

THE INTERPRETED TEXT: AMONG THE HEBREW MANUSCRIPTS OF THE JOHN RYLANDS UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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A. HORIZONS OF INTERPRETATION: WORK, CODEX, COLLECTION

Twenty-three feet of shelving in the John Rylands University Library of Manchester are occupied by Hebrew manuscripts. The aim of this brief report on these manuscripts is to convey some basic and rather general information.¹ Such a presentation presupposes a number of far-reaching if familiar moves in the interpretation of literature.² I shall try to monitor these interpretative decisions, and the structure of what follows will reflect three horizons of interpretation which are furnished by the manuscripts themselves: the literary work, the codex³ in which it is transmitted and the collection in which the codex finds its place alongside other codices. I shall provide an approximate numerical breakdown of the manuscripts according to region and literary type in section B, look at three sample codices in section C, and touch upon the history and character of the two main private collections from which the manuscripts came to the Library in section D. An appendix will supplement the listing offered in part B.

¹ This account has grown out of work towards a descriptive catalogue of the Hebrew manuscripts in the Library. Both the limited scope and the tentative nature of the picture given here reflect that project's unfinished state. I would like to take this opportunity to ask all scholars who have worked in the past on manuscripts in the Library or have knowledge of the history of the collections for their collaboration. If they believe themselves to be in possession of information that might be relevant for the final catalogue, I should like to ask them to get in touch with me at the John Rylands Research Institute, 150 Deansgate, Manchester M3 3EH, where the manuscripts are housed. Apart from a number of individual literary and manuscript experts whose kind help is acknowledged in the following footnotes, I am greatly indebted to a collective of scholars: the work of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts (see note 4) has proved an immense help in the investigation of these documents.

² The opening statement of this article, apparently reporting only a measurement, already incorporates a number of interpretative decisions leading to the exclusion of certain manuscripts; see below section D and note 69.

³ A number of Hebrew texts in the Library are not in codex form. Tora scrolls, Esther scrolls, *ketubboth* and amulets are not covered by this survey.

B. WORKS: TYPES AND REGIONS⁴

There are 177 original⁵ Hebrew manuscript codices in the Library, representing at least 260 different works or bibliographical units.⁶ Liturgical, magical-kabbalistic, biblical, homiletical and narrative writings are numerically dominant. Taken together, these account for about 160 works. Most manuscripts contain literature of religious relevance or derivation. In addition to Hebrew, a number of Jewish vernaculars written in Hebrew characters are represented, with Judaeo-Arabic forming the largest group.⁷ According to an initial dating exercise, the majority of manuscripts come from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, a small number belong to an earlier period, while a considerable minority comes from the nineteenth century.⁸

The following numerical summary assigns the major literary types to regions of origin. The regional allocation is, in the absence of colophons from the large majority of the manuscripts, based primarily on the evidence of the script; it is everywhere provisional and in some cases tenuous. It is also, strictly speaking, not a regional allocation at all, for the bearers of scribal characteristics are persons, not places.⁹ The numbers are based on bibliographical units, and thus a considerable number of codices will be mentioned more than once. In such cases the figure following the codex number represents a folio reference; where the codex starts with a bibliographical unit, no folio number is given (i.e. the absence of a folio number does not

⁴ The following sources of information about the Hebrew manuscripts in the Library have already been published. A very brief first overview of these MSS appeared as part of F. Taylor's 'The Oriental manuscript collections in the John Rylands Library', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 54 (1971–72), 449f and 455f (the article as a whole occupies pages 449–78). Brief but almost comprehensive documentation of the individual manuscripts is available as part of the card catalogue of the Jerusalem Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts. The catalogue was published in microfiche: *The collective catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts, from the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts and the Department of Manuscripts of the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem*, (France/Jerusalem: Chadwyck-Healey and the Jewish National and University Library, 1989), file 9 ('Libraries'), fiches 110–12. In the Library, two handlists are available, for which see below, part D.

⁵ There are also scholarly copies (of original manuscripts) among the Gaster codices. See section C and note 69.

⁶ For this term, see below part C.

⁷ Other languages found in Hebrew characters are: Aramaic, Yiddish, Ladino, Judaeo-Italian, Judaeo-Persian, Karaite Tatar, Judaeo-Greek, and Spanish.

⁸ For the purposes of this overview, I have avoided the individual listing of dates. The dating is the culmination of all the research into a particular manuscript and is therefore seriously affected by the incompleteness of the cataloguing project. But even the catalogue will by no means solve the dating problem for all manuscripts; fixing the date with any degree of certainty will in many cases have to await the special investigation of individual manuscripts.

⁹ On the conflicting codicological-palaeographical evidence which shows up cases of scribal migration, see M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew codicology*, (Paris: CNRS, 1976), chapter 7, 104–9.

necessarily indicate that the codex consists of texts of the rubricated sort only). Also, where the same literary type is repeated later in the codex, it is not recorded a second or third time. Wherever appropriate and wherever I know or suspect the identity of the literary unit, I shall here and in the appendix note the author and/or work title. This will be more prominent in the appendix than in the following summary, because of the greater proportion of anonymous or collective literature in the numerically dominant types of works. Needless to say, these identifications, too, are preliminary and far from comprehensive. The major literary types are distributed as follows:¹⁰

1. Liturgical Texts (61 MSS in total):

- (a) 40 texts which, while often containing *piyyutim*, represent parts of the service in its order: 9 come from Northern Africa,¹¹ 5 from Yemen,¹² and 9 represent the Corfu¹³ rite.¹⁴
- (b) 21 texts listing *piyyutim* only, 11 of North African¹⁵ and 3 of Yemenite¹⁶ origin.¹⁷

2. Magical and Mystical-Kabbalistic Texts (36 in total):

- (a) 19 magical texts;¹⁸
- (b) 17 mystical or kabbalistic texts.¹⁹

¹⁰ In the references to manuscripts, 'H' means 'Gaster Hebrew' and while 'R' stands for 'Rylands Hebrew' (in a majority of cases designating a Crawford manuscript, see below part D). This allocation of letters directly reflects the Library's shelving system which separates Gaster documents in Hebrew characters both from other Gaster manuscripts and from Hebrew manuscripts from other sources.

¹¹ H 242/107, H 740, H 1463 (= H Add. 13), H 1821A, H 1822/70, H 1827, H 1828, H 1829B, H 2087/30. I would like to thank Benjamin Bar-Tikva of Bar Ilan University warmly for his kindness in discussing with me many of the liturgical texts.

¹² H. 4, H 5add., H 290, H 2021–2022 and H 2042.

¹³ H 146, H 701, H 1460, H 1461, H 1462, H 1465, H 1612, H 1614, H 1635.

¹⁴ From other regions: H 144, H 255, H 466/80, H 732–735, H 1434, H 1433, H 1464, H 1596 (English), H 2029, R 6, R 7, R 24, R 29, R 39.

¹⁵ H 242, H 246, H 1326, H 1427, H 1497, H 1822, H 1824, H 1826/38, H 1829B/19, H 1836, H 2087.

¹⁶ H 254, H 323/2, H 2040.

¹⁷ From other regions: H 135, H 274/114, H 315/88, H 742, H 1324, H 2906 (a single-leaf collection of poems containing 282 individual items), R5/51.

¹⁸ Oriental: H 177, H 466, H 765 (Moses ben Mordecai Zacuto/Mekor [Shorshe] ha-shemot), H 1840, R 26; North African: H 1498, H 1775/30, H 1839, R 30/98; Italian: H 315, H 444, H 1090, H 1435 (Alchemy); other: H 21/26, H 61/4, H 254/88 (Sha'ar ha-otiyot, Azat Ahitophel), H 1485, H 1499, H 1634.

¹⁹ Oriental: H 713 (Isaac ben Samuel of Acre/Me'irat enayim), H 1482 (Sefer ha-Pliah), H 1632; North African: H 1775/58, H 1825, H 1834 (Moses ben Isaac ibn Zur/Me'arat sedeh ha-makhpelah), H 242/87 (Isaac Luria); Italian: H 315/70, H 446 (Abraham Miguel Cardozo/Iggeret magen Abraham), H 1811 (= H Add. 11), H Add. 10 (Hayyim ben Joseph Vital on Zohar); Ashkenazic: H 2116 (Isaac Aaron ben Meir of Mezrich/Commentary on Zohar), H 2117 (Raphael Immanuel ben Abraham Hai Ricchi/Mishnat hasidim), R 32 (Hayyim Vital-Meir Poppers/Ez hayyim); other: H 242 3, H 2040, R 50 (Idra rabba).

3. *Biblical Texts:*

24 texts and translations,²⁰ of which 9 are of Yemenite origin.²¹

4. *Homiletical Texts:*

24 in total, of which 18 belong to a group of manuscripts containing speeches and homilies of Hasidic (Lubavitch) authors.²²

5. *Narrative Texts:*

15 in total with an even spread over Oriental regions.²³

Almost as numerous as this last group are the texts on halakhic questions or *minhagim* and biblical commentaries (see appendix). The bulk of the manuscripts represented in the above five groups comes from the Middle East, the Eastern Mediterranean or North Africa, and their literary types reflect everyday and popular religious concerns: prayers, magical incantations, biblical texts or translations and talmudic narrative. Both the regional bias in favour of Muslim countries and the literary bias, leading for example to the scarcity of philosophy-theology, are imparted by the particular character of the Gaster manuscripts (see part D below).

C. THE HORIZON OF THE CODEX

1. *The Codex Containing One Work*

The calculations relating to genre and region in section B are founded upon the identification of discrete literary units; the works or, in the somewhat more flexible terminology of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, 'bibliographical units'.²⁴ There follows an examination of the way in which three Hebrew codices in the Library – R 8, R 30 and H 246 – reflect such bibliographical units and how two of them can be seen to create broader literary horizons which, while related to bibliographical units, are essentially different from them.

²⁰ H 66/191, H 86, H 170 (Tatar, on bluish paper, listed by Steinschneider in *Hebraeische Bibliographie*, xi (1871), 38), H 694, H 732, H 735, H 1324 (Karaite Arabic), H 1431 (Arabic), H 1617 (Aramaic, Arabic), H 2032 (Spanish in Roman characters), H Add 14, H Add 15 (Aramaic, Persian), R 25, R 36, R 38.

²¹ H 322–323, H 673, H 731, H 2033, H 2034, H 2040, H 2041 (Persia?), H 2043, mostly giving Aramaic, Arabic and Rashi alongside the Hebrew.

²² Hasidic: H 1342–1359. Other: H 315/111, H 516, H 1591, H 1775/57, H 1829B/18, H 1832.

²³ H 61/69 (Yemen), H 66 (Persia), H 82 (Persia), H 86/292 (Persia), H 242/25 (North Africa, Yemen), H 246/11 (Yemen), H 254/83 (North Africa and Yemen), H 274 (Oriental), H 1324, H 1425, H 1826/70 (Oriental), H 1989 (Oriental), H 2008, H 2097 (Yemen), R 5/75 (Sephardic-European).

²⁴ *Collective catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts*, User's Guide, 11: 'Manuscripts at the IMHM are catalogued by bibliographical units; each unit is described on a separate card. Thus, manuscripts containing copies of several different works are catalogued on a series of cards'. In practice the IMHM cards may reflect other significant types of differences, e.g. in the case of H 734 (Mahzor) that between a detailed secondary table of contents at the front of the codex (on paper) and the main text (on vellum).

Although the work or the bibliographical unit is the fundamental category of description for scholarly purposes, one does not necessarily find it as such in the manuscripts; it is an abstraction. The concrete piece of literature found in a codex can be radically different from the standard literary entity which the name of a bibliographical unit conveys. It may be an excerpt or anthology;²⁵ or it may be found abbreviated and in combination with other works. Moreover, the fact that the manuscript transmission of works composed before the advent of printing is hardly ever uniform in textual details²⁶ is not only familiar; it is the starting-point of much scholarly editorial activity. Neither the fluctuations in wording which are routinely found in manuscripts, nor the above-mentioned variations in overall literary shape, are normally taken to affect the work's identity, particularly if it is the text of a single author.²⁷

Among the Rylands manuscripts, there are a considerable number of works which are represented in a codex with intact physical integrity, written by one scribe, containing a text approximately in the form which literary and bibliographical study has shown to be the original one, and containing only one such text. There is, for example, Rylands (Crawford) Hebrew 8, containing the Pentateuch Commentary of Moses ben Nahman.²⁸ It starts on folio 1a with an introductory poem: 'In the name of God the great and mighty and terrible I begin to write novellae (hiddushim) on the exposition of the Torah . . .' This is how the book, according to Chavel's edition,²⁹ should start. The codex

²⁵ It may be noted in passing that the Hebrew term for 'anthology', *likutim*, is a frequently found heading in the Rylands manuscripts.

²⁶ The absence of a uniformity of transmission survives into the age of printing, even in the case of authored literary works. Here it may be the continuous creative or corrective intervention of the author in the publishing process which causes variety. See Philip Gaskell, *A new introduction to bibliography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 336ff.

²⁷ Some of the texts from the Talmudic period pose special problems in this regard; their transmitted differences may be adequately explained only by the assumption that there never was an original *Urtext*. Cp. Peter Schäfer, 'Research into Rabbinic literature: an attempt to define the status quaestionis', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 37 (1986), 139–52, especially 146ff. See also below, section C.4.

²⁸ Vellum (oriented hair to hair, flesh to flesh, starting with flesh), 256 fols (blank from 254b), quires of 10 leaves, 333 × 237 mm (written space 224 × 133 mm), 44 lines to the page, regular Italian semi-cursive hand, horizontal catchword at ends of quires, censor's inscription (Italian) on fol. 254a dated 16 August 1769, signed Pio An[ton]io Costanzi; lavishly illuminated first page (1a), and title pages of biblical books: Genesis 2b, Exodus 70b, Leviticus 128b, Numbers 173a, Deuteronomy 211a (a reproduction of the Numbers title page can be found in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), vol. 12, col. 775). The manuscript was probably produced in the last quarter of the 15th century.

²⁹ C. D. Chavel (ed.), *Perushe ha-Torah lerabenu Mosheh Ben Nahman (Ramban)*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1959–60), vol. 1, 15 (Arabic pagination). The manuscript gives the opening passage in regular full lines, not in poetic layout.

ends on fol. 254a with an evocation of the restoration of the Temple, followed (in a different hand) by a brief passage quoting Midrash Mishle and ending 'and the enlightened one will understand'. Both these endings are attested in Chavel's edition.³⁰ R 8 is, therefore, the classic one-work codex, where manuscript evidence can be easily interpreted to reinforce the distinctions between the author and the scribe on the one hand and between the artefact codex and the text with a known literary identity on the other. The next two cases are different.

2. *The Homogeneous Codex Containing Several Works*

More than one work is contained between the boards of codex Rylands 30. According to the colophon, it was written in Fez in the year 1576 by Samuel ben Saadiah Ibn Danan.³¹ The literary elements of the codex are:

- [1] Astronomical piece (1a–2a); 2b blank
- [2] an Arabic fragment of Maimonides' *Treatise on logic* (fols. 3a–5a); 5b–8b blank
- [3] a brief account of the figures of the syllogism mentioning a 'Sefer Ibn Kaspi' (8a)
- [4] Maimonides, *Treatise on logic* in the Hebrew version by Moses Ibn Tibbon (9a–24b)
- [5] Josef Ibn Kaspi, *Zeror ha-kessef* (logical compendium) (25a–81b)
- [6] Samuel ben Saadiah Ibn Danan, *Commentary on the terminology of Maimonides' 'Treatise on logic'* (82a–98a)
- [7] Various short essays on astrological and related topics (98b–103a)

Rylands 30, like Rylands 8, was written by one scribe and is uniform in its textual and physical characteristics; one difference is that the scribe is also partly author. But he remains the scribe throughout, even in writing out the text composed by himself (his text, like the others in the codex, is very much a 'fair' copy). On the other hand, the particular combination of texts found in this codex can only be explained with reference to the topical or structural links between

³⁰ *Perushe*, vol. 2, 506. Chavel states that the additional passage is found only in the early printed editions.

³¹ Watermarked paper (grapes motif?, at centre of inner edge), I + 103 + I fols., 269 × 195 mm (written space 195 × 137 mm), 17 lines to the page, careful Sephardic cursive writing, highlighting of opening words or lemmata with green, red, yellow ink; horizontal catchwords at the bottom of the b-side of almost every leaf; colophon fol. 81b dated Fez Tuesday 22 Tammuz 5336 (the IMHM cards have '5363'); due to generous application of glue throughout the codex, I find it impossible to make out the quiring. On the Ibn Danan family, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 2, col. 68; *Hebraeische Bibliographie*, xvi (1876), 60. I am indebted to Daniel Frank of the Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies for advice on this manuscript.

the works concerned. In other words, the codex as a whole contains what can be seen as a kind of composition. Samuel ben Saadiah Ibn Danan thus appears in this codex in three functions: as scribe, as author and as compiler. As a compiler, he offers the results of his reading activity, and the choice and arrangement of the texts in his codex is, among other things, an expression of his interpretation of these texts. There is a core of longer texts on philosophical logic (by Maimonides, Ibn Kaspi and Samuel ben Saadiah Ibn Danan), surrounded by shorter texts on astronomy, astrology and magic. Besides the obvious thematic link between texts [2]–[6], there are direct intertextual dependencies between the Maimonidean treatise in Arabic [2] and Hebrew [4], between [4] and its commentary [6], and perhaps between the same treatise's chapter 7 and unit [3]. Other relationships between the individual units might be discovered on closer inspection. However, besides reflecting a thematic horizon of interpretation – a selection according to subject matter suits the basically technical-academic nature of the individual texts – more practical criteria also seem to come into play. From the point of view of expediency it makes sense that the concluding texts in R 30 are brief: they may have had to fill remaining blank pages. The fact that the last leaves of a codex are unlikely to coincide exactly with the end of a main text of fixed length means that there was a slot, defined by non-literary considerations, for briefer texts. Furthermore, these leaves might have to be filled with different *types* of texts (it might not be possible to find a text about logic short enough), texts which could be easily abbreviated or where abbreviation mattered less. Thus, there is likely to be an interplay between non-literary and literary considerations in the composition of a miscellaneous codex which is less pronounced in the process of literary creation.³² In H 2007, a codex consisting of the lithographic reproduction of a handwritten text,³³ the influence of extraneous factors on the combination of literary entities is addressed explicitly. Page 15 of the book offers the following transition between an epistle and a poem: 'And in order not to leave part of the paper [unused], we write here this poem'. The poem (שיר לשבח),³⁴ being a short indepen-

³² Although even in the creation of texts there are striking examples, such as magazine serialization. See Gaskell, *New introduction* (note 26), 300–3. Similarly, the structuring of narrative in motion pictures may reflect the division of the film into reels; see an account of the writing of the screenplay for Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather III* in the *Sunday Times Magazine*, 3 March 1991), 32.

³³ Entitled *העזקה האגרה*, produced in Bombay in 1886, it contains a narrative concerning an epistle (אגרה בני משה) from the lost tribes (the 'Sons of Moses') in Hebrew and in Arabic translation. See A. Yaari, *Hebrew printing in the east* (special supplement to *Kirjath Sepher*), 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1936–40), ii, no. 40, 60f. The following Gaster 'manuscripts' also consist of lithographic reproductions: H 1617 (Yaari, *Ibid.*, ii, no. 1, 18) and H Add 14.

³⁴ By the Iraqi Rabbi Sason ben Mordecai Moshe Shindookh (1747–1830): שיר לשבח קודש מאור עיני, listed in I. Davidson, *Thesaurus of mediaeval Hebrew poetry* (New York, 1924–33) as 1656–ב.

dent text with a certain degree of subject-neutrality as it possesses an emphatic formal (poetic) message of its own, may fulfil extra-literary functions solely by reason of its brevity.³⁵

3. *The Composite Codex Containing Several Works*

Of the 177 codices in the Library, at least 37 (55, if the Hasidic volumes are counted) are of a combinatory nature. They are either of uniform scribal and material character, but contain a number of different works, as in the case of R 30; or they are composite both in literary and in physical respect, pointing to the fact that the creation of the codex did not coincide with the creation of all the constituent manuscripts.³⁶ An example of the latter type is H 246. The various parts of H 246 not only contain different texts, they are also by several scribes.³⁷ The writing is in several different semi-square hands, most of them rather irregular.³⁸ It has an Oriental appearance (is of the seventeenth or eighteenth century) and is most probably Yemenite, though it does not seem to be identical with any particular formal Yemenite style. There are different sorts of paper. The following are the bibliographical units (hands and quires are indicated by capital letters and Roman numerals, respectively):

[1] a *piyyut* under the heading בקשה נאה (1a–3b, hand A, quire I)³⁹

[2] a *piyyut* (4a–6a, hand B, quires I, II);⁴⁰ fol. 6b is blank

³⁵ I take the explicit acknowledgement of external factors at face value here. But it is by no means certain that this acknowledgement is not in fact already a literary move rather than the immediate expression of practical consideration. The codex also opens with a *piyyut*.

³⁶ The distinction between different types of multi-work codices is itself fraught with interpretative decisions, and may vary in different scholarly traditions of manuscript research. Thus it seems that while German terminology distinguishes the *Miszellankodex* (containing several texts forming a unit) from the *Sammelband* (unity achieved through the binding alone), French descriptions draw the line between a *recueil organisé* (literary units displaying certain links in subject-matter) and the *recueil factice* (no such links). See *Les manuscrits datés. Premier bilan et perspectives/Die datierten Handschriften. Erste Bilanz und Perspektiven. Neuchâtel/Neuenburg 1983* (Rubricae 2), (Paris: Editions CEMI, 1985), 90.

³⁷ At least two types of paper, one with watermark of three crescents, 120 fols., paper size varying, on average 115 × 82 mm (written space between 79 × 53 mm and 91 × 62 mm), 15 to 21 lines to the page, horizontal catchwords at bottom of almost every page. The irregular sections, as far as I can make out, are formed like this (the Arabic numerals refer to leaves): I4, II2, III4, IV26, V1, VI42, VII12, VIII4, IX16, X3, XI6. Quire IV consists of 16 leaves of thinner, darker paper being enveloped by ten leaves of the thicker paper which makes up most of the rest of the codex. As with several of the quire boundaries, the bibliographical unit [11] and the handwriting bridge the gap of this paper division.

³⁸ The writing of what I label 'hand I' (apparently responsible for parts [13], [14] and [15]) changes gradually from rather large, awkward letters to a smaller, more regular semi-square script. If beginning and end are compared, they appear as two different scripts, but I cannot find a point of transition.

³⁹ The first *piyyut* starts לָגַנוּ יָרֵד דָּוִד, Davidson 145–6.

⁴⁰ It begins שְׁלוֹמִי בֶן מַעֲדָד הָלֹץ הָוָה (?) and has the acrostic שְׁלוֹמִי בֶן מַעֲדָד הָלֹץ הָוָה.

[3] a *piyyut* under the heading 'Bakkashah on the death of Moses our Teacher' (7a–7b, hand B, quire III)⁴¹

[4] a story (*ma'aseh*) concerning Moses (8a–9b, hand B, quire III)⁴²

[5] an astrological listing in Judaeo-Arabic (10a–b, hand C, quire III)

[6] a story (*ma'aseh*) concerning the death of Moses (11a–15b, hand D, quire IV)⁴³

[7] a *piyyut* under the heading בקשה נאה (16a–17a, hand E, hand F from 16b, quire IV)⁴⁴

[8] notes on worship mentioning Joseph Caro (17a–19a, hand F, quire IV)

[9] midrash-type anthology (19a–21b, hand G, quire IV); text breaks off abruptly

[10] biblical excerpts and materials (23b–27a, hand G, quire IV);⁴⁵ 27b blank.

[11] 'Sefer Ben Sira' (= *Alphabet of Ben Sira*, 28a–35a, hand G, quire IV)⁴⁶

[12] stories, under the heading *ma'aseh*⁴⁷ (35b–37b, hand B?, hand H from 37a, quires IV, V)

[13] a 'Book of the covenant' (of circumcision) (38a–b, hand I, quire VI)

[14] an anthology (*likutim*) of material from rabbinic literature, including stories (39a–119a, hand I, quires VI–XI);⁴⁸ fol. 83a ink sketch of a human figure and a bird

[15] a *piyyut* under the heading בקשה נאה; (119b–120b, hand I, quire XI)⁴⁹

There are basically two types of explanations for the creation of a

⁴¹ צעקה ה' זכבד בקל מר וקשה. It begins בקשה על אסיפת משה רבינו. Davidson 371–צ.

⁴² Begins: 'The wolf came and saw Moses as he was herding the flock in the desert . . .'

⁴³ Begins: 'And the Lord said to Moses: "See, your days draw near to death." . . .'

⁴⁴ Beginning: לבי חרד מפחד בעת יציאת נשמה.

⁴⁵ Beginning with quotation Ps. 119:142, later Psalm 29 with 'Perush'; a list of biblical books; Moses' genealogy going back to *Adam ha-rishon*, construed with 'ibn'; 26b heading לקטים.

⁴⁶ With some variations the text is identical with J.D. Eisenstein, *Ozar midrashim*, vol. 1 (New York: Eisenstein, 1915), 43a–46a bottom. The manuscript text ends abruptly on fol. 35a (end of line, not quite at the bottom of the page, no catchword).

⁴⁷ 'Story of a pious man who used to give charity to the poor . . .'; 37a: 'A pious man taught his son 70 languages . . .'; 37b: 'Story of a man who had been wicked all his days . . .'

⁴⁸ This collection of rabbinic material starts and ends (fol. 116b) with a list of biblical measurements; there then follow midrash-type units of the *minnayin* form; fol. 104aff: on righteous women; 109a: on R. Akiba's wife and daughter; 113a: story of R. Akiba when he met a man in a cemetery.

⁴⁹ Begins: אודה לאילי כונני צור פועלי הוא ישמעה קולי ויפיק ממללי. alphabetic acrostic in Hebrew and Arabic; Davidson (supplement volume) *403–א (attested only in a Yemenite manuscript source).

composite codex like H 246. In the one literary considerations play no role; instead practical expediency is the ultimate reason for the combination of texts. In the other, the nature, form, contents or use of the texts involved governs the process of combination. In the creation of an artefact made up of previously existing independent units of matter and literature, no explanation in *purely* literary terms is likely to succeed. On the other hand, there are cases representing the other extreme, for example codices which owe their existence to the common characteristic 'paper size'.⁵⁰ In the absence of reliable historical information, one will always have to reckon with this possibility; the detection of literary connections between the texts involved alone is certainly not enough reason to discard that possibility, for with perseverance and ingenuity it might always be possible to find a literary connection between a given set of texts. In the case of H 246, however, the evidence points to a complex intertwining of scribal and compilatory activity; I think that a purely non-literary rationale can be excluded regarding this composite codex and many others among the Rylands manuscripts. Let us, on a rather superficial level, review the structure of H 246 from a literary point of view. There are some obvious topical connections between the various texts, some of which cross the prose/poetry boundary. The figure of Moses appears in the *piyyut* [3] and the narratives [4] and [6], as well as in the summary of biblical materials [10]. Other religious heroes, whether known literary-historical figures such as R. Akiba [14] or anonymous types like the Hasid (pious man) [12], figure in several of the narrative units which appear in the codex. Midrash-type statements, introduced by 'Whence [do we know]', are frequent and cover a range of theological or quasi-halakhical themes, e.g. 'Whence do we know that Eliab was elected to kingship from the six days of creation?' (fol. 19a. answered with reference to 1Sam. 16:7), or 'Whence do we know that one is allowed to eat from what one's fellow has slaughtered?' (fol. 52a). General piety, spiritual aspects of ritual (in [8] and [13]), biblical *realia*, and religious maxims provide the thematic elements of this codex, and the framework is set by poetical expressions of religiosity, with *piyyutim* both introducing and concluding the codex. These manifestations of cohesion, based on concrete formal or thematic

⁵⁰ This is how Steinschneider puts the irrelevance of literary criteria in the creation of composite codices: 'Genauer gesagt ist ein Codex etwas Zusammengehöriges; wer oder was begründet den Zusammenhang? Sehr oft ist es der Buchbinder, dessen Faden sich durchzieht, wie in einer Wiener Posse der Dichter im Prolog sein Manuskript zusammenheftet, damit "ein Faden durch das Stück gehe".' He goes on to point out that the unusually high percentage of miscellaneous codices in A. Neubauer's catalogue of Hebrew manuscripts in the Bodleian Library was due to librarians binding together manuscripts according to size – in his (Steinschneider's) absence. *Vorlesungen über die Kunde hebräischer Handschriften, deren Sammlungen und Verzeichnisse* (Beihefte zum Centralblatt für Bibliothekswesen, Heft 19), (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1897), 32–3.

literary features, are rather vague, and possibly a systematic effort at breaking down the bibliographical units into their constituent parts would furnish stronger evidence. But these manifestations seem to be sufficient to show that the claim that the combination of works is random or accidental is as implausible for H 246 as it would be for R 8. And, though composite, the codex was not put together from 15 pre-existing, physically independent, literary units; the growth of the codex as a composite entity is at least partly connected with the process of writing, as is witnessed by those cases where there is multi-work scribal continuity across breaks between gatherings.⁵¹ So, while the codex may not be appropriately defined as a new literary 'work' in its own right (though this is a question of degree – some 'works' have much less cohesion than others, see below section C.4), a literary function certainly exists. Furthermore, sustained effort at investigating other composite and miscellaneous codices will perhaps lift to a level of convention what, on the basis of one example, looks like an individual reader's predilections.

We have thus interpreted the physical juxtaposition of texts as being the result of an act of interpretation. Certain texts were perceived to belong together because of their subject matter, their literary type or structural features (or a combination of these factors), i.e. because of literary characteristics which may be recognized by other readers – ourselves, for example.⁵² In some respects this creation of a literary context, in particular where it is not the result of scribal composition but of decisions of binding alone, is akin to a publisher's decision to place a work in a certain series. That a work appears in a

⁵¹ There is no reason to assume a *scriptoria* setting for combination of scribal contributions, See M. Beit-Arié, *Hebrew codicology* (note 9), 11. See also the same author's 'Palaeographical identification of Hebrew manuscripts: methodology and practice', *Jewish Art*, 12–13 (1986–87), 17f (the whole article comprises pages 15–44).

⁵² The role of the compiler has been investigated vigorously in recent years by some Western manuscript scholars. See, for example, John J. Thompson, 'The compiler in action: Robert Thornton and the "Thornton romances" in Lincoln Cathedral MS 91', *Manuscripts and readers in fifteenth-century England: the literary implications of manuscript study*, ed. D. Pearsall (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 113–24. Cp. also C.W. Marx, 'Beginnings and endings: narrative-linking in five manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and the problem of textual "integrity"' in the same volume (70–81). The editor writes in his introduction, p. 1: 'The methods of compilers and manuscript editors of all kinds, whether professional or amateur, need to be studied, if we are to understand the reception and readership assumed for the literary works contained in their collections. The manuscript context of particular works needs to be understood in detail . . .'. A summary of some of the results of this type of investigation of miscellaneous codices is found in J. Boffey and J.J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and miscellanies: production and choice of texts', *Book production and publishing in Britain 1375–1475*, ed. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall, (Cambridge: University Press, 1989). I am grateful to Alex Rumble of the John Rylands Research Institute and of the English Department of Manchester University for drawing my attention to this article.

certain series can create very powerful horizons of reading, presupposing an act of interpretation.⁵³

However, there is another direction in which one could look for the rationale of the composite codex. It may reflect a common place⁵⁴ of the texts in the life of the user. This use may, without direct internal literary connection, bring together certain texts in a way of life, in a daily routine. In this context it might be useful to keep in mind a feature of the use of certain types of prayer books in worship. Very often the texts contained in such books are not to be read continuously, nor in the sequence in which they occur in the book. According to the liturgical occasion, they will form oral texts of drastically different overall shape.⁵⁵ This strikingly flexible relationship between the written and the oral text points to the possibility that, in the case of composite codices, related occasions of manuscript use may provide links between selected parts of the codex which are not visible on the literary surface of the texts. This is what could be called the pragmatic horizon of the codex: related *Sitze im Leben*, as it were, a neighbourhood in time or place of the use of the texts. I say use, rather than reading, because the texts in question would have to be meant for *doing* things,⁵⁶ for example performing the act of praying or the act of incantation or the act of recitation.

On a more general level, the juxtaposition of texts is widespread in Jewish religious literature, and its manifestations are not restricted to the miscellaneous or composite codex. Abraham Berliner in his 'Gang durch die Bibliotheken Italiens'⁵⁷ draws attention to the case of

⁵³ For instance, the book series of the Frankfurt Suhrkamp Verlag (e.g. 'Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Wissenschaft', 'Edition Suhrkamp'), which virtually came to constitute a textual canon for many post-war German intellectuals. An analogy to the interpretative effect of *physical* proximity of texts in a composite codex is found in the case of pictures on a (gallery) wall. The *Independent* (newspaper), February 7, 1991, 9, carried an article on a 're-hang' of paintings in the National Gallery, London, concentrating largely on the interpretative impact of the new arrangement (which was felt to be huge).

⁵⁴ The allusion to the 'commonplace book' is intentional, though the analogy is not precise. Nevertheless, this type of Western document may come closest to the milieu of *private* selection and copying activity which is so characteristic of many Hebrew manuscripts, see e.g. Solomon B. Freehof, 'One of Mordecai Ghironi's Notebooks', *Studies in Bibliography and Booklore*, ix (1969–71), 167–72. On the commonplace book, see Boffey and Thompson's 'Anthologies and miscellanies' (note 52), 292ff.

⁵⁵ I am grateful to Philip Alexander of Manchester University for drawing my attention to the case of the prayer book.

⁵⁶ Cp. John Austin's *How to do things with words*, 2nd edn., (Oxford: University Press, 1975). It should be borne in mind that a text can at any time become the object of study or reflection, even if it was originally preserved with a view to performing certain speech acts with it.

⁵⁷ Reprinted in *Wissenschaft des Judentums im deutschen Sprachbereich*, vol. 2, ed. Kurt Wilhelm, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1967), 586. The lecture first appeared as a separate publication, Berlin 1877; it was reprinted also in *Gesammelte Schriften*

a parallel manuscript layout of disparate texts. In the first 30 folios of codex Ambrosiana 116,⁵⁸ the following texts are combined on the same page: the Pentateuch commentaries of Abraham Ibn Ezra, Menahem ben Benjamin Recanati and Hezekiah ben Manoah, Maimonides' *Guide of the perplexed* and the *Halakhot gedolot*. This, the classic commentary layout extended to comprise other texts, could well be the structure of a miscellaneous or composite codex. And as far as the *creation* of religious literature in Judaism (authored or collective) is concerned, the selection and recombination of smaller textual units into new literary entities, bringing about a simultaneous transfer of wording and authority, may be seen, from the earliest texts onwards, as the most fundamental move of composition.

4. *The Codex Defining One Work*

Lastly, there is a type of codex which, while being neither composite nor miscellaneous, combines pre-existing literary units in such a way as to create a literary and bibliographical unit which may be unique. This is the case where the smaller literary units have distinct and common literary shape, but the entities which combine them into collections exhibit no comparable literary principle (or if they do, they differ from one manuscript witness to the other). Thus, *piyyutim*, magical formulae, incantations and prescriptions, and narrative units like the *ma'aseh* in many cases represent definite literary forms. But codices which contain collections of these are largely unpredictable, with regard both to the selection of units they offer, and the sequence in which these occur.⁵⁹ In other words, the bibliographical identity of these texts is defined by the individual codex itself, and only by it. In such cases, the bibliographical unit can be classified (e.g. 'collection of incantations') but not identified by the *name* of a work.

D. TWO COLLECTIONS: THE 'HONOURED GUEST' AND THE NEW TEXT

The Hebrew manuscripts in the Library come, with a small number of exceptions, from two earlier, private collections: that of the 25th and 26th Earls of Crawford and that of Moses Gaster. In this final section I

(Frankfurt, 1913), 3–28. The most spectacular example of a miscellaneous codex which also exhibits a layout combining several disparate texts on the same page is the Rothschild Miscellany. There is a most instructive account of the production of this codex by M. Beit-Arié, 'A palaeographical and codicological study of the manuscript', *The Rothschild Miscellany: a scholarly commentary* (Jerusalem London: Israel Museum Facsimile Editions, 1989), 91–124.

⁵⁸ The text of the Pentateuch appears as the central item on the page from folio 31v onwards. See C. Bernheimer, *Codices Hebraici Bybliothecae Ambrosianae*, (Florence, 1933), no. 14, 17–19.

⁵⁹ One Gaster manuscript now in the Rylands, the *ma'aseh* collection H 82, has recently been examined closely with regard to this question by Philip Alexander. See the section 'genre' in his 'Gaster's *Exempla of the Rabbis*: a reappraisal', *Proceedings of the Rashi Conference, Troyes 1990*, ed. G. Sed-Rajna, forthcoming.

shall deal briefly with the Library's acquisition of these two collections. I shall also try to characterize them on the basis of the material now in the Library, and in so doing shall show that they too constitute contexts for the individual manuscript. The rationales behind the two collections happen to be significantly different, and the following somewhat stylized account of them will emphasize the contrast between them.

R 8, the Pentateuch Commentary by Nahmanides, could almost be called a typical Crawford manuscript: it is beautiful, it is physically intact, and it represents a famous work. In all these respects, I think, it came close to the ideal manuscript in the eyes of the collector, Alexander William Lindsay, 25th Earl of Crawford and 8th Earl of Balcarres (1812–80). But it is the last point which is most interesting in the present context. The very fact that Rylands 8 carries a text with a fixed, even famous, bibliographical identity was important to Crawford. In 1864, in a letter to his son concerning his library, he wrote:

I had in my earliest youth determined to assemble together the wisest and most graceful thinkers of all countries, ages, and pursuits, as agreeable companions, instructive teachers, and honoured guests, under the symbolical pavilion of the Lindsays, who, with their friends, might converse hereafter, as in the school of Athens, with congenial associates in whatever branches of literature, art, or science their genius or taste should severally direct them to . . . I have always proceeded on the principle that our library should be Catholic in character, should include the best and most valuable books, landmarks of thought and progress, in all cultivated languages, Oriental as well as European. What one member of the family cannot, another may be able to read and appreciate . . . With the exception of a few . . . books printed or lithographed . . ., the great works of thought in most of these languages must be sought for in manuscript, and such MSS, especially in complete condition, seldom now-a-days appear in the European market . . .⁶⁰

Among the Crawford Hebrew manuscripts, even those which are physically impaired have obviously been selected for beauty, representative function, value and age, and there are no crude ink sketches of birds. Along with other Oriental manuscripts of the *Bibliotheca Lindesiana*, they were acquired for the Library in 1901 from James Ludovic Lindsay, the 26th Earl (1847–1913). Today they form numbers 1 to 33 of the Rylands Hebrew (R) manuscripts. The manuscripts were accompanied by a set of handwritten descriptions (by several cataloguers) which vary in the level of detail they offer.

⁶⁰ The letter is quoted partly in the 26th Earl's preface to a handlist of the collection's Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts: *Bibliotheca Lindesiana: hand-list of Oriental manuscripts, Arabic, Persian, Turkish* (compiled by Michael Kerney), privately printed 1898, viii–ix. See F. Taylor, 'Oriental manuscript collections' (note 4), 449; on the purchases of the 25th Earl, see D. Brady, 'Middle eastern literature in Manchester Libraries', *Collections in British libraries on middle eastern and Islamic studies*, ed. P. Auchterlonie, (Durham: Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 1982), 57f.

Some manuscripts receive extensive treatment (e.g. the Rylands Spanish Haggadah),⁶¹ while most are only briefly identified by title and author.

If R 8 is a typical Crawford manuscript, then H 246 is a worthy representative of the collection of Moses Gaster (1856–1939), whose colourful and energetic life encompassed a number of public roles, notably those of rabbi and scholar.⁶² Many of the bibliographical units contained in his codices deviate from the standard forms; many of his codices are composite; many of the manuscript artefacts are damaged and the texts incomplete as a result. Very few of the manuscripts now in the Rylands are beautiful in any ordinary sense of that word. The skewed picture of Jewish literature given by the largest groups in part B above is entirely due to Gaster's manuscripts and reflects his scholarly interests: much magic, no philosophy, many texts from a Sephardic background, few from Ashkenaz. Most prominently, however, is the contrast with Crawford's interest as a collector in the field of known literary identity: Gaster seems to have been on the look-out for the novel text, the unknown work, the curiosity. This very natural tendency in a scholar is in Gaster's case compounded by the fact that his academic interests were off the beaten track, anticipating themes that have only later come to the fore in research: folk-lore, narrative literature, magic. The curiosity for the *new* text found its expression in the fact that Gaster published unknown literature throughout his life from manuscripts in his possession.⁶³ Viewed from this angle, it simply did not matter very much whether the documents were well-written, beautifully illustrated, or complete; and that they did not appear to belong to a canon of mainstream works representing Judaism's lasting contribution to a world (high) culture defined in Euro-centric terms was implicit in the search for novelty itself.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Published in facsimile: *The Rylands Haggadah: a medieval Sephardi masterpiece in facsimile*, with introduction, notes on the illuminations, transcription and translation by Raphael Loewe (London: Thames and Hudson, 1988).

⁶² The figure of Gaster has received scant attention from biographers; for brief accounts see Albert M. Hyamson, 'Gaster, Moses', *Dictionary of National Biography 1931–1940*, ed. L.G. Wickham Legg (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 309–10; Cecil Roth, *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 7, cols. 332–34, and *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, 14 (1940), 247–52. See also the 'Prolegomenon' by Theodor Gaster in the reprint of Gaster's *Studies and texts*, (New York: Ktav, 1971).

⁶³ Examples from the texts now in the Library are: H 82 and H 66, forming part of the basis of *The exempla of the Rabbis* (London/Leipzig: Asia Publishing House, 1924), H 61 containing the *Targum Amidah* published 1894 in *MGWJ* and H 4, a Tikhlah containing a text of the *Scroll of the Hasmoneans*, published in 1893. The latter two editions are reproduced in Gaster's *Studies and texts*, 3 vols. (London: Maggs Bros., 1925–28): 'Ein Targum der Amidah', vol. 1, 264–70 and vol. 3, 50–6; 'The Scroll of the Hasmonaeans', vol. 1, 165–83 and vol. 3, 33–43.

⁶⁴ In a typewritten account of his collection entitled 'Notes on my Library', Gaster stresses the fact that many of the texts he had assembled were unknown or of scholarly

However, this picture of Moses Gaster as a collector of manuscripts is based on the codices now in the Library. These represent only the smaller section of his collection. The larger part, comprising almost 1,000 items, was sold to the British Museum in 1925. As long as it is not known what the criterion of selection was at the time, it is difficult to say whether the picture given by the Rylands manuscripts is not to a certain degree distorted. Thus the prominence of composite codices or of physically unattractive items could be the result of these manuscripts being a residue after the first round of appraisal. On the other hand, some of the texts Gaster himself must have thought important are at Manchester, not in the British Library (e.g. the base texts for his *Exempla of the Rabbis*). Only a detailed investigation of the British Library's Gaster holdings will settle this question. The picture of contrast between the two collectors suggested here may also have to be reviewed in the light of concrete historical information on the different circumstances in which the purchasing activity of the two bibliophiles took place. Conditions governing purchasing practice might have been very different in the two cases.

When the Library acquired the remnant of Gaster's manuscript collection from his son Vivian in 1954,⁶⁵ it also purchased 375 Samaritan manuscripts⁶⁶ and about 10,500 Genizah fragments.⁶⁷ Soon afterwards, 123 manuscripts in other Oriental or Eastern European languages were given to the Library by the Gaster family.⁶⁸ The Hebrew Gaster manuscripts acquired in those years comprise the greater part of the 177 codices which are the theme of the present account. They also included about 190 secondary volumes containing nineteenth-century scholarly copies of original Hebrew manuscripts held at British or Continental academic libraries, or in Gaster's own

interest ('Of this vast material about nin[e]ty percent is u[n]published, and of the remaining ten percent not a few are older than the printed editions and invaluable for a critical edition . . .' (2)). The account is dated 1 January 1924 and kept among the Gaster papers of the Library of University College, London (see note 72). I am grateful to Brad Sabin Hill, Head of the Hebrew Section in the British Library, for making a copy available to me.

⁶⁵ See the brief account in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 37 (1954-55), 2ff. Documentation about the sale, which was negotiated by Edward Robertson, also survives among the Gaster papers at the Library of University College.

⁶⁶ These were described by Edward Robertson, *Catalogue of the Samaritan manuscripts in the John Rylands Library*, vol. 2 (Manchester: John Rylands Library, 1962).

⁶⁷ The Genizah texts are in the process of being examined and identified by Abraham David of the Jerusalem Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts.

⁶⁸ The languages other than Hebrew or Judaeo-Arabic represented in the 'Various' group of Gaster manuscripts are, according to a list kindly provided by Brad Sabin Hill: Arabic, Bulgarian, Burmese, Coptic, English, Ethiopic, Flemish, French, Georgian, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latin, Maltese, Mandaic, Persian, Portuguese, Rumanian, Slavonic, Spanish, Syriac, [Tibetan] and Turkish.

possession.⁶⁹ In later years, the Library was entrusted with Gaster's Samaritan correspondence and his own scholarly writings.⁷⁰ The documents acquired in 1954 were generally water damaged when they arrived in the Library. The damage was the result of a bombing during the London blitz of the buildings in Chancery Lane to which the manuscripts had been temporarily removed (for safekeeping).⁷¹

The manuscripts were accompanied by a facsimile of a handwritten list arranged according to Gaster numbers in three language groups, representing Hebrew, Samaritan and 'Various' codices. The history of these lists is curious. They are written in a number of hands, none of which, as far as I can tell, is Gaster's own script. The entries are usually brief; they very rarely make reference to the time or circumstances of the purchase of a manuscript. In many cases the Hebrew of these entries manifests spelling mistakes. This makes it likely that the lists, perhaps due to Gaster's failing eyesight in his later years, were written by assistants recording information given earlier by the collector (some entries use a first person pronoun which must refer to Gaster). The three lists arranged according to language group are secondary, and all three only contain manuscripts which went to Manchester. These smaller lists are the result of cutting up a master-list which contained all Gaster manuscripts in a numbered sequence which presumably reflected the chronology of acquisition. One copy of that master-list is held as part of the Gaster Papers at University College London.⁷²

At least partly as a result of these two collectors' interpretative temperaments, certain manuscripts kept each other company on the shelf, and continue to do so. H 66, of Persian origin, contains, among

⁶⁹ These two groups together make up the number of c.350 which is given in all previous public accounts as the quantity of Hebrew Gaster manuscripts in the Library. I understand that the British Library figure of almost 1,000 also includes a certain amount of secondary copies. The two main copyists were Menasseh Grossberg (c.1860–?, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica* vol. 7, cols. 935f) and Isaak Last (1847–1913).

⁷⁰ See F. Taylor, 'Notes and News', *Bulletin*, 40 (1957–58), 260–1.

⁷¹ I am indebted to Glenise Matheson, of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester, for her generous help in reconstructing the history of this acquisition. Miss Matheson was Assistant Keeper of Manuscripts when the collection was acquired. The condition of the manuscripts resulted in an exchange of letters between the then Keeper of Manuscripts, Frank Taylor, and Vivian Gaster, of which a copy is kept at the Library. It is also mentioned by E. Robertson in the introduction (col. xvi) to his catalogue of the Samaritan manuscripts (note 66).

⁷² I am most grateful to Brad Sabin Hill for his cheerful and efficient assistance in reconstructing the pre-history of the handlists. It was he who located the master-list in University College Library. Thanks to his efforts, photocopies of that list are now held both at the British Library and at the John Rylands University Library. The Jerusalem Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts also holds a copy (Phot. 1545). General information on the documents relating to Gaster in the Library of University College is contained in T. Levi, *The Gaster papers* (Occasional Publications 2), (London: Library of University College, 1976).

other things, a collection of *ma'asiot* and so does the Persian codex H 82. H 246, both in its composite nature and in the tendency of its literary make-up, has many companions among the Gaster manuscripts in the Library. Crawford's R 30 is a reflection of Aristotelean philosophy among the Jews in Arab lands; so is Crawford R 28, a Hebrew translation of one of Ibn Rushd's Aristotelean epitomes. Both are the product of philosophical interest; both are written in the Sephardic cursive with the appearance of calligraphic Arabic which was so popular among the Jews of North Africa. To explore these and the many other connections is itself to a certain degree part of understanding the manuscripts, and not just because original historical settings might have been transferred intact to the collections, or have been re-created at second hand.⁷³ If the perspective of the bibliographical unit brings together all manuscript manifestations of the same work, the horizons of codex and collection give access to the place of a work with its readers and users. Manuscript artefacts contain texts, and are testimonials to the form of some abstract bibliographical unit; but they contain these texts accompanied by a concrete, unrepeatable interpretation. Layout, varying letter size, illustrations, paragraphing: all these express decisions of interpretation, lying literally in the hand of the scribe-reader of a text. The codex carrying excerpts or text combinations is an even more emphatic manifestation of a scribe-reader's or compiler-reader's reaction to texts. Lastly, codices keep each other company on a collector's shelf because of acts of interpretation. Twenty-three feet of shelving in the John Rylands University Library are occupied by Hebrew-character texts with incorporated interpretations.

⁷³ German manuscript scholars involved in the international palaeography project 'Dated and Datable Manuscripts' decided to concentrate on manuscripts which are part of historically grown, homogenous library collections. 'Die Voraussetzung, daß vorrangig Bestände historischer Provenienz ins Auge gefaßt werden, entkräftet meines Erachtens wenigstens teilweise den Einwand gegen das paläographisch gesehen von mir oben als 'zufällig' bezeichnete Kriterium 'Datierte Handschrift' insoweit, als auf diese Weise wenigstens *historisch zusammengehöriges oder später im Rahmen einer alten Bibliothek zusammengewachsenes Material* vorgestellt wird', Johanne Autenrieth, 'Handschriftenkatalogue – Datierte Handschriften: Zur Lage in Deutschland', *Les manuscrits datés. Premier bilan et perspectives/Die datierten Handschriften* (note 36) 30–3, also 85. The italics are mine.

APPENDIX

The following is a list of subject areas and literary types complementing the groups of works given in part B above:⁷⁴

Bible Commentary:

H 53 add. (Eliezer ben Elijah ha-Rofeh Ashkenazi/Yosif lekah), H 254/87 (D. Kimhi on Prophets), H 315/100 (Nissim ben Moses of Marseille), H 1492 (Benjamin Frankel/Heker eloha), H 1640 (English shorthand notes on Hebrew Prophets), H 1775/107 (Kessef nivhar), H 1814 (= H Add. 1; Hayyim Joseph David Azulai/Nahal eshkol), H 1831 (Eleazar ben Judah of Worms), H 1833 (Solomon Hazan), H 2020 (Jacob ben Reuben/Sefer ha-osher), R 8 (Nachmanides), R 23 (Aaron ben Joseph/Sefer ha-mivhar), R 51 (on Iob),⁷⁵ [Rashi in most of the Yemenite Bible manuscripts].

Texts on Liturgical Texts:

H 61/64 (Targum Amidah), H 2021–2 (Yahya ben Joseph Zalah/Ez hayyim); Haggadot: R 6, R 7, R 39 (Isaac Abrabanel, Aaron ben Moses Teomim, 'Perush al-pi ha-sod').

Mishnah:

H 2041/54 (excerpts)

Texts on Mishnah/Talmud:

H 60 (D. Nieto/Shahar Dan) H 66/175 (on Abot), H 1833/325 (Solomon Hazan on BM), H 2031 (fragment on Babli), R 51 (on Abot).

Halakhic Texts, Minhagim (often very brief):

H 61/59, H 118/52, H 254/112, H 659 (Menahem ben Solomon Meiri/Kiryat sefer), H 931 (Jacob Berab/Letter on ordination and responsa; responsa by Isaac Alfasi, Hai Gaon), H 1352/110 (on divorce), H 1356 (novellae), H 1482 (fragment of Maimonides/Sefer ha-mitzvot), H 1636 (collection of single-leaf fragments), H 1826 (Caro/Shulhan arukh-Yore deah 1–60), H 1837 (Jacob ben Reuben Ibn Zur/Leshon limmudim), H 1838 (Takkanot), R 31 (Isaac of Corbeil/Sefer mitzvot katan; Perez b. Elijah of Corbeil/Glosses to Samak, Isaac ben Meir Dueren/Shaharei Dura).

Midrashic Texts:

H 242/33 (Midrash ha-gadol), H (formerly V[arious]) 1380, H 1830.

Theology-Philosophy:

R 5⁷⁶ (Shemaiah ben Moses de Medina/Hatza'ah, Isaac ben David Aboab/Nishmat hayyim, Iggeret al tehi ka-avotekha, Abraham ibn Ezra/Arugat ha-hokhmah), R 28 (Ibn Rushd/Epitome of De sensu et sensato), R 30/3 (Maimonides/Treatise on logic, Kaspi/Zeror ha-kessef, Samuel ben Saadiah ibn Danan on terminology of Maimonides' 'Treatise on logic').

⁷⁴ The following two codices of the Gaster collection contain photostats only (they are not identified as such on the cards of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts): H 1238, H 1360. Only in the case of photostat volume H 2049 is the original itself a Gaster manuscript (H 2079).

⁷⁵ R 51 is former Sassoon 700. See D.S. Sassoon, *Ohel Dawid: descriptive catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932) vol. 1, 530–6.

⁷⁶ R 5 is a former Duke of Sussex manuscript. See T.J. Pettigrew, *Bibliotheca Sussexiana*, vol. 1 (London, Longman, 1827), xxxii–xxxiv.

Astrology:

H 59 (Abraham ibn Ezra/Reshit hokhmah), H 61, H 1775 (Abraham ibn Ezra/Reshit hokhmah among others), R 30.

Astronomy:

H 254/87, H 1775/109, H 1826/77, R 30.

Mathematics:

R 5/86.

Medicine:

H 21 (Yiddish), H 118 (Yiddish), H 1423 (Kitab al-lamha), H 1425, H 1775/76, H 2005 (Arabic), H 2054 (Ladino).

Ethical texts:

H 466/74 (Judah ben Samuel he-Hasid/Zavva'ah), R 5/42 (Letters ascribed to Aristotle).

Grammars/Wordlists:

H 242/103 (on Bible), H 973 (on Mishna), H 1482/198 (on talmudic literature), H 1620 (Solomon ben Abraham of Urbino/Ohel mo'ed, fragment), H 1639 (List of biblical geographical names), R 33 (Elia Levita/Nimmukim on Kimhi's Book of roots).

Apocrypha:

H 105 (1 Maccabees), R 5/62 (Tobit).

Jewish History:

H 105/16, H 1042 (Basnage/History of the Jews), H 1212, H 1637.

Christian Texts:

H 1616 (New Testament), R 27 (missionary tract).

Documents of Historical Interest:

H 118/55, H 242/32, H 975, H 1207, H 1421 and 1618 (Ladino autobiography of Reyna Cohen/Salonika) H 1609.

Lists of Bibliographical Interest:

H 1477, H 1986.

Model Letters:

H 1438.

Poetry (mostly single poems):

H 95 (Al-Harizi/Tahkemoni), H 139 (Yiddish), H 254/57, H 315/111, H 1617/39, R 5/51.

Plays/Fiction:

H 978 (Euchele/Henoch), H 1690 (Purim play), H 2007 (Iggeret bene Moshe), R 5/75 (Sefer Eldad ha-Dani).