Chapter three travelled across the disciplines in order to begin to construct an idea of how poetic paragesis might be constituted. I outlined the long embattled relationship between poetry and philosophy and extended this into biblical studies, built as it has been on concepts of historical realism and criticism that necessarily eschews poetic writing as part of its epistemological make-up. I argued that this position of poetry as outsider, stranger to the critical centre, is actually a useful paradoxical position from which to operate. The fact that a social group ‘others’ the stranger, the foreigner, says something about the constitution and institution of both; in this way, the foreign does not actually exist ‘outside’ the group, but is figured strange by the way in which the group systematizes their internal textual production, the murmurings of producing society and the social as a text, as de Certeau has it. Thus the poetic para-gesis is difficult to pinpoint, to situate.

As a complex fusion of both poetry and theory, I extended Avital Ronell and Bruce Smith’s sense that poetry and theory need not be opposed, but that we can reimagine the relationship as transitive; theory not writing on poetry but toward poetry. The idea of constant movement toward one another is important but I also emphasized that, through the parasitical pharmakon of writing, this toward can become a within, a difficult fusion of guest and host that can only be separated briefly by the de-scission of methodology or criticism. In this chapter, I am going to thicken this analysis of the within nature of the poetic paragesis by exploring how poetic parageses live between imaginary canons, the idea of the ‘canonical’ becoming part of generating and enacting poetic retelling. It is not that canons themselves are purely imaginary constructs; the literary canon has been constructed from a scholarly point of view and the biblical canon from a process of religious definition and institution. Plenty of ink (and, over the course of religious history in particular, blood) has been spilled over which books and materials are considered to be institutionally canonical and the interpretations that are made with them.

However, because biblical material lives between both canons and their ideological persuasions, I shall situate the poetic as a literary site where interpretative performances are enacted between the different canons.
the construction of the idea of poetic paragesis in the previous chapter, I want to allow poetic retellings themselves to start functioning as ‘acts of literature’, questioning further how imaginations are necessarily disciplined and bound into certain regimes of signification, but also how the process of retelling allows for more manoeuvres and performance in reading and writing on the biblical.

If one of the major concepts attached to ‘Bible’ is ‘canon’, then I will argue that this concept operates as both limit and permission over the paragetical writer and the more traditional biblical critic. However, this ‘double-canon’ is best understood as an ‘act-event’, part of the inventive institution of both the ‘literary’ and the ‘biblical’. In order to read and write such paragesis, a kind of ‘canonography’ is enacted in creative ways. I shall discuss issues as to how canon and the canonical are conceived and deployed as a way of controlling the semiotic influx of reading Gen. 32:22–32. This section will explore how the Jabbok scene is made (in) hospitable to retelling and reciting through its multiple canonicities, using short poems by Alden Nowlan, Yehuda Amichai, and Jamie Wasserman. This extends my analysis of the types of biblical authority we noted in the first chapter (poetic, historical, moral, and philological/critical) into how these canons of authority enact the paradox of both limit and permission in poetic retellings.

Poetic paragases do not exist outside these limits in a rarefied romanticism. I want to argue that it is by testing their bindings between these constitutions that we are able to think through some of the ways in which Bibles are made to signify. In effect, these poems are ‘iterations with différance’, demonstrating ‘iterability as alterity’ as part of the constitution of all writing, including interpretative writing. Iterability is not simply repetition but an understanding that, in order to operate as a sign, words have to be recognized again, in another context. As Derrida writes,

communication must be repeatable—iterable—in the absolute absence of the receiver or of any empirically determinable collectivity of receivers. Such iterability—(iter, again, probably comes from itara, other in

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