Biblical studies is both an academic discipline and a cultural practice, according to the editors of a new series published by Fortress. For much of its history, academic biblical scholarship has been deeply rooted in a Western, largely male, predominantly Christian context. The editors of the Texts@Contexts series seek to broaden the number of contexts in which the biblical writings are interpreted and to highlight the notion that no readings of biblical materials, professional or otherwise, are disinterested or objective. In the series introduction, the editors state: “The project of recognizing and emphasizing the role of context in reading freely admits that we all come from somewhere: no one is native to the biblical text, no one reads only in the interests of the text itself” (xii). The essays that follow draw from multiple contexts (e.g., Nigeria, South Africa, China or Critical Gender Theory, Trauma Theory, Domestic Violence) in their attempt to draw new meanings from the book of Genesis, meanings that might remain marginalized if only traditional biblical scholarly methods are utilized. What follows is a review concerning each essay, with brief commentary on their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Part 1, the largest of the three sections, contains readings of the Primeval History from a number of different vantage points. In “A Critical Assessment of the Creation Mandate in Genesis 1:26–28 and Its Human Rights Implications for Nigeria,” Amadi Ahiamadu reads the biblical charge for humans to exercise dominion in light of the ongoing practice of
latifundism carried out by multinational oil corporations in the Nigerian Delta. He examines the current situation in light of constitutional changes brought about in the postcolonial period (post-1960), notably the eclipse of a traditional gerontocratic model of leadership with a Western model utilizing the language of “human rights.” Ahiamadu contends that such abstract “rights-based” language allowed an entryway for multinational corporations to sever the populations’ relationship to land. The Land Use Decree of 1978 also shifted responsibility for distribution of land from traditional, gerontocratic hands to the federal level. Traditional patterns of stewardship and distribution of land gave way to consolidation of land holding and the creation of an urban class who were alienated from their traditional lands. The theological implication is very clear: “a right that inheres in one’s status as a human being is made dependent upon one’s ability to assert or claim such rights without which state protection is denied or deferred. Yet God created human beings with certain natural and inalienable rights, which of course, include stewardship, land ownership, and land use rights” (17).

The Nigerian context provides a necessary corrective to an overly simplistic Western response to Gen 1:26–28 and its mandate for humanity to have “dominion” over the earth. While this text has often been pointed to as ecologically problematic, Ahiamadu claims that the Nigerian context can be useful in “correcting the misconceptions and indictments associated with a too literal and uncritical reading” of the passage (20). The prior gerontocratic model of land tenure is presented as a more faithful embodiment of the ideal presented in the biblical text.

David Tuesday Adamo’s “The Genesis Creation Accounts: An African Background” contains an overview of traditional African accounts of the creation of the world. Adamo presents oral and written creation accounts of the Yoruba people of Nigeria, the Vugusa people of Kenya, the Ashanti of Ghana, and the Azande of Sudan. He next provides a brief overview of similarities and differences between the African and Israelite accounts of creation. The most controversial portion of the essay comes with Adamo’s claim that biblical scholars have failed to grapple with the possibility that the biblical creation myths potentially derive—originally—from these African oral traditions, in contrast to the standard ancient Near Eastern Mesopotamian models (e.g., Enuma Elish). He posits that the ancient Israelites could have originally come into contact with these accounts during their time in Egypt or as a result of African trading missions to Mesopotamia. There is, underlying Adamo’s assertions, a much larger argument about the exclusion of Africa from the Western tradition (the Black Athena controversy; see Martin Bernall, Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization [Rutgers University Press, 1987]). Indeed, Adamo co-authors the last article of this volume and spends a good deal of time discussing the intellectual exclusion of Africa from the study of the Hebrew Bible. To the extent that Adamo is reminding us that African peoples were a central part of the cultures
that produced ancient Israelite texts, he is correct. At the same time, the focus on Mesopotamian creation myths by biblical scholars (charitably) has more to do with these myths’ geographical, chronological, and linguistic continuity with the biblical material and less to do with a continued Western desire to marginalize Africa and its contributions to world culture.

The next two chapters explore creation narratives in light of gender dynamics. Athalya Brenner’s “Tree of Life as a Female Symbol?” explores scholarly attempts to uncover a lost Hebrew goddess behind the image of the tree of life in Gen 3. One feminist reading strategy is to suggest that the patriarchal authors/editors of the Hebrew Bible systematically suppressed or erased feminine or more egalitarian impulses in ancient Israel. While Brenner claims that such a background may, in fact, ultimately lie behind the image of the tree of life, she offers a methodological caution by pointing to the persistence of imagery (religious and otherwise) across cultures and times. She begins by narrating an encounter with Mary B. Kelly’s Goddess Embroideries of the Baltic Lands and Greek Islands (McClean, N.Y.: Studio Book, 1999). The work examines traditional goddess imagery incorporated into folk art. Many of the images remain virtually unchanged from generation to generation as patterns and skills are passed down from mothers to daughters. The meaning and significance of the images is certainly lost within such transmission. Brenner suggests that scholars who are intent on uncovering the “original” symbolism of the tree of life might learn something from these embroidered images. The producers of the Eden narrative in Gen 3 may likely have had little or no access to the original symbolism or significance of the tree of life. The connection between the tree of life and goddess imagery is no longer apparent, “as it is no longer apparent for the women who have continued to embroider goddess symbols for millennia while being devout practicing Communists and/or Christians…. And if women don’t remember the source of their traditions, why should men remember (if we agree that the bible was written, transmitted, copied and studied mainly by males)? And if they don’t remember, how can they “suppress” or “repress” (41)? There are limits to what can be decoded.

Philip Venter explores the masculine ideology present in the Priestly creation account in “History or His Story? Ideology of the Body in the First Creation Narrative.” Critical gender theory is the relevant context for reading Genesis here; Venter’s South African context is emphasized less. Venter examines the role of gender, hierarchy, and the divine male body of Elohim in the exilic construction of meaning for a disembodied (dispersed) Israel. Situating the Priestly account of creation in a context of national exile, Venter claims that the construct of a divine, male hierarchical figure, one who controls and manipulates the totality of the created order, serves an ideological function: “identification with the ideal or regulatory body must be possible so that this body can reinscribe upon the bodies of the Israelites in exile” (47). Venter sees a gender dynamic between the
watery, chaotic (feminine) force that must be subdued by the masculine presence of Elohim. He continues by arguing that all of the “acts” of Elohim in Gen 1 are traditionally “masculine” actions, such as partition, separation, control, evaluation, and active sexual generation. Israel—under the guise of generic “humanity”—is to replicate this divine male body in their own social reconstruction. Venter is aware of the problem posed by Gen 1:28 and its claim that both male and female are created in the “image of God.” He rejects (without really explaining why) the “attempts of feminist writers such as Trible and scholars like Moore to argue for bisexuality or androgyne in the depicted body of God in Genesis” (51). Greater attention to this matter would have made for a more persuasive reading.

“Sin, Gender, and Responsibility: A Contextual Interpretation of Genesis 3” explores the traditional (Western) ascription of guilt to Eve for eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Edwin Zulu reads the narrative in light of the gender dynamics of the Ngoni people of eastern Zambia. He opens with a brief review of the history and cultural practices of the Ngoni. He focuses particularly on the strong differentiation between male and female roles. Ngoni culture is a patriarchal one in which males hold responsibility for all significant decisions within the household. Zulu is clear that patriarchy produces some problematic dynamics in Ngoni culture, including spousal abuse. He is concerned, however, to put the patriarchal practice of the Ngoni in dialogue with traditional readings of Gen 3. He concludes: “[B]ecause this context clearly defines responsibilities according to gender, sin or rebellion in Genesis 3 cannot be the responsibility of a woman. The man ought to take the responsibility as the head of the household” (57). Zulu’s argument that the patriarchal structure of Ngoni culture actually militates against the traditional misogynistic reading of the Western Christian tradition is an interesting one. It would seem, however, that one might hope for a more charitable reading of Eve along other, less patriarchal, lines.

The next two essays shift the contextual focus to the interaction between biblical text and Chinese culture. In “Re-Reading Genesis 1–3 in the Light of Ancient Chinese Creation Myths,” Yan Lin makes use of the cross-textual reading strategy used by Archie Lee. The goal of cross-textual reading is to allow two “texts” from different cultures to bring one another into clearer focus; the goal is mutual illumination. Lin claims that “what we want to achieve is that both the cultural text and the biblical text seriously interact with each other in a creative and meaningful way so that both can be mutually enriched, transformed, integrated, and updated” (69). The remainder of the essay alternates between traditional Chinese creation myths and the biblical texts, exploring comparative issues of cosmology, cosmogony, human origins, and the relationship between divine and humanity.
Archie Chi Chung Lee also juxtaposes Chinese and biblical texts using cross-textual methods in his “When the Flood Narrative of Genesis Meets Its Counterpart in China: Reception and Challenge in Cross-Textual Reading.” Lee begins with the observation that Western encounters with China posed a problem for traditional Christian assumptions about the biblical flood. “According to the reports of the Jesuits, there was in China an ancient history with a continuous chronology that had not been disrupted with the alleged universal flood destroying the whole world and the human race…. If Noah’s flood had occurred, the Chinese would have survived it or not been affected by it at all” (82). Flood stories are legion in China, with 568 versions being recently counted. Central to Lee’s approach are eight thematic elements that can be isolated in these flood accounts: “1. Cause of Flood: divine anger or revenge, 2. Announcement of the flood, 3. Instruction to Prepare means of Escape, 4. Sole survivor or a pair of survivors, 5. Taboo on incest in the case of brother-sister marriage or divine-human intermarriage when there is only one survivor, 6. Means to ensure divine approval, 7. Abnormality in the first birth and its disposal, 8. The origin of humanity—the birth of different races” (87–88). Lee shows how certain peculiar aspects of the biblical creation account, especially the divine-human relationships of Gen 6:1–4, might be illuminated with reference to the Chinese flood narratives. What Gunkel called a torso of a myth “will certainly be understood more appropriately as a postdiluvian mythic motif by Chinese audiences who read cross-textually” with Chinese accounts (95). While methodology is the focus of Lee’s article, much of its value lies in the concise explanation of Chinese flood narratives for an audience who might be less familiar with these accounts.

Mark Rathbone highlights changing readings of the meaning of the tower of Babel in the South African context in “Unity and Scattering: Toward a Holistic Reading of Genesis 11:1–9 in the South African Context.” He suggests that recent readings have presented an exegetical dichotomy that focuses on either scattering or unity as the ultimate purpose of the narrative. Apartheid-era readings focused on the “separation” present in the narrative to argue for a scriptural imprimatur for racist and separatist practices. This was most clearly codified in Human Relations and the South African Scene in Light of Scripture, approved in 1975 by the Dutch Reformed Synod. A counterreading was given by Desmond Tutu, who focused on placing the narrative of Babel in a larger canonical context. Reading Gen 11 in light of the account of Pentecost in Acts 2, Tutu advocated a reading that focused on an ultimate divine wish for “unity.” While Rathbone’s sympathies are clearly with the anticolonial reading of Tutu, he does caution that a reading for unity is not without its own problems: “unity at the expense of cultural identity” (102). The rest of the essay presents a reading of the Babel narrative that attempts to move beyond the scattering/unity dichotomy. The method used is termed “nonscholarly” and “holistic,” as Rathbone reads the narrative in light of the interpretations offered by nontechnical
readers of scripture. These readers bring to bear non-Western cultural assumptions about the nature of unity that complicate the standard dichotomous readings.

“Vegetarian Ideology in Talmudic Literature and Traditional Biblical Exegesis” focuses on biblical and Jewish understandings of the proper treatment of animals. Yael Shemesh demonstrates how, despite the fact that Judaism cannot be described as a vegetarian religion, biblical and classical Jewish sources are acutely concerned with how nonhuman animals ought to be treated. She examines the biblical image of a humanity created to be vegetarian and explores why, following the flood, Noah and his descendants were permitted to eat the flesh of animals. Shemesh also highlights a medieval exegetical tradition that the divine gift of manna was an attempt to return Israel to a vegetarian diet. A number of other issues are also explored: ancient and modern rabbinic views of hunting, proper types of animal slaughter and their supposed reduction of pain for the animal, and the eating of meat in general. She concludes with a brief look at vegetarian imagery in messianic biblical and rabbinic texts.

Part 2, “Redreaming with Joseph and Others,” includes four essays dealing with the stories of Joseph in Gen 37–50. Carole R. Fontaine’s “Here Comes the Dreamer: Reading Joseph the Slave in Multicultural and Interfaith Contexts” begins with a presentation of her work as a socially engaged, multicultural, and interfaith biblical scholar. In contrast to the traditional “objective” norms of scholarship, Fontaine seeks to use her technical skills to engage “modern contexts where the Bible might actually make some practical difference for the good” (131). She explores the reality of human trafficking in the modern world and in the ancient world and notes her surprise at the marked lack of scholarly concern for such practices in traditional academic readings of the Joseph narrative.

Recent literary-critical analysis of texts through the lens of trauma theory forms the basis for Meira Polliack’s “Joseph’s Journey: From Trauma to Resolution,” which seeks to understand a particular aspect of the Joseph novella: Joseph’s erratic behavior upon his initial reunion with his brothers in Gen 42. She focuses special attention on the oblique comment in Gen 42:9 that Joseph “remembered the dreams which he had dreamed about them.” This return of repressed memories is the key, she argues, for understanding the exchanges that occur between Joseph and his estranged brothers in Gen 42–45: “Joseph’s behavior can be analyzed as reflecting the distress symptoms and behavioral patterns typical of traumatized people” (151). Polliack draws heavily from Trauma and Recovery by Judith Lewis Herman and often oscillates between a quote from Lewis Herman and its application to a passage from the biblical text. This juxtaposition of psychological theory and literary analysis is quite successful at providing a distinctive viewpoint into the character of Joseph.
Polliack touches on a number of elements familiar from trauma theory and literary analysis. The traumatic event is that which is unable to be assimilated by normal psychological means; such events “overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life” (152). Within the Joseph narrative, the homicidal betrayal of Joseph by his brothers and his subsequent dehumanization as a slave provide the traumatic experience that drives Polliack’s reading of Joseph’s character. Polliack uses trauma theory to explicate much of Joseph’s subsequent behavior. His almost wanton cruelty to his brothers in their Egyptian incarceration and his taking of Benjamin as a hostage is interpreted as “repetition compulsion” (159). Joseph, like many traumatized individuals, cannot put his trauma into words and therefore “acts out” the event while playing a different role. Polliack also points to the manner in which Joseph reconfigures the traumatic event. Traumatic events, because they elude language, also elude the meaning made by language. Joseph, after revealing himself to his brothers, tells them that “God sent me before you to preserve life… So it was not you who sent me here, but God” (Gen 45:5–7). Prior readings saw the theological center of the Joseph novella in such lines. The trauma theorist reads here the healing of the traumatized victim finally constructing a narrative that can make sense of that which was devoid of meaning and pointless.

In “‘Leadership and Land’: A Very Contextual Interpretation of Genesis 37–50 in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa,” Gerald West and Thulani Ndlazi introduce the ongoing collaborative work of utilizing biblical texts to speak to issues surrounding land and land distribution since the end of South African apartheid in 1994. The majority of the article deals with the methodology used to produce a series of contextual Bible studies dealing with land issues. West and Ndlazi note three groups who have met together to construct and implement these Bible studies for use by local congregations and others: the Church Land Program (an NGO), several community-based organizations, and the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research. These groups met together to select issues for discussion, to identify biblical texts that might be helpful in addressing such issues, and to compose and edit educational materials for use by those concerned with land-related matters. The Bible studies were meant to create “spaces for critical dialogue” (178). West and Ndlazi stress throughout the central role of community-based voices in the composition of these Bible studies. The Ujamaa Centre provided much of the technical skill, but the work was always driven by the needs and goals of community members most affected by land inequality. Such mixing of specialized and nonspecialized reading is a significant aspect of the contextual approach practiced by West and Ndlazi.

The participants involved in the “Leadership and Land” Bible study sought a biblical text that might address issues related to the concerns of the dispossessed (landless) people of KwaZulu-Natal and their struggle to see fulfilled the promises of land equality made by the postapartheid government of South Africa. West and Ndlazi note that community
members frequently looked to “professional” readers of the Bible to provide suggestions of lesser-known biblical texts that might speak to their struggles. West and Ndlazi suggested the story of Joseph because of the high regard in which he is held by many South African Christians, who see Nelson Mandela as a type of Joseph figure who “emerged from imprisonment to lead his people to liberation” (182). The members of the group were shocked when they turned their attention to Gen 41:46–57 and 47:13–26, which focus on the morally problematic method of Joseph’s redistribution of land and wealth during the seven years of famine. West and Ndlazi provide an interesting overview of how socially engaged biblical scholarship can join forces with community and religious organizations to facilitate conversations and bring about change within disenfranchised communities.

Wai Ching (Angela) Wong looks at the matriarchs of Genesis in light of modern female immigrants to Hong Kong from mainland China. In “Same Bed, Different Dreams: An Engendered Reading of Families in Migration in Genesis and Hong Kong,” Wong highlights the androcentric nature of dreaming in the book of Genesis. Wong opens with a brief overview of the nature of dreams in the book of Genesis and in Chinese tradition. She looks to the literary presentation of female dreams in the work of the Chinese novelist Xixi to read again the Genesis account of dreams—many of which deal with migration. The interpretations offered are termed “re-inscriptions” of the dreams of the matriarchs of Genesis; the biblical text is silent with regard to the dreams of Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel, and Wong seeks to fill in these possible dreams.

Part 3 explores a number of texts in Genesis in light of concerns surrounding gender, family, and class. Yairah Amit, in “The Case of Judah and Tamar in the Contemporary Israeli Context: A Relevant Interpolation,” notes that the passage is not discussed in Israeli high school Bible curricula for three major reasons: “the whiff of the erotic … teachers do not have to confront the problematic levirate law … and because it is not seen as an integral part of the Joseph story” (213). Amit suggests that the interpolated nature of Gen 38 within the larger Joseph story is editorially important and highlights the final editor’s concern with the figure of Judah and matters relating to intermarriage. Amit asserts that the interpolator’s desire to contest other views of intermarriage contained in Genesis and the larger biblical canon was so great that the editor was willing to interrupt the logic of the Joseph story in order to make these arguments. In the second section of her article, Amit first turns to debates concerning “who is a Jew” in the modern state of Israel. The standard rabbinic definition of matrilineal descent remains law in Israel, but Amit suggests that Gen 38 might provide one option to interrupt the univocality of the matrilineal rabbinic position by allowing for a broader view. The story imagines the divine working through the non-Jew (Canaanite) Tamar to bring about the birth of the ancestors of King David, who was, according to almost any definition, an Israelite/Jew.
Amit claims that “biblical redactors left, for the coming generations, the option to choose” their own definition of who is an Israelite/Jew by their interpolation of this account (217). Amit also examines the contemporary practice of levirate marriage, a biblical practice mandated by the laws of Deuteronomy as well as an integral part of Gen 38. Amit suggests that many women who find themselves recently widowed are unable to obtain a halitzah, a ruling releasing them from the obligation to marry their dead husband’s brother. Such women remain in legal limbo. Once again, Gen 38 provides a useful interpolation on behalf of the autonomy of women in contemporary Israeli life. Tamar represents a woman who was denied her rights under the laws of levirate marriage but who fearlessly took matters into her own hands. Amit’s reading provides an interesting vantage point on this familiar text. I did wonder, however, at the lack of discussion of the long history of rabbinic interpretation surrounding these stories. Surely the rabbinic courts are not unaware of the story of Gen 38. Rather, the courts offer the authoritative interpretation of the story as it pertains to the halakah. If this is the case, how can such a story serve the interpolative function Amit envisions in a society that still accords religious authority to rabbinic courts?

Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan explores aspects of divine-human relations in Gen 1–9 from a womanist perspective in “Characterizations, Comedy, and Catastrophe: Divine/Human Relations, Emotions, and Rules of Law.” She especially focuses on elements of characterization and tragedy. Kirk-Duggan describes her multidisciplinary approach as an “emancipator theory [that] embraces engendering mutuality and community amid the responsibility and stewardship of freedom, and honors the Imago Dei … the essential goodness of all persons” (224). Her treatment of the biblical texts, while raising some interesting questions and drawing on extremely diverse sources, does not seem to stake out any new territory. Her readings of the biblical material are more akin to somewhat structured musing on the possible meanings of the relationships between Adam, Eve, and God or Noah, God, and the unnamed Mrs. Noah. There are, in addition, a number of distracting mistakes. She claims, for example, that the Epic of Gilgamesh was first reduced to written form during the Babylonian exile (222) and that her current reading strategy places her “360 degrees opposite of the Sunday school lessons I learned as a child” (245).

“Reading Hagar in Contexts: From Exegesis to Inter-Contextual Analysis” is one of the most methodologically interesting and sophisticated in the volume. Kari Latvus explores the accounts of Hagar in Gen 16 and 21 in light of contemporary violence against women, particularly women of immigrant backgrounds. Latvus makes this focus on women and family violence concrete by examining the ongoing conditions of immigrant women in contemporary Finland, a country that holds the dubious distinction of having the highest percentage of domestic violence cases in the Western world. The exegetical section reviews traditional source-critical explanations for the Hagar doublets before moving on
to examine arguments that view Gen 21 as literary or theological commentary on the original narrative in Gen 16. The exegetical section closes with a review of rhetorical and postcolonial readings and their focus on the social and gendered status of Hagar. Latvus draws on each of these exegetical approaches but wants to expand on the rhetorical/postcolonial reading. Latvus opens the second section of the essay by offering four vantage points for an intercontextual reading. The first context, “Reading with Hagar: The Position of Poor 1,” tries to reconstruct what it might mean to read from the perspective of Hagar in light of what can be known of the reality of slavery in the ancient Near East and law codes that deal with the institution of slavery. Latvus shifts his focus to a second context, “Option for the Insiders and Concern for the Others: Reading with Interpreter 1,” which, drawing on the exegetical findings of the first half of the essay, examines how the second Hagar story is a literary creation that seeks to present Yahweh’s real, yet limited, concern for those “outside” of the people of Israel. The third context, “Values of the Hagar Stories: Ethical Comments of the Contemporary Readers (Interpreter 2),” explores the Hagar narratives in light of modern ethical commitments for the well-being of all persons, particularly those on the margins of society. This context forces the modern exegete to examine the often problematic ethical views of the authors and editors of the biblical narratives. In “Other Contextual Voices: Reading with the Poor 2,” Latvus examines potential meanings derived from female immigrant populations. Latvus concludes with a clear justification for reading biblical texts in multiple contexts: “An intercontextual analysis creates an ongoing discussion between texts, contexts and different voices. None of those positions has priority in the end, however: all dimensions are invited to be critically heard and evaluated. A singular final view of Hagar is an illusion that does not exist” (274). Latvus advises against the tyranny of “pure” (supposedly neutral and objective) exegesis and the dangers of imposing modern ethical values onto biblical texts. He is quite successful at charting a middle path.

Finally, David Tuesday Adamo and Erivvierho Francis Eghwubare’s “The African Wife of Abraham: An African Reading of Genesis 16:1-16 and 21:8-21” examines the Hagar narratives by viewing Hagar first as an African woman. The essay opens with a short and interesting overview of the question of the African identity of Egypt. Having argued for Hagar’s essential African-ness, the authors explore her role in the larger story of the divine dealings with Israel and the nations. They claim that “she is put in a relationship with God that only the patriarchs enjoy. Like Abraham, she is given a promise of a child who will father a nation. Like Moses, she sees and even names God. Like the Hebrews fleeing from Egypt, she is met in the wilderness by God, given sustenance, and delivered from starvation. And like the Hebrews during their oppression, she utters a cry heard by God, who knows her affliction” (283). Hagar is a model for all those “outside” Israel that the God of Israel is deeply concerned with their well-being. The authors finally turn to
exploring the status of Hagar as an additional wife of Abraham in light of the customary laws of the Urhobo people of the Delta State of Nigeria. Adamo and Eghwubare note that many modern translations render Hagar a concubine as opposed to a wife. They maintain that a society in which multiple wives are the norm might have some additional insight into the dynamics of the Hagar narratives.

Collections of essays are notoriously difficult to review. As usual, some of the essays are stronger or more compelling than others. The goals and commitments that serve as the foundation of the work (and the series) are certainly well-articulated and important. Biblical scholarship ought no longer to act as though it were a Western Christian male phenomenon. Multiple voices enrich our mutual work. There is only one real criticism I would offer. The goal of bringing new contexts to bear on the biblical material is to provide some new insight or new knowledge concerning the biblical text or, perhaps, to allow the biblical text to “do” something that it otherwise is unable to do. In many of the essays above, the “something new” is clear and compelling. I think especially of the essays by Kari Latvus or Meira Polliack. In other cases, it is not always clear how the context led to a new perspective. In a few cases, unfortunately, it is not even clear that the context of the interpreter is interacting with the biblical materials at all. The essays, however, are certainly engaging and provide new venues onto the book of Genesis. Future volumes can only add to our experience and reading of biblical texts.