Interface derives from a colloquium held in 2009 and originally published in 2010 by Mohr Siebeck in WUNT. Other than a list of corrections at the end, this edition does not appear to have updated the previous version. (The principle difference appears to be the cheaper price that comes with being softcover.) The volume comprises twenty-two essays grouped into four parts, with an author list and source, name, and subject indices.

Editors Annette Weissenrieder and Robert B. Coote begin the volume with a preface that claims that the book’s primary contribution is the interrelation of media considerations: oral, written, and iconographic forms of communication. They also survey some of the themes within the collection.

The first essay, by Susan Niditch, tries to dispel some common misconceptions of Albert Lord’s work and some of the subsequent scholarship in folklore studies. She then applies this to the analysis of Judges, commenting on how oral considerations affect her choices for the formatting and translation of the book in her commentary.

Teun L. Tieleman follows with a discussion of Greek philosophy and the impact of orality and literacy. He argues that, even if writing was essential for the development of philosophy, orality remained important. The key factor was a desire for personal interaction between philosopher and student, and this lead to the development of new
genres of philosophical literature (letter, biography, and commentary) to make up for a teacher’s nonpresence.

Catherine Hezser tracks a similar pedagogical relation among the rabbis. She strongly emphasizes the role of randomness in the development, sharing, transmission, and eventual recording of oral rabbinic traditions, reacting against a teleological tendency in scholarship.

In the next essay, Antoinette Clark Wire discusses the relation of oral folkloric patterns to Mark in terms of genre, tensions, and sequence. She argues that these show Mark as a transcription of “news,” or an ongoing tradition of what was currently happening. She favors understanding this as a scribal reperformance in Galilean cities.

Werner Kelber provides the last essay in part 1. He closely follows the arguments of Walter Ong (and Marshall McLuhan, though without reference) in arguing for the long, slow, but decisive ramifications of media change from orality, manuscript culture, to the printing press. He sets the origins of the Jesus movement in a context of an oral “plurality of originals” and traces biblical scholarship’s concern with original texts to the effects of print media.

Also emphasizing plurality, John Miles Foley describes the history of research into oral traditions. Then, in an attempt to get beyond overly textual or overly static views, he discusses three approaches (performance, ethnopoetics, and “immanent art”), gives useful questions for study, provides fake proverbs for orality, and discusses relations with the internet.

Kristina Dronsche appeals to Umberto Eco (but without citation) to argue that it is necessary to understand ancient readers as reading aloud in order to understand Mark. She sees Mark as deliberately making the reader “hear” the text and its message with a variety of textual and rhetorical features.

Ruben Zimmermann attempts to relate “forms” with processes of memory, and he particularly appeals to parables in Q. He discusses in passing narrative, genre, and community formation. He argues that forms change in their transmission, and somehow this explains the eventual use of writing for the tradition.

Mark should not be read as a scribal product, according to the next essay, by Richard A. Horsley. He argues that it should instead be read as the product of the oral “little” tradition of the Galilean countryside. Its repeated performance highlights how it conforms to a story tradition of anti-establishment prophets, including Moses and Elijah.
David Rhoads draws on experience in performing Mark to argue for eight key elements that provide a template for exploring the ancient performances of the text. He discusses performance as embodied and as composition, the performer, the receiving communities, the time and place, the cultural ethos, the social-historical context, and the rhetorical impact.

David Trobish argues that performance criticism offers a method similar to experimental archaeology, allowing for an experiential and literary understanding that permits an appreciation of new elements of context.

Starting the third section, Kristina Dronsch and Annette Weissenrieder provide a peculiar critique of Kelber, arguing that seeing text as “messenger” shows it to be a medium of communication. They then appeal to another medium, iconography, for the depiction of messengers. For them, this means that the gospel in Mark, Luke, and John is the messenger/medium of Jesus.

David L. Balch attempts to reconstruct the visual world of Corinth as it related to the Dionysian cult. He appeals to a number of frescoes and sculptures from Italy, but the essay largely follows the evidence of written sources, at times compared with the writings of Paul and Clement of Alexandria.

The image of the fig tree in Annette Weissenrieder’s analysis closes section 3. She argues that looking at Roman coins as using fig trees as a symbol for Rome provides a new reading for Mark 11. Her primary evidence comes from the city of Rome rather than Palestine.

Annette Schellenberg begins the fourth part with a discussion of the formation of the Hebrew Latter Prophets. She argues that one should understand their formation as due to “noninstitutional” prophetic disciples and followers. Nevertheless, she also notes that each book likely had a different history.

In the next essay, Roger S. Nam claims that the genealogy of Levitical singers in 1 Chr 25 functions to legitimize Levitical singing and psalm composition (rather than particular groups of them). This appears to be based on an assumption that such activity required written justification and on an understanding of the general populace having access to temple sacrificial worship. He sees this as obviating a difference between oral and scribal cultures.

Taking a typical form-critical approach to lament psalms, Andreas Schuele argues that the extant lament psalms “tame” “the protest of the oral lament.” (334). This is because he analyzes the combination of lament and praise as a literary reworking of an oral tradition.
that included only one or the other. The former is compared briefly to Andromache’s lament in the *Iliad*.

Pieter J. J. Botha surveys the practical and social aspects of scroll production in the Roman Empire. He argues that this is an essential factor in assessing the early shaping of Christian literature and that the evangelists were most likely groups of “‘behind-the-scene’ literates” (352).

Daniel Boyarin next argues that Christology precedes Mark. By this he means primarily a messianic understanding of the Son of Man in Dan 7 that is evidenced both in the *Similitudes of Enoch* and Mark 2.

Irony is the key to Mark and his relationship to the Latter Prophets, according to Robert B. Coote. In contrast to many previous essays in this volume, he sees Mark as scribe opposing the church leaders of his day, arguing that Mark wrote to preserve his ironic understanding of Jesus.

Holly Hearon follows by tracing the depiction of both the Hebrew scriptures and the gospel in Mark as primarily oral phenomena. She does this through literary analysis but concludes that this shows that literary analysis alone is insufficient.

The last essay, by Trevor W. Thompson, argues the author of Acts was a skilled writer. He used a literary letter to portray the character of its supposed sender, Lysias, as duplicitous.

As in any collected volume, the quality of essays varies. Some are exemplars of clarity and insight and a few rather obtuse in language. Contributors focus particularly on Mark, although a wider selection of early Christian and even some Hebrew texts come into consideration. The essays deal heavily with the work of Antoinette Clark Wire, Jan Assmann, John Foley, and David Carr but barely notice the rather pertinent work of Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan, despite the latter two having discussed many of the issues in this volume many decades ago. I also would have liked a cumulative bibliography, since none of the essays have one. Overall, however, this collection provides many different perspectives on relations between media around the turn of the era, and it will be a useful resource for those interested in these questions.