(Dis)closure in Qohelet: Qohelet Deconstructed[*]

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Abstract

While previous scholars have noted an affinity between the persona 'Qohelet' and postmodern Deconstructionists, this essay will explore his blindspots, instances of closure and presence. Employing a Derridian method, this article explores Qohelet's conservatism hidden within a façade of dissidence. Qohelet assumes the same retributive schema of his peers but in a different form. He employs the same dichotomous conceptualization of human morality. He ultimately attempts to master the chaos inherent in the cosmos, though his detection of disorder is keener than his peers. He also assumes the same typical misogyny of his time, another form of mastery. Finally, this article explores instances of *différance* in his text, places where the text resists mastery and reveals its own Otherness against Qohelet's intentions.

Several biblical scholars have noted an affinity between 'Qohelet', the narrator's persona,[1] and Deconstructionists.[2] Both Michael Fox and William

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[*]   This essay is a revised version of a paper entitled '(Dis)closure in Qohelet: Qohelet Deconstructs Himself' that was read at the SBL 2000 annual conference on 21 November in Nashville.

1.   I follow Michael Fox's distinction between the frame-narrator and his fictional persona, Qohelet (*A Time to Tear Down and a Time to Build Up: A Rereading of Ecclesiastes* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999)], pp. 363-67).

2.   This essay involves deconstructive methodology and nomenclature, especially that of Derrida. For secondary sources that are helpful with concepts and terminology, see C. Johnson, *Derrida* (The Great Philosophers, 9; New York: Routledge, 1999); J. Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (Ithaca, NY:

Brown speak of Qohelet deconstructing traditional sapiential values but not to the point of nihilism.[3] Eric Christianson has shown how Qohelet transcends himself as he narrates and reveals a sort of deconstructed self.[4] Scott Stephens has shown how Qohelet undermines traditional wisdom's ontological presence.[5] Suseela Yesudian has created an imaginary dialogue between Derrida and Qohelet, seeing many points of connection.[6] Thomas Krüger maintains Qohelet 'deconstructs' prophetic eschatological belief that God's timetable can be discerned, but he also 'reconstructs' it with an appeal to creation theology.[7] And finally, in a previous study, I have demonstrated how Qohelet 'deconstructs' the traditional dichotomies סכלות/חכמה ('wisdom'/'folly') and רשע/צדקה ('righteousness'/'wickedness').[8]

Cornell University Press, 1982); C. Norris, *Derrida* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1987); J. Derrida and J. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (Perspectives in Continental Philosophy, 1; New York: Fordham University Press, 1997); J. Powell, *Derrida for Beginners* (A Writers and Readers Documentary Comic Book; New York: Writers & Readers, 1997); G. Spivak, 'Translater's Preface', in J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (trans. G. Spivak; Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, rev. edn, 1997), pp. ix-lxxxvii; Leonard Orr, 'Deconstruction', in *idem*, *A Dictionary of Critical Theory* (New York: Greenwood, 1991), pp. 105-15. For the application of deconstructive theory to biblical texts, see D. Odell-Scott, 'Deconstruction', in A. Adams (ed.), *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation* (St Louis: Chalice, 2000), pp. 55-61; Y. Sherwood, 'Derrida', in Adams (ed.), *Handbook*, pp. 69-75.

    3.   Fox, *A Time to Tear Down*, pp. 10, 138-45; W. Brown, *Character in Crisis: A Fresh Approach to the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 134; *idem*, *Ecclesiastes* (Int; Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2000), p. 14.

    4.   E. Christianson, 'Qohelet and the/his Self Among the Deconstructed', in A. Schoors (ed.), *Qohelet in the Context of Wisdom* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1998), pp. 425-33.

    5.   S. Stephens, 'Chaosmography; or, Qoheleth and the Pleasures of Différance', in *AAR/SBL Abstracts* (1999), p. 384.

    6.   S. Yesudian, 'Derrida and Qoheleth: There is Nothing New Under the Sun', an unpublished paper delivered to the Reading, Theory, and the Bible Section, AAR/SBL Convention, Boston, November 1999.

    7.   T. Krüger, 'Dekonstruction und Rekonstruktion prophetischer Eschatologie', in A. Diesel *et al.* (eds.), *'Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit…': Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit* (Festschrift S.D. Michel; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1996), pp. 107-29.

    8.   M. Sneed, 'Qohelet as "Deconstructionist"', *Old Testament Essays* 10.2 (1997), pp. 303-11.

While scholars are passionate in noting Qohelet's affinity to deconstruction, none except Yesudian has explored how Qohelet himself is blind to his own envelopment in textuality. In other words, none has turned the scalpel on Qohelet himself. Yesudian has Derrida debate lively with Qohelet, revealing some of the chinks in Qohelet's armor. I want to go further, dig deeper, and reveal certain primary stances of closure and presence in Qohelet. But before I begin this task, a brief glossary of terms significant for this essay will be presented to help the reader who is not fluent in Derridian method.

Defining Terms

Presence: the supposed self-present truth that needs no justification. Derrida attacks such notions and shows that they are instances of absence.

Closure: the illusion of totality, unity, and identity, with the concomitant exclusion and marginalizing of the Other or different.

Différance: neologism coined by Derrida to deconstruct Saussure's belief that positive meaning adheres in a linguistic system. Derrida coins a French word that sounds like 'difference' (passive sense of differ) but looks like a word for 'deferral' (active sense). Derrida argues that all meaning is relational and not inherent to the system itself. A word has meaning in that it differs from other words, in its 'absence' from them. Thus, meaning is achieved through absence. But words also defer meaning by continually having to refer to other words in the linguistic system in order to produce their own particular meaning. Because of this continual deference, meaning is unstable and slippery.

Aporia: places in a text where meaning is not decidable, a place where *différance* is detectable.

(Dis)closure in Qohelet

Before we examine instances of closure in Qohelet, we will need to understand something about the nature of his critique of traditional Wisdom. Qohelet's most deconstructive feat is his questioning of the contemporary formulation of retribution. The Germans call it the deed/consequence connection (*Tun-Ergehen-Zusammenhang*), that is, a person's behavior is connected with his fortune. The doctrine forms the ethical matrix of the aphoristic material in the book of Proverbs. In Prov. 9.11, Lady Wisdom woos her potential disciples with 'length of days in her right hand and in her left, riches and honor. Her way of life brings favor; her path brings

prosperity.'[9] Qohelet counters by saying, 'I turned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the mighty, nor bread to the wise, nor wealth to those with understanding. Neither is there favor for those who are knowledgeable, for time and chance happen to them all' (9.11). And in 8.14, one finds, 'There is an evil which is done upon the earth: there exist the righteous who fare as if they were wicked. And there are the wicked who fare as if they were righteous. I said that this is also a vanity.'

In 7.15-18, Qohelet goes so far in rejecting the contemporary notion of retribution that he advises against any extreme behavior, including right-eousness:

> I have seen everything in my vain days. There exists the righteous person who perishes in his righteousness, and the wicked person who lives long in his wickedness. Do not be overly righteous. Neither be overly wise. Why ruin yourself? Do not be overly wicked. Neither be foolish. Why die before your time? Better to hold to the one and not withdraw your hand from the other. For the person who fears God will go forth with both of them.

Qohelet's method in deconstructing this notion of retribution consists of challenging two related dichotomies: wisdom/folly and righteousness/wickedness.[10] He does this by demonstrating that the contemporary defi-nitions do not fit reality. The way 'wise' and 'righteous' were traditionally defined involved more than certain types of behavior. It also involved the supposed consequences of that behavior. Wicked behavior was believed to result in punishment from God, wretchedness, and short life. Righteous behavior was to result in long life, prosperity, and blessing. This is adver-tised particularly in Proverbs 1–9. Thus, deed and consequence are already built into the definition of the Hebrew words 'wise', 'righteous', 'fool', and 'wicked'. Qohelet then demonstrates that the opposite than expected fate often resulted. So, if the righteous receive what the wicked should expect, are they really 'righteous'? Could it be that God rewards the 'wicked' because he considers them to be the truly 'righteous'? As Helmut Gese maintains, the concept of צדיק ('righteousness') disintegrates in Qohelet.[11] More accurately, Qohelet shows how its formulation decon-structs.

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9.   All Hebrew and French translations are mine.
10.   See Sneed, 'Deconstructionist', pp. 304-307.
11.   H. Gese, 'Die Krisis der Weisheit bei Koheleth', in *Les Sagesses du Proche-Orient Ancien* (Bibliotheque des Centres d'Etudes superieures specialises; Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963), pp. 139-51 (144).

Closure in Qohelet

Some scholars maintain that because Qohelet denies the doctrine of retribution as traditionally formulated, he then denies any form of retribution.[12] But if he had, we could rightly label him a true Deconstructionist. However, he stops short of that. Qohelet will not let go of the standard sapiential form of presence, which is the notion of a cosmic retribution or moral order. In other words, Qohelet has no problem with the notion of a retributive connection; he only finds fault with its particular formulation among his contemporaries.

The notion of cosmic moral order is frequently implied in Qohelet, except there is no specific word for it in Hebrew as there is in Egyptian. Maat is both a concept and a goddess. Words that reflect this concept in some way in Qohelet are the nouns משפט ('judgment', 3.16; 5.7; 8.5-6; 11.9; 12.14), חכמה ('wisdom', *passim*), מקרה ('fate', 2.14-15; 3.19; 9.2-3), חלק ('lot', 2.10, 21; 3.22; 5.17-18; 9.6, 9; 11.2), עת ('time', 3.1-8, 11, 17; 7.17; 8.5-6, 9; 9.8, 11-12; 10.17), זמן ('season', 3.1), and especially the adjective יפה ('beautiful' or 'appropriate') in reference to God's preordained times (3.11; cf. 5.17). With these concepts, Qohelet, as other sages, attempts to connect behavior and consequence with the notion of cosmic retribution.

The methodology of the wisdom enterprise is centered on determining the particulars of this cosmic order. Martin Rose aptly defines ancient sapiential methodology, 'Wisdom is in line with the concrete and daily experiences on which it reflects, and it pursues this reflection up to the point where it dares to formulate postulates for the success of human life and for the realization of a global order of the world'.[13] He points out that this order can be expressed positively as in the book of Proverbs or negatively as in Qohelet when that order is often difficult to detect.[14]

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12. F. Crüsemann, 'The Unchangeable World: The "Crisis of Wisdom" in Koheleth', in W. Schrottroff *et al.* (eds.), *God of the Lowly: Socio-Historical Interpretations of the Bible* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984), pp. 59-61; J. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), p. 28; L. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation: The Theology of Wisdom Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), pp. 239-42.

13. M. Rose, 'De la "Crise de la Sagesse" à la Sagesse de la Crise', *RTP* 131 (1999), pp. 115-34 (123).

14. Rose, 'De la "Crise"', p. 126.

To give Qohelet credit, he attempts to transcend contemporary notions of retribution, which would cast him in a somewhat dissident role. However, his solution to this problem is quite traditional. Instead of questioning the whole notion of cosmic moral retribution, which would be truly deconstructive, he does something rather conservative—he employs an old dichotomy and gives it a new twist. Instead of relying solely on the traditional dichotomies, he prefers ירא אלהים ('those who fear God') and 'those who do not' (3.14; 5.6; 7.18; 8.12-13; 12.13). He deconstructs typical dichotomous conceptualizations of his day: the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not, the saint and sinner, and those who vow and those who do not (9.2), but not once does he touch the notion of God-fearing—it is too sacred; it is presence for him.

Scholars have noted Qohelet's predilection for defining terms in his own way.[15] Some theorize that 'fearing God' in Qohelet takes on its original sense of terror before the capricious deity.[16] But one could go further. God-fearing becomes for Qohelet a type of piety that is open to God's elusive ways. The God-fearer believes the cosmos is run by a moral order that includes retribution. However, this retribution cannot be analyzed and detected in any determinate manner. This is where Qohelet parts company with his contemporary sapiential peers. Qohelet can speak of discerning an order of retribution in only the broadest and most general terms. For example, the God-fearer avoids any extreme behavior. Even extreme righteousness is dangerous (7.16). Essentially, one responds to God as one would an arbitrary despot (5.1-7 = 8.2-6). Caution, moderation, and avoiding irritating the deity are the chief virtues. Taking cultic precaution is recommended (5.1). If one makes a vow to God, one should pay it quickly (5.4). One should limit correspondence with the deity via vows and prayers (5.2-3). The non-God-fearer would overlap the traditional categories of the righteous and wicked, the wise and the foolish: those who do not display the caution and openness of the God-fearer. Only harm will come to these (8.12-13).

Although one might argue that Qohelet's ethic is an improvement on the traditional formulation of the doctrine of retribution, it still looks rather conservative. It is not far removed from the ethic found in Proverbs, which also counsels moderation in everything.

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15. See R. Gordis, *Koheleth—the Man and his World: A Study of Ecclesiastes* (New York: Schocken Books, paperback edn, 1968), pp. 87-94.

16. E.g. Crenshaw, *Ecclesiastes*, pp. 99-100.

Qohelet's new use of an old dichotomy unfortunately suffers from all the weaknesses associated with dichotomous thinking. God-fearing/non-God-fearing is nothing more than a revamped wise/righteous vs. foolish/wicked dichotomy. Both are based on the notion of cosmic retribution, and cosmic retribution represents a form of the cause/effect dichotomy, where the effect is dependent on and secondary to the cause. Nietzche is famous for deconstructing this dichotomy.[17] We must use it in the real world to function. However, that does not mean it is unproblematic. Qohelet and the traditional wise men assume that one's fortune is dependent on human behavior. But it is easy to imagine times when the opposite is true: when human behavior is dependent on fortune. Qohelet admits that since 'punishment' on the sinner in the form of disaster is often delayed, the sinner decides to continue along the foolish track (8.11).

Qohelet's new dichotomy cannot also escape the dilemma that the concept of God-fearing must, by necessity, feed parasitically on its opposite to produce meaning. Though non-God-fearing is only once mentioned in the book (8.13), its presence is conjured at each space where God-fearing enters. In itself, there is nothing positively present in the notion of God-fearing. It is only in its absence (non-God-fearing) that God-fearing carries any kind of meaning. In other words, there is no God-fearing without non-God-fearing. Though Qohelet would want to distance the two concepts as far as possible, their link is eternally sealed. God-fearing and its opposite embrace each other tightly in a mutual but necessary relationship.

As ancients, Qohelet and the traditional wise men also, of course, fail to perceive that their dichotomous thinking involves a social and ideological dimension. 'Wise' and 'fool', 'righteous' and 'wicked', 'God-fearer' and 'non-God-fearer'—all these pairs are socially constructed categories where the first member is deemed superior to the second. The wise, righteous, and God-fearers are those who promote the values of Jewish society. The fool, wicked, and non-God-fearer are those who 'buck the system', who live by a different set of rules. The first member becomes suspiciously identical with the authors of the Wisdom literature. The second member represents alterity, the Other, that is, those who differ from them in thinking and social position.

Qohelet is conservative in another way. Though he seriously damages the utility of using the traditional dichotomies of the Wisdom tradition, he

17. For examples, see F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (ed. W. Kaufmann; trans. W. Kaufmann, *et al.*; London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1968), pp. 132, 182-83, 264-65. See Culler, *On Deconstruction*, pp. 86-88.

refuses to abandon them completely. God-fearing/non-God-fearing is his favorite dichotomy, but he will still utilize and assume traditional dichoto-mization like wisdom/folly. Though death levels out any superiority that wisdom has over folly (2.15), it still has its value: 'And I saw that wisdom is superior to folly, as light is to darkness. The sage has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in the darkness.' So, though Qohelet ostensibly challenges the ultimate superiority of wisdom over folly, in reality he still makes it central. He will not de-center it.

Mastery and its Resistance in Qohelet: The Other Emerges

Qohelet will not let go of the presence the deed/consequence connection supplies him. It forms the cognitive basis for mastering the cosmos, making sense of it. And this sense of mastery is what the wise men prided themselves in. Nietzsche states: 'The so-called drive for knowledge can be traced back to a drive to appropriate and conquer…'[18] Many of Qohelet's verbs ('finding', מצא; 'inquiring', דרש; 'investigating', תור; 'testing', נסה; 'knowing', ידע; and 'seeing', ראה) imply mastery.

Of these verbs, Qohelet uses ראה 47 times! Stephen Moore has referred to the Gospel of Luke as 'the Gospel of the Look';[19] perhaps we could call Qohelet 'the book of the Look'. Freud connected the human instinct for knowledge with both mastery and the pleasure of looking.[20] And the attempt to master, of course, has been associated mostly with the male. Recent social science research suggests that males are more visually oriented than females. Qohelet attempts to look and discover an order in the universe that will put everything in its place, to mitigate his own dissonance and provide him and the other male sages with the control they desire. He finds such an order, but it is not unproblematic.

The masculinity of Qohelet's look attempts to exclude women. Women represent the irrational for Qohelet. He avoids them as he would Dame Folly. Scholars have attempted to rescue the famous passage of 7.25-29 from its misogyny, but to no avail:[21]

18. Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, p. 227.
19. S. Moore, 'The Gospel of the Look', *Sem* 54 (1991), pp. 159-96.
20. S. Freud, 'Three Essays on Sexuality', in J. Starchey *et al.* (eds.), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (trans. J. Starchey; London: Hogarth, 1953), VII, p. 194.
21. C. Seow, *Ecclesiastes: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB, 18C; New York: Doubleday, 1997), pp. 262-63; E. Tamez, *When the Horizons*

> I turned my attention to know and investigate and seek wisdom and the
> systematic result and to know the wickedness of folly and the foolishness of
> confused things. And I found more bitter than death: the woman, because
> she is a trap. A dragnet is her heart. Chains are her hands. The one pleasing
> to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be caught. 'Look at what I
> have found', says Qohelet, 'One plus one to find the systematic result'. For I
> continue to seek but have not found. One man among a thousand I have
> found, but not one woman among all these! Only this have I found: that
> God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.

We may not understand every phrase of this section, but its negative
assessment of women is unmistakable. Scholars often contrast this section
with a seemingly more positive portrayal of women in 9.9, 'Enjoy life with
the woman that you love', attempting to mitigate the misogyny somewhat.
However, there is still little positive here. His only use for the woman is
as an object of sexual fulfillment. The Other remains an object of his
gaze.[22]

Aporia in Qohelet

I would like to close with two examples of *aporia* in Qohelet. These
represent instances where his attempt at closure and mastery fail to
succeed, places where Qohelet's own argument deconstructs itself.

 Dreams cannot be mastered in Qohelet (5.2, 6). In only two instances
where Qohelet refers to dreams, חלום carries a somewhat negative conno-
tation. In 5.2 dreams are compared with the many words of a fool, and,
thus, they connote things ephemeral or without substance.[23] In fact, חלום
is connected with הבל in v. 6. Seow believes, and I agree, that a hendiadys

is being used, and so the word 'dreams' becomes synonymous with 'vanities'.[24] Verse 6 is using חלום essentially in the same way as v. 2. Thus, in 5.2 and 6 Qohelet connects folly and the fool with dreams.

Dreams have an ambivalent position in the Hebrew Bible. On the one hand, Joseph's dreams and his ability to interpret others' dreams are viewed in an entirely positive light. And were not dreams and their interpretation the exemplification of Daniel's great wisdom, which also came from God? On the other hand, a suspicious perspective is represented by the D Code in Deut. 13.1-3, which cautions against listening to dreamers or prophets who incite the Israelites to apostasy. More polemical is Jer. 23.25-29, which demotes dreaming beneath a genuine word from the Lord (cf. Zech. 10.2).

But has Qohelet forgotten that Solomon, the patron and hero of Israelite Wisdom, received his great wisdom in a dream (1 Kgs 3.5)? In Qoh. 1.16, when Qohelet assumes the role of none other than Solomon and states, 'I said to myself, "Indeed I will become greater and increase in wisdom more than all those before me in Jerusalem. My heart will experience much wisdom and knowledge"', was he not referring to this very event or, at least, its beginning? So which did Solomon receive during his dream: wisdom or folly? Does God grant wisdom or folly? Thus, though Qohelet is wary of dark and mysterious dreams that occur in the night and connects them with the vain and empty words of fools, he fails to realize that it is through a dream at Gibeon that the Wisdom movement had its origin. Though Qohelet works hard to repress folly, here it raises its ugly head. The distinction between wisdom and folly once again blurs, this time unexpectedly, in the book of Qohelet. It is both the source of Qohelet's wisdom and yet, at the same time, the representation of all he fears: the dark and mysterious, the irrational. It is both; it is *différance*. It is something to be carefully controlled and mastered. But it will not be.[25] It will not play the dichotomy game!

Another example of *aporia* is found in 1.17: 'I resolved to know wisdom and the knowledge of madness and *insight*'. The problem is that the phrase 'madness and insight' (הוללת ושכלות), paired antonyms, resembles the regularly paired synonyms in Qohelet: (הוללת וסכלות)

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24. Seow, *Ecclesiastes,* p. 200.

25. Nietzsche, on the other hand, recognizes his status as a dreamer who welcomes the irrational, '(A)mong all these dreamers, I, too, who "know", am dancing my dance' (*The Gay Science: With a Prelude in Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs* [trans. W. Kaufmann; New York: Vintage Books, 1974], p. 116).

'madness' and 'folly' (2.12; 7.25; 10.13). The difference is only a letter: samekh vs. śin, which also makes the words homonyms (שכלות/סכלות).

But how is the unexpected switch from 'folly' to 'insight' explained? Almost all commentators resolve this problem by assuming that שכלות is simply a variant of סכלות and should be translated 'folly' instead of 'insight', preserving the synonymous pair. Numerous Hebrew MSS do the same. However, the LXX takes שכלות as from the root שכל, meaning 'to be prudent' (ἐπιστήμην). So, which is it? Seow, keeps the meaning of 'prudence' and believes Qohelet is being ironic here.[26] I agree with preserving the meaning 'insight'. However, there is no irony here. I maintain that this is a true example of *différance*, where Qohelet's text unexpectedly breaks open, closure is shattered, and the Other is exposed. Though the reader might be simply surprised by Qohelet's alternation of the expected paired synonyms, the hearer would be confused: does he mean insight or folly? Here, the spoken word would be less precise than the written.[27]

Thus, we are left with a word that looks like 'insight' but sounds like 'folly'. שכלות, then, is Qohelet's equivalent to Derrida's *différance*! It is a word that desperately seeks to prevent any slippage in meaning but is unable due to the fact that its homonym happens also to be its antonym. This aporia in 1.17, therefore, confirms the close connection between wisdom and folly found throughout the book of Qohelet. The tight boundaries between 'wisdom' and 'folly' have unraveled once again.

Conclusion

Qohelet indeed does a service to wisdom by deconstructing traditional dichotomies like wisdom/folly and righteousness/wickedness. However, both his radicalism and conservatism are demonstrated in his alternative to these: the fearing God/not fearing God dichotomy. This dichotomy is superior in that it involves the notion of openness toward God's ways in the world. But it is conservative in its dichotomous conceptualization and in its assumption of a deed/consequence connection. Qohelet also reveals his conservatism in assuming the same cognitive attempt at mastery over irrationality associated with the wise men. This mastery is reflected in his exclusion of the feminine as a possible source of wellbeing. This Other is

26. Seow, *Ecclesiastes*, p. 125.
27. This flies in the face of Western philosophy's preference for the spoken word as more authentic and present than the written, what Derrida calls logocentrism.

too dangerous for Qohelet to embrace. Finally, associated with Qohelet's attempt at mastery are instances of *aporia* in the book, places where the text erupts and *différance* emerges. Qohelet is suspicious of dreams, and yet the wisdom movement fondly looks back on the dream of its patron, Solomon, as its divine source. And, while Qohelet would like to distinguish clearly between madness and insight, in 1.17 he befuddles the attempt by using a term that looks like 'insight' but sounds like 'folly': שכלות—Qohelet's equivalent to Derrida's *différance*!