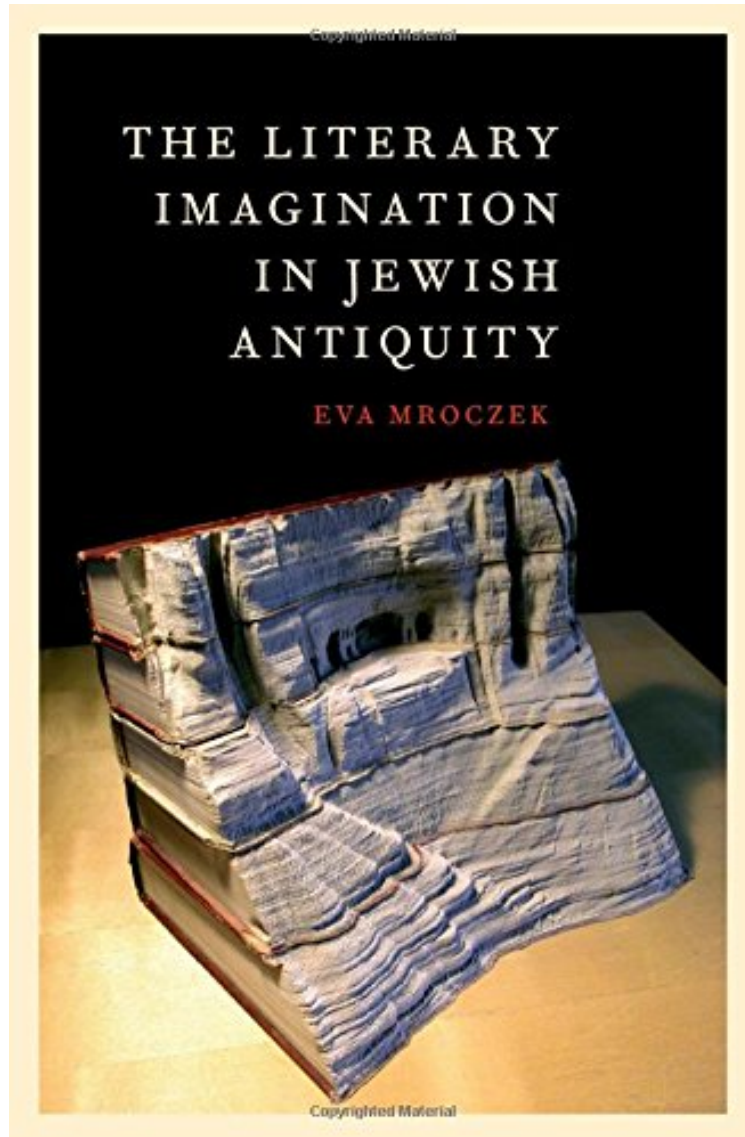


(Mobile book) The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity

# The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity

*Eva Mroczek*

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**Eva Mroczek : The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity:

Winner of the 2017 Manfred Lautenschlaeger Award for Theological PromiseWinner of the 2017 The George A. and Jean S. DeLong Book History Book Prize The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls revealed a world of early Jewish

writing larger than the Bible, from multiple versions of biblical texts to "revealed" books not found in our canon. Despite this diversity, the way we read Second Temple Jewish literature remains constrained by two anachronistic categories: a theological one, "Bible," and a bibliographic one, "book." *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* suggests ways of thinking about how Jews understood their own literature before these categories had emerged. In many Jewish texts, there is an awareness of a vast tradition of divine writing found in multiple locations that is only partially revealed in available scribal collections. Ancient heroes such as David are imagined not simply as scriptural authors, but as multidimensional characters who come to be known as great writers who are honored as founders of growing textual traditions. Scribes recognize the divine origin of texts such as Enoch literature and other writings revealed to ancient patriarchs, which present themselves not as derivative of the material that we now call biblical, but prior to it. Sacred writing stretches back to the dawn of time, yet new discoveries are always around the corner. Using familiar sources such as the Psalms, Ben Sira, and Jubilees, Eva Mroczek tells an unfamiliar story about sacred writing not bound in a Bible. In listening to the way ancient writers describe their own literature-rife with their own metaphors and narratives about writing-*The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* also argues for greater suppleness in our own scholarly imagination, no longer bound by modern canonical and bibliographic assumptions.

"The book is breathtaking and beautifully-written...Despite its impressive and wide-ranging scholarship, the book is deft of touch, enjoyable and accessible, and should be read by any scholar interested in the history of the Bible, early Jewish literature, and the idea of the book."--Claire Squires, Director of Publications and Awards for the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing "[A] well-conceived, elegant monograph [M]akes a convincing case for abandoning terms and concepts like 'Bible,' 'canon,' and 'books' when investigating Second Temple Jewish literature...Highly recommended."--CHOICE "[A]n accessible and interesting read. Her book is a much-needed contribution to biblical literature...The book is a meticulous, creative, and refreshing contribution to the conversation in biblical studies about the literary world of Jewish antiquity."--*Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* "[V]ery few have made these arguments with the detail, conviction, and dedication revealed in this particular book...Mroczek breaks new ground in her expositions of key texts, carving out space for genuinely new and better understandings of Second Temple literary culture and thus early Judaism. This is an important monograph, one that all scholars of antiquity should read. Moreover, because of its successful balancing of theoretical critiques and practical advances, the work will prove insightful for scholars of religious studies generally."--*Critical Research on Religion* "Mroczek's work here is valuable on multiple fronts. In the narrower conversation about Second Temple Jewish literature, she argues convincingly against several regnant narratives, such as the conception of Ben Sira as a historical named author and the correlation between 'David's writings' and the Psalms. She presents a convincing native theory of text production. In a wider discourse on antiquity, she offers an important theoretical intervention by pointing to the problematic use of 'books' and 'authors' even as metaphors, and the limitations this usage can engender. Mroczek has created a work that is useful for scholars of antiquity in general as well as students of Second Temple Judaism in particular."--*Ancient Jew* "Mroczek's study presents an important corrective to modern assumptions that inform our reading of early Jewish texts. *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* is a profitable read for anyone who thinks deeply about Scripture, canon, and the way we encounter the Bible."--*Reading Religion* "'Biblical' primacy is a mirage that continues to mislead scholars in their quest to recover the scriptural roots of both Judaism and Christianity. *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* promises to remake the ways in which scholars think about and talk about the role of Bible in early Jewish and Christian communities. The book is perhaps the most important publication on 'how the Bible came to be' to date."--John C. Reeves, Blumenthal Professor of Judaic Studies, University of North Carolina at Charlotte "The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls overturned longstanding assumptions about the formation of biblical books and canons. Moving beyond this much-repeated insight, Eva Mroczek invites the reader to rethink what 'books' and 'literature' did and meant for ancient Jews-in and beyond the Bible. The result is a brilliant study bristling with astonishingly fresh insights, challenging questions, and creative new approaches, opening up exciting conversations at the crossroads of Biblical Studies, Jewish Studies, and Book History."--Annette Yoshiko Reed, Graduate Chair, Religious Studies, University of Pennsylvania "Religious communities today often take for granted that in ancient times the 'Bible' consisted of an exclusive pool of textually inflexible-and therefore divinely inspired-writings. Mroczek's study beautifully demonstrates how anachronistic this assumption is. At the same time this book recovers for us a religious world that did not require a fixed objectifiable text or collection of texts in order for discourse about the sacred in writing and memory to be meaningful and, indeed, transformative. This constructive approach to Second Temple Judaism is a must-read!"--Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Chair, Institute of New Testament Studies, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universitt Mnchen "Beyond the constructive correction of anachronistic assumptions of scholars dealing with concepts of 'biblical' and 'canon' formation in ancient Judaism and early Christianity, Eva Mroczek's study offers challenging insights into rethinking the significance of the literary imagination in the world of sacred writing and memory not only in Jewish Antiquity but also in our reading of religious texts and biblical interpretation."--*Journal for the Study of Judaism* About the Author Eva Mroczek is Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Davis. She holds a PhD in the Study of Religion from the University of Toronto. Her work on early Jewish

literary culture has appeared in venues like the *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, the *Journal of Ancient Judaism*, and *Book History*. She has also written for *Religion Dispatches* and the *Marginalia of Books*.