

Contents

Foreword by David Greetham	i
Preface to the Second Edition	ix
Preface to the First Edition	xix
Introduction	1
1 The History and Development of Modern Editing Techniques of Jewish Mystical Literature	14
1. The Illusion of Distance: Editorial Practice in the Academy	14
2. Early Text Editing: From the Middle Ages through the Nineteenth Century	22
3. Gershom Scholem and Textual Scholarship in the University Setting	26
4. New Methods of Critical Editing: From Scholem to Schäfer	35
5. Editors and their Audience(s): Academic, Traditional and Popular	46
6. Computers and the Printed Format of Critical Editions	68
7. Photographic Reproductions	71
8. New Tools and Methods of Textual Scholarship of Jewish Mystical Literature	75
9. Major Text Projects: Methodology and Cooperation	82
10. Rewritten Texts in the Early Kabbalah: Multiple Versions and Editorial Practice	90
2 The Interpolation of Marginal Glosses: ‘The <i>Shekhinah</i>’ and Theosophic Revisions of Early Manuscripts of the <i>Book Bahir</i>	122
1. Condensation and Displacement: The Production and Use of Symbols	130
2. Myth and Symbol: Positioning the Subject	133
3. Misplacing Clarity: An ‘Open Book’ Emerging from Ashkenaz (Not Provence)	138
4. Choosing a Methodology: Philology with Gender	148

5. The Current Gender Debate 152
 6. The *Shekhinah* and the Virgin Mary 157
 7. Did the *Bahir* Introduce Sexual Symbolism to the Jewish Mystical Tradition? 160
 8. The Erotic Language of the *Book Bahir*: Exegesis or Eisegesis? 165
 9. '*Shekhinah*' as a Technical Term in the *Book Bahir* 168
 10. Righteousness as Israel's *Shekhinah* (§§49-51) 171
 11. The Tree that Bears Fruit §85 177
 12. The 'End of the *Shekhinah*' (§§ 115-116): The Gendered Continuum of Ontology 181
 13. Later Glosses and Accretions to the Manuscript Witnesses: The Transformation of the Text of the *Bahir* 185
 14. From Condensation to Displacement: The Reception of Bahiric Language and Parables in Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah 188
 15. Conclusion 193
 16. Passages from the *Bahir* that Contain the Term '*Shekhinah*' According to Ms. Munich 209 and Ms. Zurich 173 195
- 3 The Textualization of Orality: The Reception and Interpretation of Nahmanides' Kabbalistic Traditions 199
1. Preserving and Interpreting Esoteric Traditions and Texts 199
 2. Nahmanides and his Stand on the Dissemination of his Kabbalah 200
 3. A History of the Interpretations to Nahmanides' 'Secrets' 204
 4. Transmission vs. Interpretation: Problems in Defining the Nature of a Supercommentary 208
 5. Supercommentaries of Other Orientations 214
 6. A Complete Edition of Supercommentaries: A Tool for All Future Scholarship 216
 7. Methodological Differences and Criticism of Recent Scholarship 219
- 4 The Invention of the *Zohar* as a Book 224
1. On the Assumptions and Expectations of the Kabbalists and Modern Scholars 224

2. A New Appreciation of the Semantic Field of the Hebrew Book (*Sefer*) and the 'Open Book' in Medieval Jewish Literature 228
 3. The Invention of the *Zohar* as a 'Book' by the Kabbalists and the *Editio Princeps* 232
 4. Moses Cordovero's Commentary to the *Zohar* and the Invention of the *Zohar* as a Corpus 245
 5. Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Manuscripts of the *Zohar* 257
 6. The First Printings and Early Reactions to its Format 263
 7. Chapters in the Historiography of the *Zohar* as a Book 265
 - Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Scholarship: Studies Prior to Gershom Scholem: Elyaqim Milzahagi; Adolph Franck; Adolph Jellinek; Christian David Ginsburg; Heinrich Graetz; Dubnow; Ernst Müller; Moses Gaster.
 - From 'The Book and its Author' to the 'Circle of the *Zohar*': Academic Research From Gershom Scholem through Present Times: Gershom Scholem; Isaiah Tishby; Stephen Wald; Moshe Idel; Yehuda Liebes; Charles Mopsik; Daniel Matt; Arthur Green; Michal Oron; Boaz Huss; Ronit Meroz; Elliot Wolfson; Amos Goldreich; Haviva Pedaya
 8. The *Zohar* is Not a Book – Nor Does It Have an 'Author' 371
 9. Suggestions for Future Research of Zoharic Texts 388
 10. Form and Meaning: The Limits and Legitimacy of Interpretation 410
 11. More Zoharic than [the] *Zohar*: The Hyper-Animation of Narrative Figures 422
 12. The *Zohar* as a Family of Literary Phenomena 434
 13. Is there a *Zohar* in This Class? The Interface between Textual Instability and Hermeneutic Indeterminacy 435
- 5 Theorizing Textual Scholarship in Kabbalah Research 439
1. Textual Theory in Editorial Practice of Kabbalah Scholarship 439
 2. Textual Idealism: Editing 'The Text that Never Was' and The Invention of Kabbalistic Books 454
 - Sefer Yeşira; The Book Bahir; The Zohar; Tiqqunei Zohar*
 3. In Pursuit of the Urtext: A Central Myth that Drives Editorial Practice 486

4.	The Kabbalistic Footnote: The Descent of the Marginal Gloss to the Foot of the Page	500
5.	Intention and the Subject: The Kabbalists in their Own Eyes and their Re/Presentation in Scholarship	523
6.	Authorial Intention and Textual Idealism	540
7.	Uncovering the Author's Personality – Text as the Object of Study: Localized Hermeneutics of Kabbalah Research	548
8.	Choosing a Method of Editorial Practice	557
9.	Editorial Practice in the Field of Jewish Mysticism	568
10.	<i>Bibliographia Kabbalistica</i> : The Library of Jewish Mysticism as a Scholarly Construct	587
11.	Scholem's Letter to Bialik Revisited: New Editions and the Future of the Field	598
	The State of the Field, 1925; Kabbalistic Genres, Major Trends and Subspecialties of the Study of Jewish Mysticism; Graphic Images and Kabbalistic Texts; The Juxtaposition of Text, Jewish Magic and New Scholarly Tools	
12.	Kabbalistic Hypertext and the Material Book: Technological Advances as a Challenge to Esotericism	651
13.	Conclusion	658
6	Textual Fixity and Textual Fluidity: Kabbalistic Textuality and the Hypertextualism of Kabbalah Scholarship	664
1.	Hypertextualism and the Study of Jewish Mysticism	674
2.	Recent Debates on Textual Methodology in Kabbalah Research	678
3.	Kabbalists as Literary Critics: An Undocumented History	682
4.	Re-Editing as a Religious Imperative: A Psychological Appreciation of the Theurgic Justification of Editorial Practice	701
5.	The Cultural Agendas and Assumptions of the Methodologies Kabbalah Scholarship	712
6	Epilogue: Kabbalah as Textual Process	718
	Bibliography	723
	Index	817

Foreword

When I received by e-mail a letter from Daniel Abrams describing his book on *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory* I was both surprised and intrigued. Surprised by a book on kabbalistic manuscripts having been sent to me at all, for I could claim no genuine expertise in the first element of the title; and intrigued by seeing these manuscripts linked to 'textual theory', a topic with which I certainly felt more comfortable and for whose enlargement and understanding I had been arguing (perhaps with more than a touch of messianic conviction) over several decades. Given that my agenda had been that some form of textual theory lay behind the practice of the critical study of manuscripts and printed books (and then electronic texts), Abrams' having linked kabbalistic manuscripts to textual theory might be seen as evidence that my long project was indeed reaching fruition. In fact, as I began to read into the text, I saw that Abrams had indeed insisted on embedding the complex bibliographical and textual study of these manuscripts into the various discussions of 'theory' that I and other scholars (Jerome McGann, D. F. McKenzie, Peter L. Shillingsburg, G. Thomas Tanselle, for example) had laid out as what I had called a 'matrix'¹ for the practice of bibliographical and textual analysis.

The collocation of 'textual theory' and 'manuscripts' (kabbalistic or otherwise) therefore posed a particularly complex challenge for a scholar working primarily, though not exclusively, in the Anglo-American tradition. Having laid out one of the principles to which Abrams' book was a response, how effectively and accurately could I return the favour by assessing not only the final section on 'Theorizing Textual Scholarship in Kabbalah Research' but also by using the opportunity presented by earlier parts of the book to educate myself in a manuscript tradition with which I ought to have been more familiar, as well as mining these sections of the book for examples that could prove apt and salutary to any forthcoming work I might later undertake? Abrams' book therefore arrived at a particularly significant moment: it allowed this Anglo-American

¹ D. C. Greetham, 'Textual and Literary Theory: Redrawing the Matrix', *Studies in Bibliography* 42 (1989), pp. 1-24. Repr. *Anglo-American Scholarly Editing, 1980-2005*, ed. Paul Eggert and Peter L. Shillingsburg, *Ecdotica* 6 (2009), pp. 174-197. The use of the term *matrix* is, of course, a reference to the printer's 'mould' for casting type.

reader to reflect on the 'theory' of editing and textuality and to scour the rich materials presented on kabbalistic manuscripts for illuminating that 'theory'.

How did this expectation work out? It should first be emphasized that, as I take it, Abrams' purpose in that final section on 'Theorizing Textual Scholarship' is not to present a comprehensive view of developments in this field as a whole, but rather, working under specifically problematic or even contentious rubrics ('Textual Idealism', the 'Urtext', 'Intention and the Subject', 'Hypertext and the Material Book'), to select from arguments addressing these topics those that might help to bring a theoretical 'matrix' to bear on the particular historical, documentary, and transmissional problems of the Kabbalah.

For example, while numerous examples of the role of intention (authorial, scribal, social) occur throughout the book, it is in that part of the final section devoted to 'Authorial Intention and Textual Idealism' that Abrams can integrate the earlier documentary study with several of the basic principles invoked by contemporary intentionalist critics, for example, that '[t]he meeting of authorial intent and textual idealism is based on a presumption of a single personality who produces a unified work that reflects a uniform system of thought' (723). While several of the terms of this formula ('unified', 'system of thought') would require a good deal of unpacking to do justice to the enormous critical literature in this area, I would doubt that any faction in the idealist/intentionalist controversy would quarrel with this deftly worded summation of the 'presumption' that underlies the debate. To do this effectively, Abrams must adopt a sort of rhetorical ventriloquism, creating locutionary space for a position that he neither adopts nor rejects. Thus, he can go on to propose (or rather state, in a fairly neutral tone) that '[i]t could be argued that the starting point of such an inquiry is the cognitive experience of the reader who imposes expectations on the work by fashioning the text through acts of interpretation' (540), where the introductory disclaimer ('it could be argued') allows Abrams' ventriloquism to present what is again a complex of critical stances ('cognitive experience', 'expectations', 'acts of interpretation'), each one of which might be the focus of what has often been a highly contentious debate, but which taken cumulatively in Abrams' apparently neutral rhetoric, can be seen as an eminently fair and even-handed presentation of the problem.

It is true that, in his development of the principles of this debate, Abrams can introduce demurrals that seem to question some of the 'presumptions' that he has already described. After an examination of the working out of some instances in intention and idealism in kabbalistic texts, he quietly observes: 'In such cases, I wonder to what extent authorial intent over-determines the results of the

textual analysis. Put differently, what are the implications of research that grounds the understanding of the work?' (542), going on to examine the problems posed by an author writing at different periods and then choosing to revise earlier work in the light of these later developments. Such issues have been raised by several Anglo-American textual critics (for example, Hershel Parker on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American authors like Twain or Mailer),² and is particularly instructive to see how Abrams now adopts the principles behind such critiques in the editing of Moses de León's *Sefer ha-Mishqal*, in which the editor Jochanan Wijnhoven decided to omit some materials that 'break down the literary form or plan under any assessment' (543). It might be objected that 'any assessment' casts too wide a net given the arguments about the socialization of text advanced by such critics as Jerome McGann and D. F. McKenzie,³ but Abrams returns to his more open critical stance when he insists: 'we must ask what is the purpose of *scholarly* editing? Is it to restore the author's first (complete) execution of his literary plan, his final product, or the 'received' and commonly known form of the text as transmitted in manuscript and print' (543). When Abrams then goes on to place Wijnhoven's edition in the ongoing argument 'to test or further confirm at that time Scholem's conclusion that De León was the sole author of the *Zohar*' (543), we can see that Abrams has perhaps strategically retreated from his earlier citing of 'any assessment' in placing the edition within a very particularized critical argument.

This method appears throughout the later section on textual theory, where Abrams will take up a *potential* argument familiar to, if not necessarily derived from, contemporary Anglo-American debate, and will then test various aspects of this argument, using his extensive and detailed knowledge of kabbalistic manuscripts to find an appropriate way he can set the implications of the theory within the tradition of transmission and editing with which he is clearly such an expert. And is not this technique exactly what I have been advocating for many years? Well, of course, and how refreshing it is to be introduced into a very different and complex textual tradition via those critical tools that have been so familiar to textuists in the milieu of Anglo-American textuality.

To see the relationship in this way is doubtless historically myopic, for the critical editing and textual scholarship of vernacular European-language texts is

² Hershel Parker, *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons: Literary Authority in American Fiction*, Evanston 1985.

³ Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, Charlottesville 1992; D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, London, The Panizzi Lectures, 1985.

Preface to the Second Edition

Abraham falls victim to the following illusion: he cannot stand the uniformity of this world. Now the world is known, however, to be uncommonly various, which can be verified at any time by taking a handful of world and looking at it closely. Thus this complaint at the uniformity of the world is really a complaint at not having been mixed profoundly enough with the diversity of the world.

– Franz Kafka, *Parables and Paradoxes*, New York 1961, p. 41

This book suggests a basic change to the methodologies that inform Kabbalah scholarship. If taken seriously, scholars will no longer read books as singular testimonies to the ideas held by monolithic authors. Rather, applying the methods set out in this volume, scholars will read across multiple documents and appreciate the textual dynamics of written traditions across the changing formulations of texts that were copied and revised over time. In this volume, I have attempted to expose the various unstated assumptions and ideologies which have served as impediments for scholars of Jewish mysticism to read the texts that exist in the particular forms they have before them. In the history of the production and transmission of these texts, the content and form of kabbalistic writings have been significantly changed so as to instill new life into what otherwise would be a single moment of literary expression. This study therefore has sought to expose, and set aside, the cultural expectations of much of what scholarship has tried so hard to invent, or to reconstruct, about the Jewish mystics as authors of uniform works in an attempt to animate and sanctify particular moments from a religious past for their cultural value in the present.

In my understanding, the mindset of the first composers of these texts, like later commentators and scribes who often reworked these texts, was poised to continue their incipient act of literary creation by opening up the work to revision and thus, their works became texts, and ultimately a chain of texts in many variations. I have described this phenomenon as the performance of the text and not its corruption, privileging the material manifestations of the copies over any shared features or their ideal forms. I trust that I have made a convincing argument that will change the object of study from the ideal work to the *actual* expressions of their textual performance that can be read for what they are, in all their detail and specificity, and not simply as approximations of the 'original' that the scholar imagines to view when he or she looks at a later witness.

Not only has the obsessive pursuit of the lost original in kabbalah scholarship – contrived, partially recovered or imagined – diverted scholarship away from the textual dynamics of the various documents that have survived, but it has justified a narrow view of reception history that opposes the original to the later reactions to this lost object. This study therefore concerns neither a discussion of the original nor a binary perspective of the literary product of the author and its cultural impact. Instead, it treats the life of Jewish mystical texts and how scholarship can be rehabilitated to appreciate and re-present those dynamics through theory and editorial practice.

It is well known that the manual reproduction of manuscripts (and the preparation of printed editions) introduced errors and variation into the witnesses of a given work, but one should not confuse such incidentals with the substantive changes that were, and are, meaningful, whether that be one word or a recensional revision of a work. The creation of critical editions in the academy, or at the very least within Jewish studies, is based on a cultural agenda of producing a fixed canon, but more importantly, I would add, that it is based as well on a deep anxiety about the very existence of variation and so, many academics have dismissed it by calling it contamination and error. This anxiety is fueled by the need of some scholars to textually ground the societal expectations of faith that would address the most recent aspects of a social and cultural crisis that marks the entrance of Jews into the modern world, including most prominently the introduction of Jewish studies into the academy as one of many markers of Jewish emancipation. The academy thus serves its own needs and those of many of its reading audiences, as it unknowingly becomes a producer and a consumer of the choices and yield of the methodologies it employs. The medieval kabbalists, as a special subset of the producers of manuscript texts who are under study in this volume, as a rule, did not work with the academic categories of ‘the original’, the ‘author’, and ‘the work’, but rather freely appropriated texts for the creation of the textual forms that they sought fit, introducing whatever changes they deemed appropriate.

I suggest that the motivation that propels this sense of textual re-production forward amongst the medieval kabbalists (and perhaps beyond) is the psychological wish to avoid an ending, postponing, as it were, the death of a work. The finality of (a) text, its singular version, not only evokes the anxiety of one’s own death,¹ but in the greater context of both ancient and medieval rabbinic

¹ In a private communication from July 31, 2011, David Greetham suggested a counter argument to the anxiety of death in leaving or maintaining a work as an open work. He

culture, there is a pervasive anxiety concerning the chain of transmission as the source of authority, the confirmation of a heritage, the promise of a future, and ultimately a revisiting of the intimate moment of (textual) revelation which takes the rabbinically constructed reader back to the moment of individual inspiration and participation in the historical event of divine revelation.

The kabbalists, it has been noted, reified the tradition or idea that the Torah is the all-inclusive book, in which the world is contained and reflected.² Similarly, I argue that they saw their own works as continuing the divine writing of the revealed book and extended to this process a good measure of this ontological and literary status. Their esoteric writings were not merely the transcription of oral discussions about the deeper or inner meaning of holy texts. Rather, in a complex interface which is no doubt somewhat different for each kabbalist and period, writing served as the beginning of a dialogue with other written (and oral) traditions that perpetuated an ongoing discussion. Manuscript culture weighs in heavily here as the ability to communicate with others who similarly could pen their comments onto the same unique page of any manuscript witness, no less than they could revise a received text by copying it onto another page, which in turn allowed for a high degree of textual fluidity. Some recent studies have compared this feature of manuscript production and reproduction to hypertext and various media which have developed in the digital age.³ In the present study,

offered the examples of Wordsworth's Prelude, left unfinished until his death and the many versions of Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' (as analyzed by Jack Stillinger, *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of The Major Poems*, Oxford-New York 1994, pp. 73-79), that possibly, with intention, left the reading audience with expectation about forthcoming literary production.

² Elliot Wolfson, 'From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Memory, and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics', *Interpreting Judaism in a Postmodern Age*, ed. S. Kepnes, New York 1995, pp. 145-178; idem, 'Mirror of Nature Reflected in the Symbolism of Medieval Kabbalah', *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, ed. H. Tirosh-Samuels, Cambridge 2002, pp. 305-331. See further below on the debate between Wolfson and Idel on the sources and parallels between kabbalistic traditions and Derrida's formulation that there is nothing outside of the text. Elliot Wolfson, 'Assaulting the Border: Kabbalistic Traces in the Margins of Derrida', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 70 (2002), pp. 475-514; Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*, New Haven and London 2002, pp. 80-110, esp. p. 525 n. 55.

³ David Salomon, *An Introduction to the Glossa Ordinaria as Medieval Hypertext*, Cardiff 2012. Other earlier attempts to describe either medieval manuscripts and books as hypertexts or the desired form of new editions of multiple manuscript witnesses as hypertext include: Jay David Bolter, 'The Computer, Hypertext, and Classical Studies', *The*

Preface to the First Edition

The pleasure [of the text] can be spoken; whence criticism.

– Roland Barthes, *The Pleasures of the Text*, p. 51

I have been blessed with the opportunity to devote my creative energies to the subjects that interest me most and have had the honor and privilege to share my work with the most erudite and intellectually compelling scholars I could imagine. The study of kabbalistic manuscripts and books has been the central passion of my life, ever since I first pursued a doctorate in Jewish Mysticism with Elliot Wolfson at New York University. In those years, I would spend my days in the stacks and Rare Book Room of the Jewish Theological Seminary, reading kabbalistic manuscripts from the original codices to which they so graciously gave me direct access.

Ever since those formative years, I have had the pleasure of reading kabbalistic manuscripts and books in the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts and in the Gershom Scholem Library, both housed in the National Library of Israel, which contains the single greatest collection of Jewish sources in the world and serves as the meeting place of experts in various disciplines of Jewish studies from around the world. I would like to thank the staff of these libraries, who, over the years, have assisted me, shared their knowledge and given me access to all that I have needed to complete my research.

This book emerges out of research that extends back many years and culminates in conclusions that have been reached in response to the latest developments in scholarship. I have enjoyed the opportunity to share my thoughts and be critically challenged by a number of trusted colleagues who, without reserve, offered their direct criticism, insights, and reflections to my thoughts and research.

I would like to begin by first acknowledging Elliot Wolfson who has profoundly impacted my work and thinking since my graduate training. It is with him that I first read the *Book Bahir*, the *Zohar* and so many other texts that find their expression here. He remains a steadfast example of devotion to bibliophilia, textual scholarship, religious studies and the integration of critical theory within the study of kabbalistic books and manuscripts.

Moshe Idel first taught me to read manuscripts without a map of any kind in mind, to randomly choose kabbalistic manuscripts from the card drawer each day so that I would construct my own impressions of kabbalistic texts out of all that has survived, instead of limiting myself to what others have published or deemed important. He has encouraged me to appreciate all things that have been presented as marginal or which exist in variation and to celebrate their multiple forms. He has consistently advised me to ignore all political and institutional pressures in order to pursue the projects that I enjoy and find interesting, and to realize in print my vision of what I understand from reading primary sources.

Philip Wexler has shared with me his keen wit and intimate knowledge of critical theory in the humanities and social sciences and has refined my thinking and presentation for a wider and more sophisticated audience than I would have otherwise considered.

I would like to offer my special thanks to David Greetham, whom I hope to meet one day. His work has guided my research in textual scholarship for many years. His book, *Theories of the Text*, opened my eyes and transformed my thinking, exposing me to an ideal of how to think and write about texts and textual scholarship. I did not dare contact him until completing this manuscript and I am glad I had the courage to do so as he has helped me see this book to print and has honored me with his foreword and critical reflections on my work.

Finally, I wish to thank Michael Schneider, a friend, colleague and teacher, who has taught me a greater degree of patience when confronting texts and has shared with me how he reads in context and across various traditions. He is a scholar in the deepest sense I know, seeing past all boundaries, whether they be linguistic, historical, ideological or textual. I turn to him when I reach the limits of my abilities in deciphering a text. And for all who know him, in whatever field they share with him, he shies away from the glories of success, seeking only the pleasures of learning. I dedicate this study to him as a small token of the recognition he deserves as a master of so many subjects and fields: *he-ḥakham ha-shalem*.

Introduction

I am certain that there is no hope or foundation for Kabbalah research until these manuscripts are investigated. [...] One should know that what has been printed and what has not been printed was not the result of their importance, but by a matter of chance. That is, these were random events and we must correct the incidental damage that has been done.

– Gershom Scholem, 'Letter to H.N. Bialik', p. 60

In the serious study of Jewish mysticism, textual scholarship concerns every stage of research, from assessing the character and context of the appropriate sources to be studied for a given project to adjudicating meaning about the most theoretical and abstract discussions for a thematic survey or history of ideas of a given topic. As understood for some time now in the field of textual scholarship, theory resides within all uses of textual sources and there is no need to oppose, or to argue, for the need to combine textuality and theory as if they were mutually exclusive disciplines. This study thus takes for granted the necessary interface between the two and explores the particular forms of their application in the study of Jewish mysticism.¹

The academic study of Jewish mysticism has witnessed great strides since its inception nearly a century ago, but unfortunately it has been engaged in little self-reflection on its methodologies of research in textual scholarship. Social and intellectual history, hermeneutics, and the various theoretical aspects of speculative (and theosophic) kabbalistic traditions have been privileged over textual scholarship which has been seen as the theoretically neutral groundwork intended to serve the higher aims of these other types of research. The needed corrective is not intended to reverse this hierarchy, but to expose the unspoken theoretical assumptions within textual scholarship and editorial practice and thus rehabilitate these methods for many, and in the eyes of some, even

¹ See foremost Paul de Man's essay 'The Resistance to Theory' and 'The Return to Philology' in his volume, *The Resistance to Theory*, Minneapolis 1986, and the engagement on this question by David Greetham in his essay 'The Resistance to Philology', *The Margins of the Text*, ed. D. C. Greetham, Ann Arbor 1997, pp. 9-24, reprinted in *The Pleasures of Contamination: Evidence, Text and Voice in Textual Studies*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 2010, pp. 29-42.

legitimate editorial practice within the academy. This volume is decidedly not aimed at offering such an education,² but to advance the understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of past editorial practice and to forward a new theory for textual scholarship within the study of Jewish mysticism.

A central assumption of this study is that scholars serve the texts of Jewish mysticism in order to advance its understanding within the academy. Textual scholarship as the primary engine for advancing the various forms of scholarship within the field is constructed around the effort to adduce meaning from within the raw data and surviving materials, which should be studied in order to better appreciate the phenomena that produced and resulted in this textual body. The strong thesis of this study is therefore that the versions of the texts that we now possess are not reflections on the religious and cultural life that once existed, transforming the text into the medium, or kabbalistically the speculum, through which the modern scholar can reflect on the religious and mystical life behind and beyond the text. Kabbalah as the main period and interest of the study of Jewish mysticism as a whole is in itself textual and as such the textual work, editions and interpretive studies are part of a composite whole for understanding its life throughout the ages, including the very editions which are produced from its manuscript resources.

Textual scholarship of Jewish mysticism is not in the service of theory as such, offering a new tool that advances the study of hermeneutics, even when it is reconfigured historically, culturally or socially. Kabbalistic manuscripts meet textual theory within the discipline of editorial practice where methods of evaluating and presenting difference in the text allow the scholar to negotiate meaning from within the various contexts without idealizing such constructions as the author, the work or the intended meaning. This study will thus expose the theory behind editorial practice in Kabbalah research and present these findings as a contribution to the general theory of textual scholarship. This study, nevertheless, will stop short of theorizing the theory behind the academic's hermeneutic negotiation with the kabbalistic text, a project worthy in its own right, but will instead isolate the unique features of interpretation within the textual work with kabbalistic manuscripts.

The aims of this project thus depart from those mapped out in David Greetham's masterful *Theories of the Text*, even where it builds on many of his

² For a fine collection of studies about editorial practice see *Scholarly Editing: A Guide to Research*, ed. D.C. Greetham, New York 1995; *Textual Editing and Criticism: An Introduction*, ed. E. Kelemen, foreword by Donald H. Reiman, New York and London 2009.

conclusions, foremost amongst them being the implication of theory in all aspects of textual editing.³ In many other studies, Greetham has demonstrated the underlying theoretical moves behind text work is replete with ideological assumptions that shape the edition and convey a particular set of ideas to the reader. As he wrote in the introduction to the collection of some of his earlier studies, *Textual Transgressions*, ‘As I have argued for some time, Althusser’s definition of ideology (‘ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence’) as a cognitive system applied just as much to textual and editorial work as to any other intellectual activity. Philology, either old or new, was not exempt from the cultural *données* of its time’.⁴

The history of the academic scholarship of Jewish mysticism is quite complex. Despite Scholem’s philologically grounded inquiries and the *volumes* he published in the early years of the field of kabbalistic bibliography – the history of printing and annotated manuscript listings – his efforts were culturally motivated as catalysts for change in a community of readers in and outside of the university.⁵ The importance of this claim is that with voiced self-awareness, Scholem saw his engagement with this spurned body of literature as a corrective to a given situation in his generation. Much has changed since Scholem’s time and scholarship has emerged as *more* culturally invested in its self-understanding, both in how it evaluates the intentions and achievements of past scholarship and how its self-perception informs and shapes the questions and interests of contemporary research.

This fundamental shift in orientation has been deleterious to textual scholarship in the study of Jewish mysticism. Countless studies about Scholem have misinterpreted his methods and aims by assimilating the two when in fact he was able to appreciate that culture and ideology could offer the initial impetus and ultimately benefit from the fruits of textual scholarship, but that the methods of research were derived from within its study. That is to say, that Scholem quite

³ David Greetham, *Theories of the Text*, Oxford 1999, esp. pp. 1-25.

⁴ David Greetham, *Textual Transgressions Essays Toward the Construction of a Bibliography*, New York 1998, p. 21, citing Louis Althusser’s, ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)’, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, translated by Ben Brewster, New York 1971, p. 162.

⁵ Daniel Abrams, ‘Defining Modern Academic Scholarship: Gershom Scholem and the Establishment of a New (?) Discipline’, *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 9 (2000), pp. 267-302; idem, ‘Presenting and Representing Gershom Scholem: A Review Essay’, *Modern Judaism* 20 (2000), pp. 226-243; idem, ‘The Cultural Reception of the *Zohar* – An Unknown Lecture by Gershom Scholem from 1940 (Study, Edition and English Translation)’, *Kabbalah* 19 (2009), pp. 279-315.