stitching in modern fiction. And I conclude with the argument that stitching in modern biblical hypertexts stems from the need for coherence in the modern realistic novel. This post-Enlightenment coherence impulse is contrasted with myth and the latter's tolerance for loose ends and less than coherent narrative.

Documentary Hypothesis

Genesis and the whole Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) can be viewed as a coat coming apart at the seams in some places. The text contains contradictions and redundancies that have been explained in various ways by theologians and midrashic thinkers over many centuries. Why does God give two sets of instructions to Noah before the flood? In Genesis 6:19 one pair of each animal species is to be taken into the Ark, but in 7:2 seven pairs of the clean beasts and one pair of the unclean are to be saved by Noah. Why is Joseph taken away by merchants whose identity appears to change as the narrative progresses? In Genesis 37:28 the merchants are first referred to as Midianites and then as Ishmaelites. Why does Abraham pass Sarah off as his sister in Genesis 12:10–20 and 20:1–18, and then Isaac does the same thing with Rebekah in Genesis 26:1–14?

Modern biblical research relies on the Documentary Hypothesis to deal with these issues. This approach goes back to the nineteenth century when Old Testament scholars began to reject the traditional notion that the Pentateuch had been written by Moses. It was discovered that four sources or *documents* constituted the Pentateuch. The authors of these documents are known as 1) the Yahwist or J because he refers to God as Yahweh ("Jahweh" in German); 2) the Elohist or E because he refers to God as Elohim; 3) the Priestly writer or P because he focuses on matters of religious regulations, dogma, theology and especially the role of priests in Israelite society; and 4) the Deuteronomist or D who is responsible for most of Deuteronomy.[2] Since *Joseph und seine Brüder* is based almost exclusively on Genesis, we need to deal only with J, E and P: the sources of the Pentateuch's first book. I am going to rely on the work of Richard E. Friedman for the dating of the Pentateuchal authors: J – between 848 and 722 B.C.E; P – between 722 and 609 B.C.E. and E – between 922 and 722 B.C.E (Friedman 87, 210).[3]

Sometime after 722 B.C. when the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the Assyrians, J and E were combined into JE (Friedman 87; also cf. Martin Noth 20–37). And then after Babylonian exile JE was combined with P and D into what is today known as the Pentateuch. The person who combined them is known as R for Redactor. This is what gave rise to some of the puzzling passages in Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch. The authors of these documents were pursuing different political and ideological goals, which accounts for the disagreements among their respective visions of Israel's history. On the other hand, they were drawing from the same stock of traditions about the Patriarchs, the Exodus from Egypt etc. This common stock of stories is referred to by Noth as G or *Grundlage*, and it explains many of the doublets (similar versions of the same events) among the authors of the Pentateuch (39).

Although the Documentary Hypothesis was already known by the time Thomas Mann began to write his great Genesis hypertext, he chose a reading of the hypotext that can be viewed as traditional.[3] This form of reception involves an attempt to *stitch up* the fabric of Genesis in those places where it appears to come apart at the seams, i.e., at the junctures of J, E and P. Stitching of this sort has been going on for a long time in theological circles, and Mann relied on Jewish kabbalistic and midrashic traditions of biblical exegesis (Irvin Stock, 124–5). The need to stitch arises from the need for coherence in literary reception, and Jonathan Culler's notion of *naturalization* is helpful in this connection: "To naturalize [a text] […] is to make the text intelligible by relating it to various models of coherence. […] [Naturalization] is an inevitable function of reading. […] The Russian formalists […] spoke of naturalization under the heading of 'motivation'" (159). Culler discusses naturalization in terms of various levels of *vraisemblance* of which the first one, referred to as The Real, can be linked to biblical stitching. The Real has to do with common sense and basic logic: "The most elementary paradigms of action are located at this level: if someone begins to laugh they will eventually stop laughing, if they

set out on a journey they will either arrive or abandon the trip" (Culler 141). And it is this desire for logic and common sense that characterizes Mann's naturalization of Genesis.

Jacob and Esau

Mann's hypertext of the Jacob and Esau story involves the stitching of two hypotext segments. J is responsible for Genesis 27:1–45 where Rebekah prompts Jacob to steal Esau's blessing by tricking the blind and feeble Isaac. This leads to Jacob's flight motivated by Rebekah's fear that Esau might kill Jacob to avenge this injustice. P in 27:46–28:9, which comes right after J, gives an entirely different motivation for Jacob's departure for Aram. P ignores completely the blessing theft incident and therefore does not attribute Jacob's departure for Aram to the need to flee from Esau:

> Then Rebekah said to Isaac: "I am disgusted with living because of these Hittite women. If Jacob takes a wife from among the women of this land, from Hittite women like these, my life will not be worth living." So Isaac called for Jacob and blessed him and commanded him: "Do not marry a Canaanite woman. Go at once to Paddan Aram, to the house of your mother's father Bethuel. Take a wife for yourself there, from among the daughters of Laban, your mother's brother" (27:46–28:2).

As Richard Clifford and Roland Murphy put it, in P's account "Jacob is not fleeing; he is departing peacefully to acquire a wife among relatives […]. Jacob calmly receives, as though for the first time, a blessing from Isaac and a charge to depart. Put succinctly: according to J, Jacob flees from Esau to his relatives; according to P, he goes there with a blessing in order to choose a wife" (30).

Furthermore, the reference to Rebekah's fear that Jacob might marry a Hittite (Canaanite) woman is a continuation of an earlier P segment: "When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and also

Basemath daughter of Elon the Hittite. They were a source of grief to Isaac and Rebekah" (26:34–35). So P's passage about Jacob's calm departure simply picks up from this reference to the condemnation of mixed marriages in Israelite society. In fact, after Jacob's departure in P, Esau takes a wife from his own clan (Ishmael's daughter) in order to follow his brother's example and redeem himself in the eyes of his parents. No reference is made to pursuing Jacob, anger toward Jacob or any kind of awareness on Esau's part of the blessing theft incident in J.

This lack of awareness among P's characters of the blessing theft incident from J is the focus of the stitching process in Mann's hypertext. Whereas in P Esau decides to marry Ishmael's daughter for reasons unrelated to any quarrel with Jacob, in Mann the alliance between Esau and Ishmael is naturalized as a conspiracy against Isaac meant to avenge the unjust dispensation of the blessing (Mann 214). The lack of any vengeful action on the part of P's Esau is naturalized as the inability of the conspirators to agree on a murder plan (Mann 215). And the lack of any reference to the blessing theft on the part of P's Rebekah and Isaac is naturalized as a tacit agreement between the spouses to avoid the disturbing topic in order to keep everything calm and not jeopardize Jacob's departure:

> Nur von Jaakob war zwischen den Gatten die Rede und auch von diesem nicht etwa im Sinne einer Gefahr, die ihm, wie auch Isaak wissen mußte, drohte: niemals also im Hinblick auf den Segensbetrug und Esau's Wut (darüber schwieg man vollkommen), sondern einzig unter dem Gesichtspunkt, Jaakob müsse reisen, und zwar nach Mesopotamien, zum Besuch der aramäischen Verwandtschaft, denn falls er hierbleibe, sei zu befürchten, daß er – auch er noch! – eine verderbliche Heirat eingehe (216).

Therefore, the real reason for Jacob's departure in P ("daß er – auch er noch! – eine verderbliche Heirat eingehe") is used in the hypertext as a mere pretext for diffusing a dangerous situation imported from J. So the main stitching

mechanism used by Mann is this conspiracy of silence: everyone knows what has happened but for various reasons acts as if nothing were wrong.

P does not present Isaac as a blind and feeble old man who is thinking about his approaching death, but rather as a sharp chieftain who is fully in control when sending Jacob to Aram (Clifford and Murphy 30). In J, on the other hand, the fact of Isaac's blindness and weakness is central, because it is a way of motivating the blessing theft. In order to naturalize this discrepancy, Mann presents Isaac's infirmity not as a real affliction but as a posture. The patriarch in the hypertext *pretends* to be blind, weak and out of touch with the world in order not to reveal his aversion toward the brutish and idolatrous Esau: "Wie hätte er wohl sehenden Auges an der Übereinkunft festzuhalten vermocht, er bevorzugte Esau? Darum nahmen seine Augen ab, wie der sterbende Mond, und er lag im Dunkeln, auf daß er betrogen werde samt Esau, seinem Ältesten" (200). Thus, J's and P's contradictory pictures of Isaac are stitched into one coherent portrait: "Mann has not simply added flesh to the skeletal Biblical narrative; he has given the characters an extra psychological dimension, one they certainly do not posses in his source […]. Isaac's blindness is neither real (i.e. physiological) nor a self-protective psychosomatic device, but a response to the knowledge that he must be deceived" (Raymond Cunningham 52–3).

The "stitching of Isaac" in Mann's novel fits into a theme that can be viewed as the key concern of *Joseph und seine Brüder*: the eternal return. As many critics have pointed out, this is the idea that in mythic thinking individual actions fit into predetermined paradigms established by the divine sphere.[4] To quote Cunningham, "why does Isaac allow himself to be deceived in this painful and humiliating manner? The events involved in this deception belong to a mythical pattern, that of enmity of two brothers and the inheritance of the birthright by the second, the 'naturally' blest son. It is the pattern of Set and Osiris, Cain and Abel, Ismael and Isaac" (53).

Shechem

The Shechem episode in Genesis comes to us from J and E. In order to understand the different versions of how Shechem came into the possession of the Israelites, we must briefly consider the political motivation behind J's and E's respective accounts. According to Friedman, J and E were both writing at a time when David's and Solomon's Israelite state had split into two kingdoms: the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. J was from Judah and defended the South's political position, while E was from Israel and his task was the opposite of J's. Shechem was the capital of Israel, which means that it was in J's interest to present its acquisition by the Israelites in a bad light. E, on the other hand, wanted to make sure that Israel's claim on Shechem appeared legitimate and legal. This is why E in 33:18–20 says that Jacob bought the land at Shechem for a specific amount of money. Thus, the Israelites settle at Shechem through perfectly legal means, minding their own business and paying in full. J in Genesis 34 presents a very different story. Shechem is treacherously sacked, and its population is put to the sword. To quote Friedman, "How did Israel acquire Shechem? The E author says they bought it. The J author says they massacred it" (62–3). Then, in 49:5–7 J has the dying Jacob curse Simeon and Levi, the two brothers responsible for the crime at Shechem. But Judah, the founder of the tribe that constituted the kingdom where J lived, naturally receives Jacob's blessing (Friedman 64).

Even though E and J are mutually exclusive in their original intent, they are implicitly linked in the hypotext through sequential presentation, i.e., E's purchase of the land immediately precedes J's sacking of Shechem. However, no formal connection is made between these two texts in Genesis. Mann's hypertext establishes the connection missing in the hypotext: "Der Vertrag war das erste. Ohne ihn hätte die Ansiedelung der Jaakobsleute gar nicht statthaben und auch das Folgende sich nicht ereignen können" (164). This stitching is reinforced through the transfer of J's plot against the city into the

part of the hypertext that deals with E's reference to the arrival of the Israelites at Shechem (33:18). Thus, as Jacob's clan approaches the city for the first time, the brothers are already scheming:

> Die Unruhe der Städter nun aber wäre noch lebhafter gewesen, wenn sie die Gespräche hätten belauschen können, welche die älteren Söhne des heranziehenden Häuptlings untereinander führten […]. Dan war der erste gewesen, der aus dem Mundwinkel den Vorschlag gemacht hatte, Schekem durch Handstreich einzunehmen und zu plündern (157–8).

E's hypotext naturally says nothing about such unseemly plans, since its object is only the legitimate pact between Jacob and the city. But Mann overtly "corrects" E by saying: "Die Überlieferung aber […] verschweigt […] daß es von Anfang an in Jaakobs Lager auf eine kriegerische Regelung des Verhältnisses zu Schekem abgesehen war" (158).

In E's hypotext the reference to the land purchase pact is very succinct and involves no characters apart from Jacob: "For a hundred pieces of silver, [Jacob] bought from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem, the plot of ground where he pitched his tent" (33:19). The murderous Simeon and Levi, the victimized Dinah and the love-sick Prince Shechem appear only in J's hypotext where no land purchase pact is mentioned; however, Mann introduces all these characters into E's pact situation in order to further harmonize J and E. Thus, Simeon and Levi are outraged by the pact (Mann 164), and intermarriage between the Israelites and the Shechemites (originally only in J) is provided for in this agreement (Mann 163). The latter point is the pivoting element in the stitching of E with J in the hypertext. By transferring J's mention of this intermarriage notion into the context of E's land purchase agreement, Mann connects E's pact with Prince Shechem's proposal to marry Dinah in J.

The result is the improvement of the prince's character as compared to his hypotextual counterpart. In J we are told that "when Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, the ruler of that area, saw [Dinah], he took her and violated her"

(34:2). But once the prince, the intermarriage clause and the land purchase pact are stitched together in Mann's hypertext, the incident with Dinah from J is placed into the same context of *legality* as Jacob's acquisition of Shechem in E. This is developed through several "corrections" of the event sequences from the hypotext. Thus, in J the prince rapes first and asks for marriage second, but in Mann's hypertext this sequence is reversed. And this reversal is deliberately emphasized by the "revisionist" narrator:

> Was blieb da Hemor, dem Gichtigen, anderes übrig zu tun … als daß er sich vor [Jaakob] neigte […] und ihm nach manchem Umschweif von dem starken Herzensgelüste seines Sohnes sprach, auch reiche Morgengabe bot für den Fall, daß Dina's Vater in die Verbindung willige? […] *Genau ist hier die wahre Reihenfolge der Geschehnisse zu beachten*, die anders war, als später die Hirten im <<‹Schönen Gespräch›>> sie anordneten und weitergaben (169–71; my emphasis).

In J the brothers make Prince Shechem circumcise himself *after* the rape, whereas in the hypertext the circumcision precedes any relations between the prince and Dinah (Mann 171). What is more, since the brothers make the marriage conditional on the prince's circumcision, and since they go back on their word once Prince Shechem is circumcised, Dinah's kidnapping is transformed from a rape into a legitimate act in biblical terms (Mann 172). The last point of the prince's rehabilitation by the hypertext is the fact that Dinah willingly yields to Prince Shechem once inside the city, i.e., there is no rape (Mann 174).

The stitching of E and J in the Shechem episode produces a surprising effect. The combination of E's legalist point of view with J's condemnatory position ends up bolstering the latter. Since E's pact appears as the context for the Dinah episode in the hypertext, prince Shechem no longer has any reason for raping Jacob's daughter. This turns his behavior into something perfectly legal and conversely makes the murderous brothers appear even worse than J intended. In J the rape of Dinah at least explains the sacking of the city even if

it does not justify it (the latter point is suggested by Jacob's curse). Mann makes the brothers' action completely groundless. Thus, when Jacob curses Simeon and Levi on his deathbed in the hypertext, he has even more reason to do so than in the corresponding scene from J's hypotext.[5]

Dying Jacob

If taken as a whole, Jacob's death pericope in Genesis constitutes a very uneven text which violates logic and undermines its own literary effect. This has to do with the fact that the pericope consists of three different versions of the same event: J's, E's and P's. If we are unaware that the text does not come to us from one author, Jacob's death resembles one of those interminable scenes from opera where a character is on the verge of death for so long that the tragic begins to erode. The pericope opens with J (47:29–31) where Jacob feels close to death and summons Joseph. Jacob wants to be buried in Canaan and makes Joseph swear that this will be done. Clifford and Murphy point out that although here "the atmosphere is that of the deathbed," the next scene "is out of harmony with 47:29–31" (42). This lack of harmony appears because J's solemnity is interrupted by the anticlimactic insertion of E (48:1–2, 8–22). In E's segment Jacob is ill, and Joseph races to his father's bed with Ephraim and Manasseh. Since Jacob proceeds to bless Joseph's sons from his sickbed and then says that soon he will die, this is E's version of Jacob's deathbed scene. Then J reappears with Jacob once again on the verge of death (49:1–27): this time Jacob summons not just Joseph but all his sons to be either cursed or blessed. Finally, the actual death of Jacob is presented by P in 49:33.[6]

Mann's stitching of this pericope is aimed at giving Jacob back the dignity of which the venerable patriarch is deprived in the hypotext (at least from the vantage point of our modern sensibility). To begin with, the death scene in the hypertext is made brief enough to be dramatic, i.e., Mann saves the time of

Jacob's impending death until the very end. This is why the hypertext stresses that Jacob is not dying in the scene from J (47:29–31) where Joseph is made to promise to bury his father in Canaan: "Er war nicht krank damals und wußte, daß es noch nicht aufs rascheste zu Ende ging" (1773). This allows Mann to connect J with E's subsequent reference to Jacob's illness (48:1–2) without the backwards motion that undermines the logic of the hypotext. Since Jacob's actual death in the hypotext appears in a subsequent scene (P's 49:1–33), Mann makes sure that in the illness scene from E there is no suggestion of an impending end either: "Ich aber erlösche noch nicht, auch diesmal noch nicht, mein Sohn. Diese Krankheit ist welker als ich" (1781). What E intended as his version of Jacob's death, Mann turns into a mere stage in the patriarch's aging process. In this manner the hypertext eliminates the anticlimax that so weakens the hypotext. Mann's Jacob avoids any false starts and does not actually begin to die until J's and P's realm (49:29–33) which is the end of the pericope in the hypotext: "Jaakobs letzter Gedanke galt wieder her Höhle, der doppelten, auf Ephrons Acker, des Sohnes Zohars, und daß er darin begraben sein wolle zu seinen Vätern […]. Da unterbrach ihn der Tod, er streckte die Füsse, sank tief ein in das Bett, und sein Leben stand still" (1805).

There is a further complication in the hypotext, since E's version of Jacob's deathbed scene (48:1–2; 8–22) is interrupted by an insertion from P (48:3–7).[7] Both E and P deal here with what Jacob says about Ephraim and Manasseh, and the two authors contradict each other. Friedman explains the contradiction: "In verse 48:5 (P), Jacob promotes Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to equal status with Jacob's own sons, but in verse 47:8 (E), Jacob looks at Ephraim and Manasseh and says, 'Who are these?' " (258). This problematic juncture between the two sources in the hypotext necessitates some ingenious stitching in Mann's hypertext. In order to account for Jacob's "strange" behavior Mann resorts to the patriarch's trickiness. Given that Jacob has been presented as a con-man with a blessing throughout *Joseph und seine Brüder*, it makes sense that in the scene with Ephraim and Manasseh, the old

man would be up to his old tricks: "‹‹Und wer sind die?›› Denn er tat, als habe er die beiden Enkel bisher überhaupt noch nicht bemerkt, und übertrieb sehr seine Unmacht, zu sehen" (1783). Thus, Mann's Jacob tries to give his agedness more importance by playing up the burden of the years that weigh him down, and the contradiction between E and P disappears.

The same spirit of mischief on Jacob's part is used by Mann to stitch yet another incongruity between P and E in this scene. At an earlier point in the hypotext (47:28) P tells us that Jacob had lived in Egypt for 17 years before the scene with Ephraim and Manasseh. This would imply that Joseph's sons are about 20 years old when they come to see Jacob. But E's time frame is different from P's: E places Jacob's death soon after the old man's arrival in Egypt (von Rad 415), which makes Ephraim and Manasseh very young at the time. This is why in E's version of the deathbed scene Jacob asks Joseph to bring Ephraim and Manasseh up to him, and the boys end up on their grandfather's lap (48:9–12). In order to stitch up this contradiction Mann adopts P's time frame (Joseph's sons are grown men) and naturalizes E by presenting Jacob's request to have his grandsons *brought* to him as yet another one of the old man's mischievous quirks: "‹‹So bringe sie her zu mir, daß ich sie segne.›› Was war da zu bringen? Die Infanten kamen schon ganz von selbst mit schmiegsamen Hüften heran und neigten sich in ausgesuchter Wohlerzogenheit" (1783). Since this follows right after the reference to Jacob's faking bad eyesight and pretending not to recognize Ephraim and Manasseh, Man's Jacob is seen as merely *playing* the role of a senile old man.

Finally, Jacob's buffoonery is used as a way of explaining a third puzzling element from this deathbed scene. In the hypotext, as he is about to bless Ephraim and Manasseh, Jacob places his right hand on the head of the younger Ephraim and his left hand on the head of the older Manasseh (48:14). The right hand in Israelite tradition implies primacy which is due to the elder son, but Jacob violates this rule to Joseph's amazement. This reversal is justified in

Mann through the familiar eternal return motif, i.e., just as the elder son's primacy was stolen in the case of Jacob and Esau, so too Ephraim, rather than Manasse, receives Jacob's right hand blessing. However, in addition to this we read: "Joseph war, wie gesagt, erheitert und auch verletzt, dies beides. Sein Sinn fürs *Schelmische* war ausgeprägt" (1785, my italics). And so it is this notion of Jacob's "schelmische" behavior throughout the entire blessing scene in the hypertext that accounts for all the puzzling elements in the hypotext.[8] The quirks of the E and P combination end up as the quirks of Mann's Jacob, the consummate actor.

Joseph Enslaved

The attack on Joseph by his brothers (37:12–36) is one of the most problematic pericopes in Genesis. It is in fact a combination of E and J whose respective political biases explain the contradictions. In the J part of this pericope (37:19–20, 23, 25b–27, 28b, 31–35) the brother who prevents the other brothers from killing Joseph is Judah because J's bias was pro-South, i.e., pro-Judah. E, the northerner, was not promoting the interests of Israel's rival kingdom, so in his version of the incident it is not Judah but Reuben who saves Joseph's life (Friedman 65).[9] If we compare the behavior of J's and E's respective saviors, it becomes clear that Judah's attempt to save Joseph is less laudable than Reuben's: Judah proposes to sell Joseph into slavery rather than kill him (37:26–27), but Reuben actually tricks his brothers into throwing Joseph into a well in order to come back and try to save him later (37:21–22, 29–30). This difference determined Mann's stitching procedure: E's perspective predominates in the hypertext. Thus, the only truly positive character in Mann's version of the incident is Reuben. Mann's Judah, on other hand, is not trying to save Joseph from the others: Judah proposes to sell Joseph because he recognizes that the brothers have lost their bloodthirsty resolve and cannot bring themselves to murder the victim of their fury: "Darum sage ich euch:

‹‹Da wir's dem Lamech nicht gleichzutun wußten und mußten den Läuften was drangeben, so wollen wir gleich ganz ehrlich sein und den Läuften gemäß und wollen den Knaben verkaufen!›› " (599). Furthermore, Mann's Reuben is even better than E's, since E has Reuben propose that Joseph be thrown into a well (37:22), while in the hypertext this is Dan's idea. The hypertext's Judah, on the other hand, not only rejects Joseph's pleas to be taken out of the well but also says: "Wenn du nicht still bist, so werfen wir Steine auf dich, daß du gar dahin bist" (569). The only vestiges of J's positive Judah preserved by the hypertext include the fact that Judah feels some guilt at the thought of throwing Joseph in the well (Mann 561) and does not want the brothers to talk of Joseph's death within earshot of the well (Mann 570). Therefore, to avoid the incongruity of having two mutually exclusive saviors of Joseph, Mann chose the more impressive Reuben and relegated Judah to a place among his cruel brothers.

As for the sale itself, the hypotext presents a number of inconsistencies that are naturalized in the hypertext. First, in E Joseph is *not sold*: the merchants merely pull him out of the well and take him away (37:28). This is in line with E's picture of Reuben who would never have allowed such a sale to take place, as is evident from Reuben's despair after he sees the empty well: "The boy isn't there. Where can I turn now?" (37:30). Only J says that Joseph is sold to the merchants (37:28b). Furthermore, the sequence of J and E in the hypotext creates an impossible situation: J's segment where Joseph is sold to the merchants (37:25b–27, 28b) *precedes* E's description of how Reuben goes to the well to attempt Joseph's rescue (37:29–30). Therefore, without source division it would appear that, paradoxically, first the brothers sell Joseph to the merchants *with Reuben present*, and then Reuben goes to get Joseph out of the well. In order to naturalize these contradictions Mann reverses the sequence of J and E: in the hypertext first Reuben secretly steals away from the others to save Joseph, and *while he is away*, the brothers sell Joseph to the merchants.

Secondly, E says that the merchants pull Joseph out of the well (37:28a), while J does not have Joseph thrown into a well to begin with. This allows J to have Joseph sold by the brothers to the merchants. If read as a whole, the hypotext presents a puzzling situation: the merchants pull Joseph out of the well (E's 37:28a) and then the brothers sell him to these merchants (J's 37:28b). Surely the two versions are mutually exclusive: E's merchants already have Joseph and don't need to buy him. As von Rad points out, according to E "Joseph was *stolen* from the cistern in an unguarded moment by the Midianites, which thwarted Reuben's plan to save him" (353; my italics). This is why E's merchants never deal with the brothers and simply take their "find" as a commodity to Egypt. Mann naturalizes this problem by making an *explicit link* between the merchants' finding Joseph and their buying Joseph. Thus, the merchants in the hypertext first pull Joseph out of the well (Mann 592), and then they *run into* the brothers: "Ein Zug von Ismaelitern kommt geschritten von Gilead, die Nasen hierher gerichtet" (598). This instance of stitching is reinforced by the fact that the leader of the merchants in the hypertext is presented as someone who does not want a kidnapped slave. Here is what he says to Joseph: "Geh nur, ich will gar nichts wissen von deinen Bewandtnissen, nämlich des näheren, daß ich mich reinhalte und bleibe im Rechten" (679). This accounts for the fact that Mann's honest merchants, unlike E's unscrupulous merchants, declare their find to the brothers and subsequently conclude a legitimate transaction to buy the boy.

Thirdly and lastly, as I have pointed out above, the identity of the merchants varies from E to J. In E they are Midianites (37:28a), whereas in J they are Ishmaelites (37:28b). This is a truly striking contradiction: "So when the Midianite merchants came by, his brothers pulled Joseph up out of the cistern and sold him for twenty shekels of silver to the Ishmaelites who took him to Egypt" (37:28).[10] Mann's solution is to attract attention to the discrepancy and naturalize it by saying that the term "Midianites" is specific and more precise, while the term "Ishmaelites" is generic and less precise: "Also waren die

Reisenden Ma'oniter von Ma'in oder Minäer, Midianiter genannt. […] Wenn man sie einfach und allgemein mit dem alles Wüsten- und Steppenhafte umfassenden Namen von Ismaelitern belegte […] ließen sie's auch geschehen: es war ihnen wenig wichtig wie man sie nannte" (587; cf. Abrabanel's and Radak's respective midrashes). This element of stitching in the hypertext is linked to the previously mentioned stitching of Joseph's sale from J with Joseph's removal from the well in E. Having stabilized the merchants' identity, Mann can argue that the merchants who pull Joseph out and those who buy him are the same ones.

Conclusion

T. E. Apter argues that there is a basic discrepancy between Mann's subject-matter and the literary genre chosen for this material. Apter points out that myth suffers from too much precision, coherence, detail and vividness: "The form of the novel […] with its mass of secular and particular detail, is not suited to the essentially allusive quality of myth […]; myth – as a richly symbolic tale – actually gains effectiveness by indeterminate or many-faceted explanation […]; profane inconsistency is irrelevant to myth […]" (95–96). This has important implications for stitching because in Genesis much of what Apter refers to as "indeterminate or many-faceted explanation" has to do with the contradictions among the sources. The naturalization of such contradictions and inconsistencies in Mann's work has to do with the fact that the modern realistic novel tends toward coherence. However playful and self-referential the narrative of Mann's novel may be, the author's well-connected and plausible story line is aimed at producing a *realistic* effect. As Stock writes,

> [Mann] wanted to put us there. He wanted to make out of that highly condensed story of the Jewish discoverers and first servants of God a novel that would convince, grip and move us as a story of real people in a real world. He has succeeded. *Joseph and His Brothers*, whatever else it is,

> is a great realistic novel […] all the well-known events are linked together as causes or effects of one great development (80–1).

Therefore, the stitching phenomenon stems from the combination of the novel form with the mythic subject-matter of the Bible and is a natural consequence of rewriting the Bible in the modern era.[11] In order to illustrate that Mann is by no means the only one to follow this rationalization tendency, I would like to cite two other examples from twentieth-century literature: the first from the Canadian novelist Timothy Findley and the second from the French author Michel Tournier.

I have mentioned Culler's notion of The Real in the process of naturalization, i.e., the reader's need for basic logic as a point of reference in the reading process (see above). Thus, God must want Noah to bring either one pair of each species on board or seven pairs of the clean plus one pair of the unclean. Culler's "Real" level of naturalization implies that God could not want both, but in Genesis He does! The account of the Flood in Genesis is a combination of J's and P's respective versions of the great cataclysm. P in 6:19 says that only one pair of each animal species is to be saved, while J in 7:2 says that seven pairs of the clean animals and one pair of the unclean ones must be taken aboard. Friedman points out that P was written in opposition to the ideology in J. P was defending the prerogatives of the priestly class while J was not. This is why J's Noah brings more than one pair of each species into the Ark and after the Flood *sacrifices* some of the animals to God. But for P sacrifice was an exclusively priestly role: it not only made the priests necessary in Israelite society but also brought them an income through tithing. So P rejects any possibility of sacrifice at a point in the story where there are no priests yet, since Israel will not appear until later on. That is why P has only one pair of each species in the Ark, thereby annulling J's suggestion that people other than priests can sacrifice (Friedman 54–9, 191–2). P's Noah, not being a priest, is deprived of the ability to sacrifice by simple math.

In his novel *Not Wanted on the Voyage* Timothy Findley, reading the Flood story as a single coherent text, naturalizes the animal number contradiction in the following manner: "These [the cattle, sheep and goats] were the animals whom the Edict had decreed should be brought on board the ark not 'two-by-two' but 'seven-by-seven' – all the expendable animals, whose young had provided so much food for the carnivores […]" (277). By assigning P's version to the carnivores and J's to the herbivores, Findley relies on the very logic of nature to stitch two originally irreconcilable political views into one smooth vision. This is especially important here because numeric contradictions are the most glaring form of incongruity and therefore all the more incompatible with our modern sensibility (cf. Hizkuni's and Shadal's respective midrashes).

Similarly, in *Le Roi des Aulnes* Michel Tournier considers the sequence of anthropogony and the question of gender as these issues are presented in the first two chapters of Genesis. Tournier's narrator notes a "flagrant" contradiction in the biblical text and tries to naturalize it:

> Quand on lit le début de la Genèse, on est alerté par une contradiction flagrante qui défigure ce texte vénérable. *Dieu créa l'homme à son image, il le créa à l'image de Dieu, il* les *créa mâle et femelle* . . . . Ce soudain passage du singulier au pluriel est proprement inintelligible, d'autant plus que la création de la femme à partir d'une côte d'Adam n'intervient que beaucoup plus tard, au chapitre II de la Genèse. Tout s'éclaire au contraire si l'on maintient le singulier dans la phrase que je cite. *Dieu créa l'homme à son image, c'est-àdire mâle et femelle à la fois. Il lui dit: ‹‹Crois, multiplie,››* etc. Plus tard il constate que la solitude impliquée par l'hermaphroditisme n'est pas bonne. Il plonge Adam dans le sommeil, et il lui retire, non une côte, mais son ‹‹côté››, son flanc, c'est-à-dire ses parties sexuelles féminines dont il fait un être indépendant (33–4).

Tournier's narrator is in fact looking at *two* versions of anthropogony. P is the author of Genesis 1 where the universe is created by a majestic, detached deity and where the creation of humanity is a brief note at the end of the cosmogonic process. J is the author of Genesis 2 where a very anthropomorphic God is preoccupied almost entirely with the creation of Adam

and with human affairs in Eden. In P's version humanity is intentionally created in two genders from the beginning, but in J God's original intention is to create Adam and no one else. The woman is created later and accidentally by a process of elimination when God tries to make an assistant for Adam (Robert B. Coote and David Robert Ord 56–7). P's vision of God is very austere: everything is planned and carried out with absolute precision and no room for error or experimentation. This is a priest's theological vision. J's God is much closer to humanity: the sound of His footsteps can be heard in Eden, He becomes angry, He regrets his actions and He changes his mind (Friedman 191–2)! Tournier's narrator naturalizes the two ideologies into one harmonious whole by stitching up the issue of gender with the thread of ludic hermaphroditism. P's two-gender anthropogony is brought in line with J's one-gender anthropogony by the ingenious argument that in both cases only *one individual* is created. Thus, typically Tournierian aesthetics and literary symmetry sweep away the ideological battle that P waged against J's text through his debate with J's theology (cf. Rashi's midrash).[12]

The "coherence impulse" inherent in the modern realistic novel can be well illustrated by a unique example of stitching in *Joseph und seine Brüder*. J and E both have versions (doublets) of the same incident: a patriarch passes his wife off as his sister. In E's text Abraham ends up in Gerar at the court of Abimelech, fears that he might be killed because someone might covet Sarah, and the following happens: "Abraham said of his wife Sarah, 'She is my sister.' Then Abimelech king of Gerar sent for Sarah and took her" (20:2). J, drawing on the same source of Israelite traditions (G – see above), tells the same story. The events also take place in Gerar and the king is the same Abimelech, but the protagonists are Isaac and Rebekah: "When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, 'She is my sister,' because he was afraid to say 'She is my wife' […]. When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah." (26:7–8). The key difference here is the fact that in E

Abimelech takes Sarah into his harem, while in J Rebekah is not made Abimelech's consort.

Mann's hypertext refers to something like the Documentary Hypothesis with respect to these doublets: "Weit merkwürdiger ist, daß, der Überlieferung zufolge, deren schriftliche Befestigung zwar aus spätern Tagen stammt […] dasselbe Erlebnis […] dem Isaak zugeschrieben wird" (126). Thus, the presence of more than one source is implied, and the narrator appears to notice the doublets as something unusual, which is not the case with respect to the other instances of stitching that I have considered above. However, the need to naturalize is so fundamental to the genre of the hypertext that the doublets are stitched anyway, albeit with reservations:

> Gesetzt, auch Abrahams Abenteuer habe sich in Gerar zugetragen, so ist nicht glaubhaft, daß der Abimelek, mit dem Jizchak es zu tun hatte, noch derselbe war, der sich verhindert gefunden hatte, Sarai's eheliche Reinheit zu verletzen. […] die Annahme, sie seien ein und derselbe gewesen, wäre höchstens unter dem Gesichtspunkt zu vertreten, des Königs vorsichtiges Verhalten im Falle Rebekka's sei darauf zurückzuführen, daß er erstens seit Sarai's Tagen viel älter geworden und zweitens durch das Vorkommnis mit ihr bereits gewarnt gewesen sei (127).

This need to account for such a discrepancy – even if it is only in the form of a hypothesis – demonstrates the extent to which the modern realistic novel does not easily accept the "loose ends" of ancient texts. However, the stitching of these doublets is actually used in the hypertext to develop a familiar central theme of the novel and a centerpiece of mythic thinking: the eternal return. Thus, we are told that in Gerar Isaac acts out with Rebekah the sister-wife paradigm from Abraham's experience (Mann 127–128; cf. Charlotte Nolte 79). Therefore, in this instance of stitching, as well as in the stitching of Isaac's behavior from the blessing theft incident (see above), we see that the modern novel is not necessarily at odds with myth.

Mann's attempt to stitch up Joseph's coat contributes to what Genette calls "amplification narrative": "Reste à fournir ce dont le ‹‹laconisme›› de la version originale nous privait le plus, dans la discrétion qu'elle partage avec les autres grands textes archaïques, mythes ou épopées: c'est évidemment le ‹‹pourquoi››, c'est-à-dire la motivation psychologique" (312). Therefore, the stitching process partly explains why the ancient story had to grow so much (*amplification*) to satisfy the modern sensibility. The need to dot all the i's and cross all the t's is really the legacy of the Enlightenment which led to the creation of the modern novel. And it is the combination of the Enlightenment with antiquity that causes the discrepancy referred to by Apter (above). However, Mann, as is evident from his preoccupation with the concept of the eternal return, sought to balance the Enlightenment with myth. And that has to do in part with the historical context of this novel's creation. Nolte points out that Mann, faced with the abuse of myth by the Nazis for political purposes, wanted to reclaim myth as a positive cultural phenomenon. However, unlike Nazi ideology, he did not want to delve into myth at the expense of rationality and the traditions of the Enlightenment; he wanted to combine mythic thinking and rationality in an artistic way that would yield a morally and intellectually sound result (Nolte 3–4). The stitching of Genesis contributes to this balance. In the end Joseph's coat does not lose its original lustre because *Joseph und seine Brüder*, instead of betraying the spirit of Genesis, novelizes it.

Western University   VLADIMIR TUMANOV
Department of Modern Languages
and Literature
University College 115
London, Ontario
Canada N6A 3K7

Notes

2. In fact D is divided into two sub-sources: D_1 and D_2.

3. In his dating Friedman is different from other scholars. Gerhard von Rad, for example, argues that J wrote c. 950 B.C.E; E wrote one or two centuries later and P wrote after the exile of the Israelites in Babylon c. 538–450 B.C.E. (von Rad, 25).

4. Here is Gérard Genette's definition of hypertextuality: "J'entends par là toute relation unissant un texte B (que j'appellerai hypertexte) à un texte antérieur A (que j'appellerai, bien sûr, hypotexte) sur lequel il se greffe de manière qui n'est pas celle d'un commentaire [...]. J'appelle donc hypertexte tout texte dérivé d'un texte antérieur" (11–14).

5. This is how Mircea Eliade describes this concept: "Dans le détail de son comportement conscient, le ‹‹primitif››, l'homme archaïque ne connaît pas d'acte qui n'ait été pose et vécu antérieurement par un autre, *un autre qui n'était pas un homme*. Ce qu'il fait *a déjà été fait*. Sa vie est la répétition ininterrompue de gestes inaugurés par d'autres" (15).

6. A number of biblical scholars have argued that E's text shows an awareness of the sacking episode: von Rad (337) and Clifford and Murphy (35). In E's description of Jacob's departure from Shechem we read: "Then they set out, and the terror of God fell upon the towns all around them so that no one pursued them" (35:5). I have written to Friedman about this, but he has assured me that this fear is unrelated to the Shechem episode. His position is echoed by William Propp, who has written to me that this passage refers to the general hostility between the Israelites and the Canaanites. However, what matters most is the dichotomy between E's legalist position and J's condemnatory view. Since E refers to a legal pact as the basis for Israel's claim on Shechem, while J's version, as we have it in Genesis, mentions only the violence at Shechem and Jacob's curse, my arguments about Mann's stitching of E and J still stand.

7. With regard to the unevenness of this pericope, von Rad says that the father of the Documentary Hypothesis, "Wellhausen, once said one could perceive the strata of the interlocking source documents in Genesis nowhere so palpably as at the end of ch. 47 and beginning of ch. 48" (413).

8. Friedman attributes 48:7 to R himself (258).

9. As Friedman argues, Jacob reverses tradition and gives primacy to the younger Ephraim because of E's pro-Israel bias: "Ephraim was king *Jeroboam's tribe* [Jeroboam was the founder of the Northern kingdom – V.T.]. Jeroboam's capital city, Shechem, was located in the hills of Ephraim. Ephraim, in fact, was used as another name for the kingdom of Israel" (65).

10. Cf. Coote and Ord 172–4.

11. Compare this to the following Alliance biblique translation: "Des marchands madianites, qui passaient par là, tirèrent Joseph de la citerne. Ils [the brothers – V.T.] le vendirent pour vingt pièces d'argent aux Ismaélites, qui l'emmenèrent en Egypte" (37:28).

12. If we consider the story of Joseph proper, then the myth-novel discrepancy should not be overstated. As Claus Westermann argues Joseph's "biography" prefigures the modern novel in some ways: "However much it differs from [the modern novel], it should be classified under that type of literature which covers the novel or short story, namely, belles lettres" (241).

13. Although indirectly, Mann also touches upon the issue of Adam's androgyny on the basis of the research that he conducted in his kabbalistic sources. As Willy R. Berger points out, "In die vom religionswissenschaftlichen Standpunkt gewiß fragwürdige Vorstellung vom doppelgesichtigen und doppel-geschlechtlichen Jahwe, die im übrigen mit dem Motiv vom 'doppelgesichtigen' Joseph korrespondiert, sind freilich noch andere Quellen eingeflossen. Der Satz vom Menschen als dem 'Ebenbilde Gottes' hat vor allem im jüdischen Glauben einen ganz spezifischen Nebensinn. Aus der Genesis-Stelle 1:27 […] hat, wie Jeremias ausführt, 'die jüdische gelehrte Auslegung... nicht ohne Grund den androgynen Charakter Adams herausgelesen'" (281).

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