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## Editorial In(ter)ventions: Comparing the Editorial Processes of the Hebrew Bible and the Star Wars Saga

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# Editorial In(ter)ventions: Comparing the Editorial Processes of the Hebrew Bible and the Star Wars Saga

## **Abstract**

Canonicity and authority of one textual form over another, textual plurality, and scribal freedom in the early transmission of the Hebrew Bible have in the recent decades become prominent topics in the methodological discussions of biblical scholars. Since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has become clear that, when attempting to discern the oldest text of the Hebrew Bible, we are in need of new and better models of textual transmission that take into account all extant textual evidence. Working solely on the basis of the so-called Masoretic Text is no more methodologically tenable, especially when it comes to the methods of literary and redaction criticism. Finding parallel phenomena – ancient or modern – of similar textual pluralities and evolution could help to refine these new models.

In this article it is argued that the editing of the Hebrew Bible and editing of films can in many regards be seen as parallel phenomena. Both the Hebrew Bible and the Star Wars saga evidence similar editorial techniques and attitudes of their editors towards the texts. Using the Star Wars saga as an example of how the text- and literary critical methods of biblical studies can be applied to the textual evolution of films, it will be argued that there are multiple ways these parallels from Star Wars and Film Studies can in turn enhance our understanding of the textual evolution of the Hebrew Bible.

The Star Wars franchise is also in a textually active situation, with new canonical installments being filmed at the very moment. This makes it an excellent example of a constantly evolving literary work, which is also at a constant interaction with its core audience, namely the fan community, paralleling the ancient situation. Moreover, the un-centralized nature of the Star Wars fan-editing community is argued to form a parallel with the scribal cultures in charge of the transmission of the books of the Hebrew Bible during the era when no textual tradition had yet emerged as the one and only authoritative version.

## **Keywords**

Star Wars, editing, Hebrew Bible, fan-edit, textual criticism, literary criticism, redaction criticism, textual plurality, fan criticism, editorial techniques

## **Author Notes**

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## **Introduction: Film Studies, the Hebrew Bible—and Star Wars<sup>1</sup>**

Editing is possibly the most important part of movie-making: after shooting all the material for a film, it is only at this stage when a movie actually comes to resemble a movie.<sup>2</sup> Hit films can be made in the editing room, or they can be completely butchered there. Film editors, similar to the ancient editors of the Hebrew Bible, are indispensable agents between the writer(s) and the readers of a text, be it a literary or cinematic one.<sup>3</sup>

Since the work of Julius Wellhausen, the text-, redaction-, and literary-critical methods, which aspire to disentangle the different editorial layers behind biblical text, have played a prominent and well-established role in the traditional historical-critical study of the Hebrew Bible. Especially after the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947–1956, it has become certain beyond any doubt that the biblical texts were radically altered throughout their history.<sup>4</sup> In fact, modern biblical studies as a field is in a state of flux at the moment. How should we, methodologically and otherwise, deal with this newfound *textual plurality of (sacred)<sup>5</sup> texts*, which was clearly part of the life of the ancients? Are there parallel phenomena to be found, either in ancient or modern times, by means of which we could possibly better understand and conceptualize the different dynamics behind these textual changes?

Interestingly enough, not unlike in the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, it has in recent years become quite an important pastime for movie fans to seek and single out differences between movie trailers, for example, and the scenes in the final product, and speculate what may have caused the often quite

substantial differences between the two. For instance, in the case of the second most recent Star Wars movie, *Rogue One* (2016), there are indeed multiple hints of a quite large upheaval of textual material during the production stage.<sup>6</sup> When it comes to textual and intertextual material, on the basis of which it is possible to make remarks regarding editorial activity, in the case of modern films we are in a very fortunate position: in addition to the final product(s), we also possess “textual fragments” in the form of trailers, occasional “deleted scenes” on DVDs/Blu-Rays, full movie scripts, and sometimes even leaked videos or photos from the set itself. Furthermore, when it comes to movie production, we are lucky to possess something that we are unable to reconstruct in biblical studies, namely, eyewitness accounts of the behind-the-scenes drama, or even full documentaries of the production of certain works.

Like with sacred texts, there are enormous (albeit mostly commercial) pressures involved with the making of movies. If the final product does not resonate with audiences, large amounts of money and time will have been wasted—and more importantly, the product will simply be forgotten, lacking a living legacy, with no possibility of a sequel, for instance.<sup>7</sup> Especially in this respect, then, it could prove useful to compare movie production and the production of ancient (sacred) texts. As a further similarity between the two, it has frequently been pointed out that Star Wars fandom, in many respects, resembles a religion of its own.<sup>8</sup> Already these points make film studies a potentially rich field for an interdisciplinary comparison with modern biblical studies.

In addition, there are three other interrelated factors that make the Star Wars saga an interesting text for biblical scholars—and especially text, literary, and redaction critics—to dissect. First, the saga has been continued since the *original trilogy*<sup>9</sup> with six more films, most recently in 2015 (*The Force Awakens*), 2016 (*Rogue One*), and 2017 (*The Last Jedi*).<sup>10</sup> Thus, the saga is currently in the process of textual evolution. While the three most recent films follow the canon of the original trilogy quite closely, some of the *ideological* repercussions of the newer *prequel trilogy*<sup>11</sup> (1999–2005) for the Star Wars mythos were quite substantial, and they remain a subject of debate to this day (to such a degree that the three newest films hardly refer to the prequel trilogy).<sup>12</sup>

The second thing to note is the now-notorious interest or infatuation of George Lucas, the original creator of the Star Wars universe, with *re-editing* both the original and the prequel trilogies. We therefore possess not only the original trilogy, but also the *Special Edition* (1997), as well as two re-edited versions of the *Special Edition* (2004, 2011).<sup>13</sup> These changes by Lucas have not been met with unanimous praise and commendation, since many—if not most—fans consider them to be detrimental to the quality of the original movies.<sup>14</sup> Together with certain ideological changes to the mythos introduced by Lucas in his prequel trilogy, many fans seem to now even regard Lucas, the former “high priest” of the saga, as a heretic.

Thirdly, this “heretical turn” of Lucas has led to a heated debate about the *canonicity* of both the prequel trilogy and the changes made by Lucas in the re-edited Special Editions. The fact that Lucas has also refused to re-release the

original trilogy in its unaltered state has only escalated the debate.<sup>15</sup> This discussion on the canonicity and authoritativeness—or the lack thereof—of (more or less sacred) texts and, furthermore, the authority to declare texts as canonical, parallels in many ways the discussion begun in biblical studies in recent decades, showing yet another similarity between the two fields.<sup>16</sup>

As a countermove, some fans who deny the canonicity of Lucas' new vision have started to edit these movies themselves to better conform to their own canonical picture (which is mostly based on the original trilogy) of the saga. These *fan-editors* have thus brought to Star Wars an ever-growing state of *textual plurality*, which in many ways resembles what is today faced by scholars of the Hebrew Bible.<sup>17</sup> In fact, if one were to change the words “*Star Wars*” in the following comment of John C. Lyden to “Hebrew Bible,” the statement would hold just as well: “It is difficult to identify which version of *Star Wars* actually is the original at this point, given the plethora of versions and the continuing dispute ... about what constitutes the ‘canon,’ and who has the authority to define it.”<sup>18</sup>

### **When the executives panic: Compositional *paradigm shifts***

It is often said that the first Star Wars film, *A New Hope*, was “saved in editing,” gaining its hit potential only from the later re-editing and re-composition of already filmed material.<sup>19</sup> The original cut of the full film (“The Lost Cut”), which was likely mostly similar to the final draft script of the movie,<sup>20</sup> was deemed by many as a failure, in dire need of thorough

reworking—a radical *shift in the paradigm*.<sup>21</sup> Faced by this editorial catastrophe, the original slow-paced rough cut had to be made much tighter in its pacing in order for it to work. This was especially achieved by multiple *transpositions* and *omissions*.<sup>22</sup>

The “deleted scenes” often found on DVDs and Blu-Rays of movies give us glimpses (similar to text fragments found from the Dead Sea caves, for instance) of a movie that could have been—or, rather, was at some very early point of composition—seen on the big screen. Sometimes, as in the case of *A New Hope*, these scenes can shed light on *how* certain paradigm shifts took place in the composition stages of the movie. In this case, one of the most prominent changes to the original rough cut was an almost complete *omission* of Luke Skywalker’s childhood friend Biggs Darklighter from the film. In the final edit of the original trilogy, Biggs is only present at the last battle, in which he dies. In terms of the cutting of scenes with Biggs in the final cut of *A New Hope*, we can see that in fact there occurred a quite substantial redaction of the original script, where Biggs plays a more prominent role.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, it is noteworthy that these “deleted scenes” were in fact not deleted for good—they were simply left unused and “lying on the floor of the cutting room,” and apparently still stored in Lucasfilm’s archives. This in turn creates an interesting analogue with the literary-critical theories of earlier, old stored narratives, which only later found their way into the final form of a biblical book.<sup>24</sup> Like film stock in modern times, writing materials were very expensive in ancient Israel. Thus, it only made sense to store materials already

in possession—as one never knew when they might be needed!<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the Special Edition of *A New Hope* now includes one of these originally omitted scenes of Biggs Darklighter.<sup>26</sup> What makes this later addition of original material interesting is the fact that it actually creates some slight inconsistencies in the narrative: because Biggs has not been previously introduced to the spectator, his sudden appearance near the end of the movie makes little sense, especially when it seems that Luke and Biggs have known each other for quite a while.<sup>27</sup> On the one hand, it is clear that the material in question comes from the original shoots of the film, but, on the other hand, it is also clear that the scene in question must have been added later. From a purely text- and literary-critical point of view, then, we are only able to see here the addition (or omission) of a scene, even though the actual situation is much more complicated (i.e., the “added scene” being part of a larger “omission redaction” made to the original cut of the movie, parts of which were only later and sporadically added back into the text). Such “textual zigzagging” is only rarely posited in biblical scholarship, even though it is very likely to have happened at least occasionally.<sup>28</sup>

This is a prime example of how the editorial techniques evidenced by modern films may challenge—or rather, complement—the traditional literary- and redaction-critical methods of biblical studies, where it is often assumed that the editing of the Hebrew Bible happened purely through additions, never through deliberate omissions. With no textual material preserved for us, it is understandably hard to *prove* that omissions, especially large layers of them,



took place in the earlier evolution processes of the Bible. Yet the modern example of the Star Wars saga lends credibility to the idea that this was also a reality in the ancient world. Passages that were later seen as theologically problematic would have been necessary to omit. For instance, one such revision involving a thorough omission likely concerned the goddess Asherah, the wife of Yahweh, whose ostensible importance to the earlier religion of the ancient Hebrews is still echoed by some biblical passages, and especially in the idea of a holy tree, which persevered in the temple of Jerusalem until the reign of the pious monarch Josiah (2 Kgs 23:6, 14).<sup>29</sup>

Whereas in the case of *A New Hope* the re-editing of the rough cut was initiated by the director and the editors themselves, more recent films often get re-edited in their compositional phase for a different reason: changes to already fully filmed and even edited movies are forced by studio executives.<sup>30</sup> Since so much money is at stake,<sup>31</sup> they want to “make sure” that the movie will be a hit. In some cases, this panic mode of executives, who usually have had no part in the actual, hands-on production of the film, has catalyzed complete paradigm shifts in the editing stages of movies.<sup>32</sup> Most recently, this has been theorized to have happened to both the Star Wars movie *Rogue One* and the Batman comic book-based movie *Suicide Squad* (2016). In the latter, a gritty and tonally dark original cut was seemingly changed to a brighter one, because many recent popular comic book movies have succeeded with a more lighthearted formula.<sup>33</sup>

The way in which these recent executive interventions have happened is somewhat different from how *A New Hope* underwent its paradigm shift. In the

case of *Rogue One*, not only did the original, already filmed material undergo re-editing, but a substantial number of completely new scenes were also shot (“reshoots”), replacing many portions of the original rough cut.<sup>34</sup> These reshoots also parallel the well-known tendency in the Hebrew Bible of accumulation of new material at the beginnings and endings of a text:<sup>35</sup> both the beginning, and more notably the ending, of *Rogue One* are said to have been heavily altered.

While the changes made to a text’s ending are harder to deduce without text-critical material, many of the alterations made from the beginning are clearly visible to literary-critical analysis (for instance, jumpy editing and inconsistencies in the narrative logic).<sup>36</sup> The earlier in a text a change is made, the greater its potential impact on subsequent text.<sup>37</sup> A good biblical example of this “ripple effect” is the Masoretic edition of the Book of Jeremiah, in which chapters 46–51 (Oracles against the Nations) were transposed from their original location of 25:14–31:44 (preserved in the Septuagint edition). This massive transposition means that the oracles’ integral partner, the so-called Cup of Wrath sequence (25:15–29), which completes the prophecies of the oracles, became separated from its counterpart and, instead of finalizing the prophecy, now seems to predict the upcoming oracles. Similarly, in Jer 36:2 a reference is made to the uttered oracles (“Take a scroll and write on it all the words which I spoke to you concerning Israel, Judah, and all the nations”), even though they are yet to be recounted.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, two different (radical) techniques of re-composing material can be noted in the production stages of the first and second of the latest Star Wars movies, respectively:

1) Mostly or solely using already existing materials, with multiple omissions and/or transpositions of this material (less intrusive to the overall narrative, harder to notice without further text-critical material); and

2) Creating completely new segments in reshoots, or with Computer Generated Imagery (CGI), often either displacing or replacing old elements in the text (more intrusive, easier to spot in the narrative because of the literary critical tensions they create).

Similarly, changes can be initiated either at the grassroots level (by editors) or dictated from the top down (by executives). While both may result in extensive re-editing of material, these “power structures of editing” come into play especially during the shifting points of tradition, and they potentially manifest in different ways: executives, who have the most power, may have very different standards for making changes than the actual editors and scribes working with the texts. As noted, at least when it comes to the compositional stages of movies, executives can even provoke a very thorough restructuring of an already completed film. These same power structures of editing likely existed in biblical times as well. While smaller and more local textual changes and additions were possible for individual scribes and editors to make at nearly any point, it is probable that the large-scale alteration of texts would have required wider authorization by the community and its leaders.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, these

power structures would have been somewhat fluid, depending on the temporal context: at other times, even a single scribe or editor may have had more power to alter the text.

What can also be said about the two paradigm shifts mentioned above is that they had the potential to either make or break the text. Without the early compositional reworking of *A New Hope*, there would have very likely been no *Rogue One* for us to analyze and criticize in terms of the alterations likely made in its compositional stage(s).

#### **How to “specialize” an edition: Scribal enhancements of a “fixed” text**

After becoming a spectacular success, the text of the original trilogy became fixed until 1997, when its first Special edition hit the shelves. The changes made to this edition, which were mostly quite minor, could be described as conservative scribal enhancements or *Fortschreibungen* to an already fixed, and practically canonical, text: small additions of minor details and even short scenes (which are often literary-critically easily distinguishable from the older base text because of their use of modern CGI), additions of some scenes that had earlier been left out (see above), explicatory pluses, and minor transpositions in the surrounding contexts triggered by these additions. Similarly to the transmission of the early stabilized Pentateuch, there was no more need—or even possibility—for large-scale changes, and especially omissions, similar to those made in the composition stage of *A New Hope*.

Many of these minor additions and “specializations” go unnoticed to an untrained eye. As is also the case in the study of the Hebrew Bible, without text-critical evidence they would be hard, and at times even impossible, to discern with literary-critical means only.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, minor changes were made to the later Special Editions as well, while some changes made to the first Special Edition have subsequently been removed from the later ones.<sup>41</sup> Therefore even Lucas’ authoritative text has been in a state of constant flux since 1997, although mostly concerning very minor points. In a way, Lucas strives for a “proto-Masoretic” authorization with his newer editions, even stating that the earlier versions of the movies no longer exist.

As in the case of many biblical books, the tendency towards smaller changes does not mean that there were no significant ideological changes in the Special Edition. Very much like the wise King Solomon in 1 Kings, whose image was further polished during the transmission process (in the Septuagint version of 1 Kgs 11:1, for instance, Solomon is described as simply a “lover of women,” thus sidestepping the idea that he may have married hundreds of foreigners, as is implied by the Masoretic Text’s claim that “Solomon loved many foreign women”),<sup>42</sup> the originally roguish hero Han Solo gets “whitewashed” in relation to his shooting of the bounty hunter Greedo in *A New Hope*.<sup>43</sup> In the original scene, Han preemptively fires on the bounty hunter, leaving Greedo no time to even react, while in the Special Edition Greedo shoots first (and misses, which renders Greedo’s character completely incompetent), such that Han only responds in self-defense. This change mitigates assignment

of blame to the hero (for murder) and radically changes his picture. Fans, however, were not delighted by this particular transgression of the fixed text; they still maintain that, canonically, “Han shot first.”<sup>44</sup>

Several *harmonizations* between different movies and trilogies were also implemented in the later Special Editions (2004, 2011). This is understandable, since the prequel trilogy movies contradict the original trilogy in many ways; these incongruities needed to be harmonized in the new textual paradigm (a unified saga of six movies instead of three). In many cases, these harmonizations were made in order to assert the canonicity of the newer material and blend them as seamlessly as possible with the older material.<sup>45</sup> Similar harmonizing tendencies are also common in the differing traditions of the biblical materials.<sup>46</sup>

### **Ancient scribes as fan-editors? The theological origins of the textual plurality of the *Star Wars* saga**

The Special Edition was, however, only a minor disturbance in the Force when compared to the polemics created by the prequel trilogy (1999–2005). Not only is the quality of these movies generally considered inferior to the original three, but they also radically restructured and reinterpreted the old canon. One could even argue that they opened the canon, which otherwise was already closed, for further alterations and interpreters.<sup>47</sup> Theologically speaking, the most radical change was made to the key religious concept of the Force, which was no longer understood to be a mysterious pantheistic energy

penetrating all life, but reduced to a mere biological concept of “midichlorians,” microscopic organisms in every living being’s blood (the more midichlorians you have, the stronger you are in the Force). In addition, Anakin Skywalker, who later succumbs to the Dark Side and becomes “Darth Vader,” was also apparently conceived immaculately. Far from simple *Fortschreibungen*, these changes completely altered some of the (until then) well-established, core concepts of the Star Wars mythos.

It is therefore not hard to see why many fans would, in the wake of such enormous theological innovations and reinterpretations, seek to revert to the old canon and denounce the new one.<sup>48</sup> There is a battle of canons raging at the moment; it is most clearly divided on the authoritativeness of the prequel trilogy—with matters only made more complicated by the first two films of the newest trilogy.<sup>49</sup> For biblical scholars, this is a prime opportunity to watch and learn how such an aggressive assertion of authority, possibly somewhat similar to that of the (proto-)Masoretic or early Christian textual canonization, is met in a community of the faithful.<sup>50</sup>

While some of the textual plurality can certainly be ascribed to the Special Editions and Lucas himself, the most radical growth of differing textual traditions has risen from the *fan-editing* community as a countermove to the prequel trilogy’s aggressive assertion of canonicity and authority. The beginning of this modern scribal activity dates back to 2000, when *The Phantom Edit* (an edit of the first prequel movie, *The Phantom Menace*) made by professional film editor Mike J. Nichols started circulating in the movie circles

of Hollywood. In this edition, the theologically controversial concept of midichlorians was omitted, together with many other things (such as the extremely unpopular character Jar Jar Binks). Also many transpositions were added. To date, there are over 130 different fan-edits circulating on the Internet, with more being published every year.<sup>51</sup> These fan-edits differ vastly in terms of their content and style: while most focus only on one movie, others may, in a Chronicles-like manner, combine even three movies into one coherent film. In this case, the “heretical turn” of the “high priest” Lucas has quite clearly functioned as a paradigm shift for the disappointed fans—a form of shift which was likely also found at the inception of the ancient Qumran community and its sectarian texts.<sup>52</sup>

It is also interesting to note that this decentralized textual plurality of fan-edits—however radical the actual means may have been—began (and in many ways continues) as a *conservative* effort to *preserve* the old canon and text of the franchise, which was (and still is) being radically altered by its central authority.<sup>53</sup> At the same time, however, this conservative effort somewhat paradoxically also enabled the radical re-editing of the older texts and made possible even the complete reinterpretation of the whole canon of the Star Wars universe. In the case of the revered original trilogy, it is nevertheless clear that the re-edited versions do not aspire to replace the original text—they simply function as further interpretations of and homages to the beloved text, as “Rewritten Star Wars.”<sup>54</sup>



The decentralized nature of fan-editing is somewhat similar to the analogy made by Francis Borchart on the evolution of the Bible as *open source programming* (i.e., seeing the biblical text(s) as inherently adaptable to the needs of its editors and audiences, and, because of the nonexistent copyright principles of the process, freely borrowable).<sup>55</sup> In both cases, from an originally centralized base text emerges textual plurality, which then starts to interact with both itself and the original text, forming a complex web of intertextual networks. The biggest difference between the two, however, is the stance of the central authority on the textual plurality: in the case of open source programming, plurality is not only tolerated, but also encouraged. In the case of fan-editing, however, the actions of these “fan-scribes” are not always tolerated, and the central authorities often explicitly seek to stop these editions based on their “closed-source code” from spreading—as has been very adamantly done by Lucasfilm.<sup>56</sup> It is possible that, also in the biblical context, these two types of pluralities should be understood as emerging from two different (temporal) contexts: the “open source” model used at the earlier stages, when no central authority had yet emerged (or when it had collapsed, for whatever reason, as would have been the case after 586 BCE), and the “closed source” model taking place after a central text, such as the Masoretic text, had already been established.<sup>57</sup>

When it comes to the editorial techniques employed by fan-edits, omitting—or rather, *leaving out* of—earlier text seems to be one of their key characteristics. This can be seen especially in the case of Star Wars, where

multiple cases of “ideologically problematic” scenes and ideas have simply been left out of the fan-editions. As a phenomenon, this is very close to 1–2 Chronicles, which radically shorten 1–2 Kings, serving in a way as a fan-edit—and at times even coming close to the interpretational techniques of fan *film*<sup>58</sup>—of the base text.<sup>59</sup> Another tendency of fan-edits is to make smaller “scribal corrections” to the text. For example, in the original version of *A New Hope*, the hero Chewbacca was for some reason not given a medal of honor in the final scene of the movie. However, in the fan-edit *Star Wars Revisited* (edited by “Adywan”) this iniquity has been corrected, and Chewbacca can now be seen with a medal.<sup>60</sup> Similar to the proto-Masoretic editing of Jeremiah, for instance, fan-edits can simultaneously make extremely large-scale and incredibly minuscule changes to the text—the two are not separable as distinct “layers” or phenomena. As a more recent development, however, some fan-edits seem to have also started venturing into the direction of fan-*films*: they not only use the old, canonical materials, but create completely new “additions” as well.<sup>61</sup> It will be interesting to see how this newly assumed “fan-directorial” role will enhance the ever-growing textual plurality of *Star Wars* in the future.

## **Conclusions**

It has become clear that many of the editorial phenomena we confront in biblical criticism can also be encountered in both the production of movies and their later reception, with the *Star Wars* saga probably being the most illustrative example thus far. The modern parallel therefore confirms that the

text- and literary-critical method is not only a valid companion for a biblical scholar, but a necessary tool when untangling the complex problem of what does (or should) constitute the basis of the whole field (i.e., the biblical *text*). The cases presented in this paper (additions, omissions, harmonizations, “redactional” layers, differing editions, etc.) are only the tip of an iceberg when it comes to editorial decisions shared by movies and the Hebrew Bible, either in the compositional or the post-release stage(s). Many of the editorial techniques used in film production parallel those of the biblical authors and scribes, offering a prime opportunity to witness how texts and their legacies, in the form of modern film series, actually evolve in the hands of both professionals and fans—the communities who hold these texts dear. It is thus argued that it could prove fruitful to delve even further into the comparison between the two fields and their similarities and differences. It is likely that this further study would result in a better understanding of not only the editorial techniques of the Hebrew Bible, but the contexts in which these techniques were used.

All ancient scribes, like modern fan-editors, had their own ideas about the canon and canonicity of different materials, and this was in turn likely to be reflected in their work as well. The authoritative and canonical nature of different texts, authors, and institutions were (and still are) constantly contested by individuals and groups invested in the transmission of the traditions, whether biblical or modern. It is thus important to see fan-editors not simply as either overzealous or even malicious fans, but as creative individuals concerned with greater questions of theology and the canonicity of the texts they are working

with—similar to the ancient scribes, who were not simply mechanical copyists, but creative agents of their own.<sup>62</sup>

Texts were and are rewritten exactly because of—not in spite of—their importance to the community. Even radical editing of a text is, at least to a certain degree, always a means to *preserve* an earlier text that is perceived as somehow important. An immutable text becomes dead in a way, and in danger of being simply forgotten; or, in the words of George Lucas, “films never get finished, they get abandoned.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This article is a revised version of a paper given at a workshop organized by the Academy of Finland Centre of Excellence *Changes in Sacred Texts and Traditions* (<https://blogs.helsinki.fi/sacredtexts/>). I want to thank all the participants for their helpful comments on the paper.

<sup>2</sup> As Linton Davies, *Editing of Star Wars: How Cutting Created a Classic* (Lulu.com, 2012), 9, stresses: “Consistently the so-called masters of cinema, people such as Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick or Orson Welles, to name but a few, have expounded on how editing plays the most important role in the films they put their names to.”

<sup>3</sup> On the comparison of film and text, see Garry Gillard, “Introduction,” in *Film as Text*, ed. idem (Unpublished, 2005; <http://garrygillard.net/writing/filmastext.html>, accessed May 18, 2017): “The notion of ‘film as text’ is a metaphor drawn from the idea of reading a book. It suggests that in many ways reading a book is like watching a film, and that we might take some of the things we know about the one and apply them to the other. ... Our metaphor (film as text) means that in both cases, book and film, we can ‘read’ the story, both in the sense of taking it in as it goes along and in that of being able to hold ‘all’ of it in our minds, after taking it in, for evaluation, analysis and enjoyment.”

<sup>4</sup> Emanuel Tov, “Understanding the Text of the Bible 65 Years after the Discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” *Open Theology* 1 (2014): 89–96, 95: “The Qumran scrolls show us that textual divergence was the rule rather than the exception at Qumran. These scrolls ... display a textual variety that must have been characteristic of Israel as a whole in the period between the third century BCE and the first century CE... When these scrolls were written, the concept that scrolls should be identical simply did not exist in most of Israel.”

<sup>5</sup> The definition of the term “sacred” is notoriously elusive, and might here be simply replaced with “religious.” As Jonathan Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence,” in idem, *Imagining Religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (Chicago: University Press, 1982), 44, stresses, “sacrality persists insofar as there are communities which are persistent in applying their limited body of tradition,” which then brings forth a canon of such tradition(s). From the viewpoint of the Qumran community, Hanne von Weissenberg and Elisa Uusimäki, “Are there Sacred Texts at Qumran? The Concept of Sacred Text in Light of the Qumran Collection,” in *Is there a Text in this Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*,

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ed. Ariel Feldman et al. (STDJ 119; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 21–41, 22, note: “‘sacred’ serves as a graded relational category, and the ‘sacredness’ of texts pertains to their claimed origin in divine revelation.” Similarly noteworthy concerning this community is their insight: “The ‘sacredness’ of texts is not identical with the ‘canonical closure’ of a text corpus. To clarify, the sacredness clearly overlaps with but is not equal to questions of authority or canonicity. Instead, textual authority is here understood as a pragmatic attribute: a composition is authoritative insofar as it has some practical impact on a human community.” (32)

<sup>6</sup> See Alex Leadbeater, “How Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Changed During Reshoots,” *Screenrant.com* (December 16, 2016, <http://screenrant.com/star-wars-rogue-one-reshoots-changes/>), accessed May 18, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> It is likely, of course, that in their own time certain movies may have a brief but huge cultural impact on both audiences and movie-makers alike, but then become mostly forgotten quickly thereafter. Very few movies are classics, which continue to resonate with audiences decade after decade, like *Star Wars* seems to have done—thus far. It is very likely that this was also the fate of many, or even most, sacred texts and traditions of ancient Israel (the sectarian Qumran texts, for instance) and, more widely, the ancient Near East. For instance, not even the hugely influential Gilgamesh Epic, whose literary evolution alone spanned at least 1,500 years, survived the slow death of Akkadian culture and civilization, although many of its features are reflected even in the Hebrew Bible. While the text of the Gilgamesh Epic itself survived (albeit in a fragmentary form) for modern scholars to analyze, its cultural significance waned and practically disappeared completely from around the turn of the common era until its rediscovery at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Maybe there will come a time when the *Star Wars* movies themselves have been forgotten, but audiences still enjoy lightsaber fights in more recent hit films.

<sup>8</sup> See John C. Lyden, “Whose Film Is It Anyway? Canonicity and Authority in *Star Wars* Fandom,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80/3 (September 2012): 775–86. Indeed, thousands of people worldwide identify themselves not only as fans of the saga, but as followers of the *Jedi faith*; see Zachary Ingle, “Jediism as Religion? The Force as Old/New Religious Philosophy,” in *Fan Phenomena: Star Wars*, ed. Mika Elovaara (Chicago: University Press, 2013), 65–6. Many of the spiritual concepts in the *Star Wars* saga were indeed deliberately created by Lucas to be universally applicable; see John C. Lyden, *Film as Religion: Myths, Morals, and Rituals* (New York: University Press, 2003), 217–24.

<sup>9</sup> Composed of *Star Wars* (1977; later renamed as *Episode IV: A New Hope*), *The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), and *Return of the Jedi* (1983). It is important to note that during the saga even the idea of a “book” or what constitutes a complete literary work has been fluid and in transition, as seen in the later change of the name of the first film.

<sup>10</sup> In 2018, a further spin-off, *Han Solo: A Star Wars Story*, will be released. After Disney bought Lucasfilm and the rights to the *Star Wars* franchise from George Lucas in 2012 at the astronomical sum of 4.06 billion dollars, we are likely to see the saga continue with multiple new installments, possibly even yearly, as has thus far been the case. Such a purchase of intellectual property could, of course, raise the question whether these new movies can be considered *canonical* in the same way as the original trilogy and the prequel trilogy, both of which Lucas was highly involved in. However, quite a few voices had, at least prior to *The Last Jedi*, raised this question, and it seems that the fans’ concerns have been more focused on the quality of the new movies rather than their true canonical nature. *The Force Awakens* features, along with the new cast, all of the original lead actors—Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), Carrie Fisher (Leia Organa), and Harrison Ford (Han Solo)—indicating continuity in the tradition. Interestingly, even the announcement of the *de-canonization* of extensive amounts of material in the *Star Wars Extended Universe* (numerous animations,

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games, and over 150 novels spanning over 20,000 years in the Star Wars universe) hardly seemed to raise polemic among fans—possibly because the material (and its canonicity) had been hotly debated for the entirety of its existence; see William Proctor, “‘Holy crap, more Star Wars! More Star Wars? What if they’re crap?’: Disney, Lucasfilm and Star Wars online fandom in the 21st Century,” *Participations: Journal of Audience & Reception Studies* 10/1 (2013): 198–224, 215, 219. In this case it seems that Disney (which has since begun a new canonical *Extended Universe* of its own) has the approval of many of the faithful fans to continue the saga—at least for the time being.

<sup>11</sup> Consisting of *The Phantom Menace* (1999), *Attack of the Clones* (2002), and *Revenge of the Sith* (2005).

<sup>12</sup> Also similar to the evolution of the Hebrew Bible is the fact that the different trilogies have not been made in a strictly chronological order: episodes 4–6 were made first, and the prequel episodes 1–3 were added later. Most recently, the new trilogy of episodes 7–9 has begun production, and, moreover, the second most recent movie (*Rogue One*) is chronologically situated between episodes 3 and 4, just before the beginning of episode 4. In fact, the last scene of *Rogue One* ends directly where *A New Hope* begins. *Rogue One* also ends in the catchword “hope,” spoken by a (clearly) CGI-generated Leia Organa, thus explicitly connecting the new installation to the old canon. One is immediately reminded of the similar seams of the books Deuteronomy-Joshua, Joshua-Judges, and Samuel-Kings, where the new stories begin more or less seamlessly where the old ones end.

<sup>13</sup> For the many changes in these editions, see [http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/List\\_of\\_changes\\_in\\_Star\\_Wars\\_re-releases](http://starwars.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_changes_in_Star_Wars_re-releases) (accessed November 25, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, the many fan reactions in *The People vs. George Lucas* (2010), directed by Alexandre O. Philippe.

<sup>15</sup> Lucas has gone so far as to state that, to him, the original movies no longer exist; see The Associated Press, “Lucas talks as ‘Star Wars’ trilogy returns,” *Today.com* (September 15, 2004, <http://www.today.com/popculture/lucas-talks-star-wars-trilogy-returns-wbna6011380>), accessed May 18, 2017: “The special edition, that’s the one I wanted out there. The other movie . . . to me, it doesn’t really exist anymore. It’s like this is the movie I wanted it to be, and I’m sorry you saw half a completed film and fell in love with it.”

<sup>16</sup> Instead of “authoritativeness” or “canonicity,” it could prove more useful to speak of the *importance* of certain biblical text(s) to certain communities in certain temporal contexts. See Florentino García Martínez, “Rethinking the Bible – Sixty Years of Dead Sea Scrolls Research and Beyond,” in *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. Mladen Popović (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 19–36; and Hanne von Weissenberg, “‘Canon’ and Identity at Qumran: An Overview and Challenges for Future Research,” in *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible, and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of Raija Sollamo*, ed. Anssi Voitila and Jutta Jokiranta (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 126; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 629–40.

<sup>17</sup> At the moment, the film industry as a whole seems to be starting to step into a new age of decentralized textual plurality, brought about by the fan-editing community. Star Wars is only the most prominent example (and in a way the starting point) of this phenomenon.

<sup>18</sup> Lyden, “Whose Film Is It Anyway,” 780.

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Kaminski, *The Secret History of Star Wars* (Kingston, Ontario: Legacy Books Press, 2008), 137–8.

<sup>20</sup> The final draft script can be found in Carol Titelman (ed.), *The Art of Star Wars* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), 7–137. According to David Reynolds, “The Evolution of Star Wars: Exploring the Lost Cut,” *Star Wars Insider* 41 (1999): 68–75, 70, up to 30–40% of the material from the “Lost Cut” was changed to make the final cut. See also Kaminski, *Secret History of Star Wars*, 84–153, for the long evolution process of the final draft itself. A study of the evolution of Lucas’ different drafts could be another interesting venue of scholarly work.

<sup>21</sup> See Juha Pakkala, “Textual Development within Paradigms and Paradigm Shifts,” *HeBAI* 3 (2014): 327–43, 333–9, 335, for the term: “...while stable conditions deal with the evident changes in the environment by making expansions, a sudden and substantial change in the socio-historical environment, causing an ideological paradigm shift, would have to be resolved by more radical processes.” The most significant of such catastrophic events that incited a paradigm shift would have been the Babylonian exile, which radically altered the old theological framework of the Israelite exiles.

<sup>22</sup> See Davies, *Editing of Star Wars*, 51, 53–6.

<sup>23</sup> These omitted segments with Biggs can be found in Titelman, *The Art of Star Wars*, 25–6, 28–9, 106, 111, 120. These scenes were also filmed. They can, for the most part, be seen in the documentary film *Star Wars: Deleted Magic* (2009, directed by Garrett Gilchrist). The final space-fight sequence at the end of the film was heavily altered as well.

<sup>24</sup> The annalistic materials and the prophetic stories of 1–2 Kings are good examples of such materials, which are often supposed to have existed and developed independently of each other, only later having been (in several stages) combined with each other.

<sup>25</sup> The Qumran library (or parts of it) could be a case of such storing; the manuscript 4QSam<sup>a</sup> seems to be a good example of a manuscript that aspired to store in itself all the available readings. The psychological effect of *sunk-cost fallacy* might also play a role in this storing tendency: once an investment in an undertaking has been made, it is hard for the human mind to simply abandon the investments; see Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2011), 342–6. However, one may exclude from this theologically or ideologically offensive material, which likely would have been destroyed for good in the processes of omitting; for such cases, see Pakkala, *God’s Word Omitted: Omissions in the Transmission of the Hebrew Bible* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupprecht, 2013), 183–252.

<sup>26</sup> See George Lucas, *A New Hope (Special Edition, 1997)*, 1:43:12–46.

<sup>27</sup> It could nevertheless be argued that the scene simply shows that Luke has (made) friends in the rebel forces. However, Luke’s remark “I told you I’d make it one day” and Biggs’ assertion that “Luke is the best bushpilot in the outer rim territories” both indicate that their relationship goes way back.

<sup>28</sup> See Jan Joosten, “Empirical Evidence and Its Limits: The Use of the Septuagint in Retracing the Redaction History of the Hebrew Bible,” in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?*, ed. Juha Pakkala & Reinhard Müller (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 251–64, according to whom a very similar textual zigzag motion took place during the evolution of David’s death narrative in 1 Kgs 2:1–10, where the (clearly late) deuteronomistic notice in

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verses 3–4 was first incorporated into the proto-Masoretic text, then taken out of the Septuagint version, and finally added back into the Septuagint from the MT version.

<sup>29</sup> Asherah, or a holy tree, can still be found associated with Yahweh and his temple in some biblical passages; cf. Josh 24:26; 2 Kgs 21:7. In 2 Sam 5:24, Asherah's cooperation with Yahweh, which is found in the Septuagint, seems to have been omitted from the text as late as in the (proto-)Masoretic edition; see Pakkala, *God's Word Omitted*, 212–13. See William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife? Archaeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), on Asherah's history in the earlier Israelite religion.

<sup>30</sup> See Tom Brook, "Director v Studio: Who should have final cut?" *BBC Culture* (June 3, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/culture/story/20140603-director-v-studio-whos-right>), accessed December 1, 2017.

<sup>31</sup> The production budget of *Rogue One*, for instance, was 200 million dollars. The film made over 1 billion dollars at the box office.

<sup>32</sup> These shifts are often initiated by negative or indifferent feedback from *test audiences* to whom the movie is shown before the actual release of the film (*test screening*); for some examples, see Simon Brew, "51 films, and how they were affected by test screenings," *Den of the Geek* (October 10, 2014, <http://www.denofgeek.com/movies/test-screenings/32412/51-films-and-how-they-were-affected-by-test-screenings>), accessed January 15, 2018.

<sup>33</sup> Alan B. Orange, "Did Suicide Squad Reshoots & Studio Interference Ruin the Movie?" *Movieweb.com* (March 8, 2016, <https://movieweb.com/suicide-squad-movie-studio-interference-reshoots/>), accessed May 18, 2017: "Just four months before it was said to open, Warner Bros. reportedly had two very different versions of the movie assembled. One was David Ayer's much more somber vision. And then there was the lighter, funner, funnier version that Warner Bros. seemed to favor. ... The studio cut is said to have won the argument ... behind-the-scenes is said to have been nothing but extreme panic and clashing of ego." Interestingly, both *Rogue One* and *Suicide Squad* were edited by the same editor, John Gilroy. Possibly the most infamous example of executive influence on a movie's composition is the comic book-based movie *Fantastic Four* (2015), whose final cut was publicly denounced even by its own director; see Jacob Hall, "Everything That Was Cut From 'Fantastic Four' Before Its Release (That We Know About)," *Screenrush.com* (August 10, 2015, <http://screencrush.com/fantastic-four-trailer-scenes-cut-from-movie/>), accessed May 18, 2017.

<sup>34</sup> See Leadbeater, "How Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Changed During Reshoots," for most of the significant changes and reshoots inferable from the differences between the movie trailers and the end result.

<sup>35</sup> On this tendency, see Sara Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision Through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (Oxford: University Press, 2016).

<sup>36</sup> See Leadbeater, "How Rogue One: A Star Wars Story Changed During Reshoots," for a "literary-critical" analysis.

<sup>37</sup> Editor John Gilroy has called this phenomenon the "ripple effect" when discussing the editing of *Rogue One* in Jack Shepherd, "Rogue One and Suicide Squad editor talks reshoots, deleted scenes and Star Wars spin-off expectations," (January 10, 2017, <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/rogue-one-reshoots-star-wars-spin-off-editor-suicide-squad-john-gilroy-cgi-tarkin-trailer-a-new-hope-a7519996.html>), accessed May 18, 2017: "...we definitely changed things at the beginning, added scenes developing those characters, and that has a ripple effect through the whole movie."



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<sup>38</sup> Ville Mäkipelto, Timo Tekoniemi & Miika Tucker, “Large-Scale Transposition as an Editorial Technique in the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible,” *TC: A Journal of Textual Criticism* 22 (2017): 1–16, 10–11. See also Emanuel Tov, “The Literary History of the book of Jeremiah in Light of Its Textual History,” in idem, *The Greek and Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays on the Septuagint* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 363–84.

<sup>39</sup> See Mäkipelto, Tekoniemi & Tucker, “Large-Scale Transposition,” 14: “...the relocation [of Oracles Against the Nations] in Jeremiah required careful and systematic planning on how the whole composition would work after the intrusion... Since the process is materially demanding and thus expensive, it is probable that large transpositions would have required the wider support of a community or at least its leaders. While minor additions or transpositions ... could have been easily made by individual scribes in every stage of textual transmission, large transpositions and relocations likely required wider support involving a great deal of planning and decision making.” However, changes to these power dynamics would have likely happened during times of radical paradigm changes, or when the “open source” model was prevalent.

<sup>40</sup> Compare with the view of Hermann-Josef Stipp, “A Semi-Empirical Example for the Final Touches to a Biblical Book: The Masoretic Sondergut of the Book of Jeremiah,” in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East: What Does Documented Evidence Tell Us about the Transmission of Authoritative Texts?*, ed. Juha Pakkala and Reinhard Müller (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 317, on the book of Jeremiah: “The *Sondergut* [of MT] challenges overly optimistic attitudes as to the power of our tools for uncovering the history of biblical books. If we did not have an alternative text type permitting us to reconstruct the common ancestor, we would be utterly incapable of doing so.” One example from Star Wars of such a change is the ending music of the victory party at the end of *Return of the Jedi*. The original soundtrack was somewhat synchronized to the actual music played by some of the characters in the scene, while in the Special Edition this is no longer the case. However, without textual evidence it would be practically impossible to surmise that the music was changed from one edition to the other.

<sup>41</sup> Possibly the most notable such addition made to the 1997 Special Edition, which was then removed from the 2004 edition, is the scream of falling Luke Skywalker at the end of *The Empire Strikes Back* after his confrontation with Darth Vader. This addition changed the picture of Luke as composed and silently accepting his imminent death to a more fearful character; see RedLetterMedia, *Half in the Bag Episode 17: The People vs. George Lucas* (June 26, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JU30obwqvA>), 11:53–13:50, accessed November 25, 2017.

<sup>42</sup> See Percy Van Keulen, *Two Versions of the Solomon Narrative: An Inquiry into the Relationship between MT 1 Kgs 2-11 and LXX 3 Reg. 2-11* (Supplements to Vetus Testamentum 104; Leiden Brill, 2005), 203–21. Both the MT and Septuagint editions seem to independently polish Solomon’s picture in certain regards; see Frank H. Polak, “The Septuagint Account of Solomon’s Reign: Revision and Ancient Recension,” in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies*, ed. Bernard A. Taylor (Atlanta: SBL, 2001), 148–63.

<sup>43</sup> The picture of the villainous Darth Vader was also made more ambivalent—and, at the end, even benevolent—throughout the making of the original trilogy; see Kaminski, *The Secret History of Star Wars*, 232–3, 247. The widely beloved character of Darth Vader became so important to both Lucas and the fans that Lucas ultimately ended up making the prequel trilogy all about him and his fall to the Dark Side. Similar phenomena can also be seen in the Hebrew Bible, where well-known characters such as Moses, Joshua, and David became so

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important to the community that they started to act as the paragons of virtue and the most central players of different stories.

<sup>44</sup> In the later iterations of the Special Edition, the scene has been further altered to a state where the characters shoot practically simultaneously, although Han still shoots second by only a margin of milliseconds. The final draft script, of course, has no mention of Greedo shooting at all; see Titelman, *Art of Star Wars*, 70. Similarly, see Lyden, “Whose Film Is It Anyway,” 778: “from the fan point of view, this alteration in the ‘canon’ may well be a religious event, and a heretical one at that.”

<sup>45</sup> One of the most prominent of such harmonizing changes can be found in the final scene of *Return of the Jedi*, where the Force ghost of Anakin Skywalker, originally played by Sebastian Shaw, was changed to a younger prequel version of Anakin, played by Hayden Christensen.

<sup>46</sup> Possibly the most prominent example is the highly influential book of Deuteronomy; see Emanuel Tov, “Textual Harmonizations in the Ancient Texts of Deuteronomy,” in idem, *Hebrew Bible, Greek Bible, and Qumran: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 271–82.

<sup>47</sup> Taking here the definition of Jonathan Z. Smith, “Sacred Persistence,” 48–52, of “canon” as a closed set of tradition(s), where instead of alterations to the “text” itself a class of interpreters emerges in order to extend the domain of use of these canonized (at times even physical) materials into everyday life. In the case of the Hebrew Bible, such final canonization meant the birth of rabbinic tradition (where the idea of Hebrew Bible as explicitly *sacred* text is also first encountered)—and, arguably, in the case of Star Wars, the fan community and the vast secondary and “interpretative,” almost *Talmudic*, materials in the Star Wars “extended universe.” However, as noted by Roy T. Cook, “Canonicity and Normativity in Massive, Serialized Collaborative Fiction,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 71/3 (2013), 273, the division between the “canonical” and “non-canonical” is, like the idea of a “canon” itself, not always clear: “canonicity practices are *dynamic* and *negotiable*: a work is not eternally canonical. Rather, it is taken to be canon at a time, but that status is always up for revision. For example, within the *Star Wars* MSCF [=Massive Serialized Collaborative Fiction], the comics ... are typically noncanonical. Once George Lucas included the Jedi Knight Aayla Secura in the second and third prequel films, however, the comics within which she appeared (beginning with *Star Wars Tales* #19) became canon. Further, the fact that a subfiction’s status as canonical is always negotiable underlies the widespread practice within comics of *retroactive continuity*, or *ret-conning*... Since such retroactive reinterpretation is always possible ... any currently canonical installment of such an MSCF is negotiable in this sense.”

<sup>48</sup> Similarly, Ingle, “Jediism as Religion,” 61, states: “In *The Phantom Menace* (Lucas, 1999), Qui-Gon Jinn expands on the ‘theology’ of the Force, referring to the ‘living Force’ and the ‘will of the Force’, while also introducing the role of midi-chlorians, the microorganisms and symbionts that not only have the ability to communicate with the Force, but can also infuriate fans to no end. Based on endosymbiotic theory, this became one of the biggest controversies in the wake of *The Phantom Menace*.”

<sup>49</sup> The fact that the newest installments hardly refer to the prequel trilogy, or at least to their most controversial features, seems to confirm that the fans denouncing the prequels may in fact be winning the battle. It is important to note that the prequels have not been completely abandoned, however; see, for instance, Bryan Young, “10 Times ‘The Force Awakens’ Nods to the ‘Star Wars’ Prequels” (December 29, 2015, <https://entertainment.howstuffworks.com/10-times-the-force-awakens-nods-the-star-wars->

[prequels.htm](#)), accessed January 15, 2018. In a way, this “un-mentioning” of the prequels parallels the at times awkward relationship of Christians with the Old Testament.

<sup>50</sup> In the biblical scholarship, it has been recently increasingly noticed that the texts cannot have existed (and indeed did not exist) without the community and, ultimately, its support. However, it is not clear what the exact relationship between the illiterate individuals living in a predominantly oral culture and the religious texts would have been. An interesting analogue between ancient thought and modern film studies might be that of “fan criticism,” as presented by Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans & Participatory Culture* (Studies in Culture and Communication; New York: Routledge, 1992), 284: “Fan criticism is playful, speculative, subjective. Fans are concerned with the particularity of textual detail and with the need for internal consistency across the program episodes. They create strong parallels between their own lives and the events of the series. Fan critics work to resolve gaps, to explore excess details and undeveloped potentials. This mode of interpretation draws them far beyond the information explicitly present and toward the construction of a meta-text that is larger, richer, more complex and interesting than the original series. The meta-text is a collaborative enterprise; its construction effaces the distinction between reader and writer, opening the program to appropriation by its audience.” Therefore, the community (or a single scribe) would not have been simply a passive receiver/listener of the texts, but an active agent in itself, at the same time not only reproducing and adapting the old narratives, but also creating new ones. It is also highly interesting (and, in the case of biblical studies, highly unresearched) to note the different *gender* perspectives on matters of canonization. As Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 110–1, notes: “Male reading acknowledged and respected the author’s authority, while women saw themselves as engaged in a ‘conversation’ within which they could participate as active contributors.” The ancient voice of women has been mostly suppressed, of course, which gives even more importance to the modern study of the parallel phenomena.

<sup>51</sup> As of March 2018, the database of fanedit.org lists a total of 139 Star Wars fan edits (<https://ifdb.fanedit.org/jreviews/tag/franchise/star-wars/>).

<sup>52</sup> Similarly, see Pakkala, “Paradigms,” 334–5: “A religious schism that results in sectarian groups emerging would represent a paradigm shift. For example, some Qumranic texts imply a confrontation between the community and that of the temple priests in Jerusalem.” This “paradigm shift by heresy” is closely paralleled by the television series “Beauty and the Beast,” whose third season was broadly rejected by fans on the basis of its already formed “fan canon”; see Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 147–54. After this rejection of the authority of the producers, and the cessation of the production of the series, the bifurcated, if not sectarianized, fans (those in favor of the third season and those opposed to it, resembling the division among Star Wars fans) proceeded to create their own narratives and texts, thus creating massive and fluid textual plurality outside the central authority’s canon.

<sup>53</sup> Therefore, instead of simply being “textual poachers,” the fan community may rather be seen in this regard as the “keeper of the flame,” which is certainly how some fan-editors see themselves. See Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 24–50, for a discussion of this term. In this way, the fan-editors would, arguably, transcend the often-used metaphor. In fact, many fans would nowadays be inclined to accuse Disney, who is also not the “original owner” of the trademark (and whose authority may thus more easily be challenged; see endnote 12), of “poaching” the Star Wars brand, as seen in the popular online petition demanding the latest film, *The Last Jedi*, to be erased from the official canon (<https://www.change.org/p/the-walt-disney-company-have-disney-strike-star-wars-episode-viii-from-the-official-canon>, accessed February 15, 2018); see also the discussion of William Proctor, “Disney’s Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Crit,” (February 7, 2018, <http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2018/2/4/disneys-star-wars-episode-iii-revenge-of-the-crit>), accessed February 15, 2018. The present-day

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practice of purchasing the rights to an existing intellectual property, which has, arguably, already been “canonically closed” by its central authority (in the case of Star Wars films not only once but twice!), does indeed raise the question of who is poaching and what? Should a further distinction be made between fan-poachers and corporate-poachers, and is the difference between them simply one of usable (monetary) resources?

<sup>54</sup> Many of these “rewritten” editions are clearly conscious of their rewriting tendencies, while others like, to a certain degree, *The Phantom Edit*, aspire to produce new editions of the *same* text. This comes quite close to the situation in the Qumran community, where many text forms were just as likely aware of their “rewritten” nature.

<sup>55</sup> Francis Borchardt, “Daniel’s Court Tales as Source Code: What Daniel Can Teach Us about Biblical Development,” paper presented at SBL Annual Meeting, Chicago, November 17, 2012. See also Joshua Wille, “Fan edits and the legacy of *The Phantom Edit*,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 17 (2014), 1.2: “Earlier audiences, less well versed in industrial conventions, may have assumed that a film exists in a singular form, like a sculpture on its pedestal, but to the ‘George Lucas generation’ digital cinema is like software in its mutability...” <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2014.0575>

<sup>56</sup> Lucasfilm has repeatedly asserted, sometimes through threats of legal action, its sole right to dictate the canon of the series; see Forrest Phillips, “Star Wars Franchise, fan edits, and Lucasfilm,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 9 (2012), 4 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.3983/twc.2012.0385>). This means that fan-edits are in many ways forced to work in a legal gray area and, consequently, are quite marginal in relation to the larger fandom. This attitude also finds its parallel in antiquity, where a curse often befell those who dared in any way to alter the original text (cf. Deut 4:2 or Letter of Aristeas, §310–11).

<sup>57</sup> See also Pakkala, “Paradigms,” 331–3, according to whom the models of “radical” and “conservative” models of transmission, like the “open source” and “closed source” models, alternated.

<sup>58</sup> While an exact definition is yet to be agreed on, a *fan film* is generally a film which is shot, acted, and edited by fans of an intellectual property who are usually not in any way affiliated with the owners of the copyrights. Whereas fan edits typically only (re-)use (copyrighted) materials from the original creators, fan films are characterized by being completely new, transformative, creations of the fan community. For further discussion, see Phillips, “Star Wars franchise,” 2.4, and Maria Alberto, “‘The effort to translate’: Fan Film Culture and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien,” *Journal of Tolkien Research* 3 (2016).

<sup>59</sup> Chronicles could also be seen as partly paralleling the editorial techniques of fan films when it comes to its many radical (ideological) reinterpretations and substantial additions. Similar to the CGI-produced additions of the Special Edition, these changes are usually quite easy to spot, on one hand because of their differing vocabulary and grammar, and on the other because of their ideological differences vis-à-vis the source text.

<sup>60</sup> If it came to a text-critical choice between these two editions, the fan-edit would in this particular instance likely be deemed—and rightfully so—as a contextual harmonization, a *lectio faciliior* of sorts.

<sup>61</sup> Joshua Wille, “Fan edits and the legacy of *The Phantom Edit*,” 2.9: “For his forthcoming version of *Star Wars Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* (1979), Adywan has assembled an international crew of volunteer filmmakers to help with casting, costuming, and shooting new digital video to be incorporated in the film.”

<sup>62</sup> Eugene Ulrich, “Empirical Evidence for Scribal and Editorial Transmission of Second Temple Religious Literature,” in *Insights into Editing in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, ed. Reinhard Müller & Juha Pakkala (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 43, speaks of “‘learned scribes’ who had or assumed the authority to make limited minor additions or changes.” Wille, “Fan edits and the legacy of *The Phantom Edit*,” 1.5, 1.8, stresses: “...casting fan editors only as rebels against the authorial voices of Hollywood neglects the creativity of their emerging work ... instead of simply characterizing fan editors as disgruntled fans fixated on reclaiming films from their makers, we should recognize fan editors as a breed of artists and storytellers experimenting with cinematic media in the digital age.” See also Joshua Wille, “Dead links, vaporcuts, and creativity in fan edit replication,” *Transformative Works and Cultures* 20 (2015) <https://doi.org/10.3983/twc.2015.0663>.

<sup>63</sup> Wille, “Fan edits and the legacy of *The Phantom Edit*,” 5.1, similarly notes: “...the existence of fan edits may contribute to an evolving public understanding that cinematic forms are fluid and malleable rather than immutable. Thus the collective work may eventually prove George Lucas's claim that ‘films never get finished, they get abandoned.’”

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