CHAPTER 1

On Space In-between

> *The historical materialist . . . regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.*
> —Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*[1]

Cicero opens his *Tusculan Disputations* with a biographical note. In it, he mentions that he has retired from being an advocate, has been released from his duties as a senator, and has returned to studies that never had been out of his mind, particularly Greek philosophy, which he wanted to expound in Latin to his countrymen.[2] Changes in personal life make one reflect or even embark on projects that have lingered around and waited for such an opportunity. Biographical ruptures – such as severe illness or comparable experiences – can open up new ways of engaging with a long-studied subject, both personally and for one's audience.[3] Toward the end of his work, Cicero strikes the following tone, giving in book 5, the last of his *Disputations*, the famous story of Damocles:

> Damocles thought himself very happy. In the midst of this apparatus, Dionysius ordered a bright sword to be let down from the ceiling, suspended by a single horsehair, so as to hang over the head of that happy man. After which he neither cast his eye on those handsome waiters, nor on the well wrought plate; nor touched any of the provisions: presently the garlands fell to pieces. At last he entreated the tyrant to give him leave to go, for that now he had no desire to be happy.[4]

[1] W. Benjamin, *Selected Writings 4 1938–1940* (2003), 392; W. Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften* 1,2 (1990), 696–697.
[2] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 1.
[3] See, for example, Jonas Grethlein, *Mein Jahr mit Achill: Die Ilias, der Tod und das Leben* (2022).
[4] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5. 61 (trans. C. D. Yonge).

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This story follows the argument of Book 4 that virtue is sufficient for living a happy life.[5] The counterexample of Damocles, one amongst others, makes Cicero ask: Does this not "seem to have made it sufficiently clear that there can be no happiness for one over whom some fear always loom?"[6] Cicero is critiquing a tyrant, but the story might be applicable to all human beings. Does not fear of death, of potentially immediate death of a life that depends on "a single horsehair," make one wretched, desperate, exasperated? Even though all human beings, just like all living creatures, live on thin ice, at least human beings know that their life is not only at risk but have the assurance that it will come to an end, perhaps to an immediate end, is the solution for a happy life to ignore this fact? Life is living in limbo, in suspense, in a space between birth and death. A diagnosis of cancer, of course, lets that sword bring you further down from the ceiling, closer to your mind and heart and makes it brighter and frightening in your eyes. Nothing is left between the sword and you except the magical power of the single horsehair that prevents the sword from penetrating your chest.

Often, when Jutta went to bed, and she saw the shadows dancing up and down the walls, we spoke about this sword and the space in between it and her and me. She felt threatened just as I felt threatened because of her being threatened, hardly thinking about me being directly threatened, too. Sometimes, I even wished to lie beside her, exposed to the same short distance between life and death. Then, she asked me to look after myself, care for our children, and stay close to her, but not too close. At the same time, she endorsed Cicero's main thesis that virtue is sufficient for living a happy life, and if not always happy and sometimes sad, for living a thankful life. She spoke about those people and things dear to her, put on a smile, relaxed, and got up the next morning with energy that surpassed my drive. Long before I had gone up, she sat on the balcony of our holiday home, wrote her new book on art and performance, and had completed page after page when I offered her a first coffee. She gave me a hug and encouraged me to sit down with her and start my own writing and suggested we should have our breakfast a bit later as she felt kissed by the Muses. The sun was rising, and the black sea turned its color to blue and red.

Limbo does not mean we are bedded by Procrustes, stretched and hammered. This we are too, but, as I have learned from Jutta, the small space between the point of the sword and your skin where there is no safety

[5] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5. 1.
[6] Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* 5. 62 (trans. altered). See on this story, M. Jaeger, "Cicero and Archimedes' Tomb" (2002), 51–54.

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net that protects you still gives place to breathe, and if only for seconds. This does not fill such emptiness or even make breathing a heroic task.

Sitting at the table, looking over the sea into the ever-changing sky, thinking and typing word by word into her laptop was gaining normality and using the time that was given to her. Her smile, kiss, and invitation to sit next to her made me write these lines and explore a territory I had hardly thought of before. She insisted that life is limbo and that no one should miss the opportunity to explore this blink of an eye, in which life was given sense.

Having been worried from the fear of the night, I sat down, watched her, and started writing.

Brushing history against the grain reminds not by accident of Feyerabend's attempt at basing historiography on "counterrules" "which oppose familiar rules of the scientific enterprise."[7] By this, he means to proceed "counterinductively," acting against the advice "to use alternatives only when refutations have already discredited the orthodox theory."[8] In contrast, he is prepared to put "the cart before the horse" so that he reverses the traditional order and looks at what is in front of him from the reverse order, or, as we would say today, think out of the box.

An archaeologist or historian, who searches for formative layers and intends to study these, normally needs to deploy the reverse order. However, it will begin with precise planning to know where to start, not to waste time, energy, and money, map out the campaign and, while carrying out the digging, jump over areas in-between relevant spaces and interfaces that themselves seem irrelevant and only related to spaces of defined periods of time. Doing this sounds like jumping into the unknown and working as Benjamin or Feyerabend suggested, but archaeology is rather based on empirical approaches. Still, because archaeology works in time reversal, it has an inbuilt anarchic element; perhaps that is why I liked it already when I was a young student and formally enrolled in reading it at Munich University while I was doing my PhD there. However, as the entire postprocessual debate on archaeological methodology has shown, one has attempted to radicalize this research method.[9]

[7] P. Feyerabend, *Against Method* (1993), 20. [8] Ibid.

[9] See, for the huge debate about the relation between science and archaeology and a critical assessment of postprocessualism (with discussion of concepts by Feyerabend, Popper and others), C. S. VanPool and T. L. VanPool, "The Scientific Nature of Postprocessualism" (1999).

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Instead of looking at the formative layers, which are separated by the irrelevant interfaces, and looking at these interfaces themselves, one will agree that it is often difficult to separate one from the other, just as contexts and texts are difficult to distinguish[10] because they often mutually condition each other. Nevertheless, interfaces are defined by absence rather than the presence of content, by lacking texture – except for geological sediments – whereas formative layers are typically filled with remains. Any sense construction depends on both the layers with such fillings and their bordering areas that lack them. In contrast, an area "in-between" that misses further texture except for its boundaries seems senseless, is void of things to be recorded, and once noted as empty of findings, is unsuccessfully sifted and screened and then put aside.

On the other side, there are no spaces, no times, no periods of time without borders and in-between spaces. What, then, are borderlines that, in contrast to physical partition walls, might be void of material and be regarded as ephemeral junk or no space?

The architect and philosopher Rem Koolhaas (b. 1944), who became famous for his criticism of junkspace, is proud of noticing in his *Travel Behavior* the many temporary halts he has made during the years.[11] He measured, for example, the development of his architectural company by comparing his quiet life of the year 1980 with the 360,000 kilometers that he traveled in the year 1993 and the 305 nights that he spent that year in hotels.[12] He acknowledges the importance that transitional spaces and times have for the constitution of business and life. Hotel rooms, which are nothing but overnight stays, erected for and used by people not to memorize them for more than a day, event, or moment,[13] are necessities he made use of, only to leave them at the earliest opportunity. They are constructed not to make oneself at home but to move on from them without regret. Deliberately one does not leave anything behind in such rooms, for they are not made to retain something by a traveler, not her or

[10] See E. C. Harris, M. R. Brown and G. J. Brown, *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (1993), 5.

[11] Koolhaas was criticized that his architecture tended to be junk, see L. Chiesa, *Space as Storyteller: Spatial Jumps in Architecture, Critical Theory, and Literature* (2016), 176.

[12] R. Koolhaas and B. Mau, *S, M, L, XL: Small, Medium, Large, Extra-large* (1997), xiii. On Koolhaas and his critique of junkspace, see I. Böck, *Six Canonical Projects by Rem Koolhaas: Essays on the History of Ideas* (2015), 245–255. On his concept of "public domain," "free public," and "semi-public" space, see ibid. 263–276. On Koolhaas and the influence on him by Branzi, see L. Chiesa, *Space as Storyteller: Spatial Jumps in Architecture, Critical Theory, and Literature* (2016), 150.

[13] See, on events, R. E. Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?* (2017).

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his personal portrait, nor is the one who leaves meant to keep a memory of what he left. Hence, we rarely remember such business trips, nor the printed art pictures on the walls, nor the rational and purpose-built furniture of the rooms. As a result, hotels need constant renovation without respect to the experience of earlier guests. Interiors must be removed once they are outdated and after they have served their purpose.[14] Koolhaas, proud of his journeys, frustratingly states, as part of the guild of architects of such buildings: "We are not leaving Pyramids behind us."[15]

Yet these kinds of buildings are not simply junk, even if they are neither spatially nor timely marked out. Still, they feature in Koolhaas's diary as inter-space or "in-betweenness," which is not anything and which has become en vogue over the past years, particularly in sociology, political science, geopolitics, arts, and literature, with frontier and migration studies being on the forefront.[16] The concept of "frontier," promoted by F. J. Turner (1932–1861),[17] had an enormous impact on the distinction between countries and marginal regions and inspired research on frontier zones,[18] land between borders, including those of past times and their developments.[19] It emerges as the difference between a clearly defined "border" and the broader and often unsharp "frontier," not only centered

[14] R. Koolhaas, "Junkspace" (2002). [15] Ibid. 175.

[16] See, for example, the workshop of the Erfurt RaumZeit-Forschung on November 24–25, 2017, on "Zwischenräume II – Raumvorstellungen und Raumpraktiken im Heterochronotopos." J. Vinzent, *"From Space in Modern Art to a Spatial Art History": Reassessing Constructivism through the Publication "Circle" (1937)* (2020); R. Waldinger, *The Cross-Border Connection: Immigrants, Emigrants, and Their Homelands* (2015); J. Vinzent, *Identity and Image: Refugee Artists from Nazi Germany in Britain, 1933–1945* (2006); R. K. Merton, "Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge" (1972). See, for example, the geopolitical frontier-study by A.-L. Amilhat-Szary, *Qu'est-ce qu'une frontière aujourd'hui?* (2015). Or the curiosity cabinet by P. Basu, *The Inbetweenness of Things: Materializing Mediation and Movement between Worlds* (2017). And the literary anthology A.-G. Corinne and K.-P. Isabelle, *Migrations, exils, errances et écritures* (2014). See also the conference on "In-betweenness: Spaces, Practices and Representations (L'entre deux: espaces, pratiques et representations)" on May 29, 2019, in Paris," https://journals.openedition.org/erea/.

[17] F. J. Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (2008). A. G. Bogue, "Frederick Jackson Turner Reconsidered" (1994).

[18] P. Hämäläinen and S. Truett, "On Borderlands" (2011), 338.

[19] See J. W. Thompson, "Profitable Fields of Investigation in Medieval History" (1913). R. Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change 950–1350* (1993). D. S. H. Abulafia and N. Berend, *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices* (2002); B. Nora, "Medievalists and the Notion of the Frontier" (1999). P. Hämäläinen and S. Truett, "On Borderlands" (2011).

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on political or geographical aspects but also on culture and economy.[20] And yet, whether border or frontier, what appears "on maps in deceptively precise forms" often reflects "merely the mental images of politicians, lawyers, and intellectuals." Their practical consequences are often quite different. No matter how clearly borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watchtowers are built, people will ignore borders whenever it suits them or whenever they are in a position to do so. Instead of setting boundaries, they are described as "fugitive terrains,"[21] also as colonially imposed markers, "born of European failure rather than indigenous initiative."[22]

The proximity of spaces within or surrounding borders and frontiers reminds of Bhabha's concept of hybridity and Soja's third space. It relates to key concepts of postmodern and postcolonial worldviews.[23] It involves the ideas of fluidity, both continuity and separation, but also combinations and overlappings of paradoxes, liminality, and the deconstruction of essentialisms. How radical such deconstruction needs to be can be seen from the further definition of in-betweenness.

At first, in-betweenness seems to presuppose layers in between which something can be assumed. However, this order can also be reversed and in-betweenness taken as a transcendental that becomes the precondition for a discourse on layers, as Bernhard Giesen has taken it in his dense book *Zwischenlagen*.[24] To him, it is in-betweenness "on which the cultural order is based," whereby in-betweenness is an expression for "the approximative and the ambivalent, the unclear, the equivocal (*uneindeutig*)," as Harald Wydra summarizes the core ideas of Giesen.[25] Therefore, the outset is not a given space cut down in different layers, just like a sponge of black forest cake, which only needs to be filled with cherries and creme. Space does not need to exist a priori but can also be understood as the product of in-betweenness, which allows space – cultural, temporal, geographical, or any other type – to be conceived as layers and multiplied in various directions.[26]

[20] See M. Baud and W. v. Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands" (1997).
[21] P. Hämäläinen and S. Truett, "On Borderlands" (2011), 348. [22] Ibid. 352.
[23] H. K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994); E. W. Soja, *Thirdspace* (1996).
[24] B. Giesen, *Zwischenlagen. Das Außerordentliche als Grund der sozialen Wirklichkeit* (2010).
[25] H. Wydra, "In-Betweenness: The Extraordinary as the Ground of Social Reality" (2011), 185.
[26] See already R. Koselleck and H.-G. Gadamer, *Zeitschichten. Studien zur Historik* (2000), 9, 78–96.

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It is an amorphous outset "without foundation, intentionality, or justification," which makes a cultural order possible "once a common perspective on the world is adopted by participants that is not based on constraint, purposiveness, or decision."[27]

So far, Giesen's views resonate with my own approach. Yet he believes further that "we orientate our lives by means of vanishing points, which are symbolically mediated – in the past or future," vanishing points that he sees "in mythical narratives, ritual performances, iconic representations, or in figurations of the sacred."[28] In this, his approach differs from the one presented here. Though they have in common that what is fundamental is perceived as "unattainable," even if vanishing points seem "categorical and compelling,"[29] I do not think that the four points that Giesen provides as the core of culture, in general, will function for history, irrespective of whether we think in terms of time or space.

In my view, mythical narratives are not more or less vanishing points than other historical narratives. Ritual performances are not "extraordinary events that interrupt" or even threaten the "order and structure of daily life." Rather, they are built into life to link what is unrelated and extraordinary to make life look ordinary and coherent. Iconic representations and figurations of the sacred do, indeed, "simultaneously unveil and conceal."[30] Still, they are not extraordinary in themselves. They are not only "dealing with voids of meaning, paradoxes, or ignorance"[31] but often point to the contrary, to attempts of consciously or unconsciously filling gaps and bridging what is unbridgeable. In contrast, events are those "rupturing moments," in which "we may pause in our daily activities … and feel somewhat dislocated and disoriented," events that "provoke an enormous sense of uncertainty," a "complex dynamic of 'unknowing' and then reknowing a world transformed."[32] Wagner-Pacifici mentions "the great Michelangelo fresco *The Last Judgment*" that "epitomizes the importance and conundrums" of such a gap moment, or "the French Revolutionary painter Jacques-Louis David's *Intervention of the Sabine Women*" that "demonstrates the power of a pause in the flow of an event," and "the

[27] H. Wydra, "In-Betweenness: The Extraordinary as the Ground of Social Reality" (2011), 185.
[28] Ibid. [29] Ibid.
[30] B. Giesen, *Zwischenlagen. Das Außerordentliche als Grund der sozialen Wirklichkeit* (2010), 65.
[31] H. Wydra, "In-Betweenness: The Extraordinary as the Ground of Social Reality" (2011), 187.
[32] R. E. Wagner-Pacifici, *What Is an Event?* (2017), 1.

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portentous early twentieth-century emblem of labor struggles, Giuseppe Pellizza da Volpedo's painting *Il quarto stato* (*The Fourth Estate*)" that "highlights the interruption of an event by another possible event or counterevent (and its eventual possible rejections or absorptions)."[33] Rarely do ritual performances with their iterations amount to such a "threshold moment."[34]

Take the opening of this book – gaps are where we start to think beyond, where we sit back, relax, and realize how we take in from which we live. We become aware that we are more than what is spun in between tasks, between requirements and outputs, that we are not irrespective of those, but that there is this "yet," this moment of now, where all seems to be at a halt.

It is not the pointers that are the productive constituents but the gaps that these are pointing to. In this sense, Jacques Derrida provides a deeper insight by introducing the non-concept of *Khora*, which has been nicely called "the archaic predecessor of the cosmic black holes."[35] With it, Derrida meditates upon Plato's *Timaeus* (52a–b), where we read:

> A third kind is ever-existing space (*khora*), [52b] which admits not of destruction, and provides room for all things that have birth, itself being apprehensible by a kind of bastard reasoning by the aid of non-sensation, barely an object of belief; for when we regard this we dimly dream and affirm that it is somehow necessary that all that exists should exist in some spot and occupying some place, and that that which is neither on earth nor anywhere in the Heaven is nothing.[36]

Derrida considers this "murky concept"[37] as an "apparent origin, or pre-origin," which "is at the same time as evasive as it is vital for thought."[38] Yet this void does not "pitch us into an abyss of either relativism or nihilism"[39]

[33] Ibid. x. [34] Ibid.

[35] J. Manoussakis, "Khora: The Hermeneutics of Hyphenation" (2002), 93. See, for the concept itself, his most penetrating study, J. Derrida, *Khôra* (1993).

[36] Trans. Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes* (1925). Trans. slightly altered. See, on the topic of the *khora* in Plato with a broad bibliography, K. J. Lee, *Platons Raumbegriff: Studien zur Metaphysik und Naturphilosophie im "Timaios"* (2001).

[37] T. Rickert, "Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention" (2007), 252.

[38] C. Yates, "A Question of Necessity: Deconstruction, Khora, and Faith" (2009), 313.

[39] Ibid. 311. See, also, for example, R. Bhaskar, *Meta-reality 1: Creativity, Love and Freedom* (2002). On Bhaskar, see U. Lindner and D. Mader, *Critical Realism Meets kritische Sozialtheorie: Ontologie, Erklärung und Kritik in den Sozialwissenschaften* (2017). That Bhaskar was heavily criticized for moving from a Euro-centered Critical Realism to an Eastern influenced holistic view, which, however, prepared him for developing his views

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or mysticism[40] – already Aristotle took it materially and spatially[41] – but on the contrary, Derrida understands *Khora* as the fertile ground of creativity, "a more constitutive beginning for philosophy itself" than anything less receptive can be.[42] From a linguistic perspective, Julia Kristeva understands it as "a preverbal realm prior to and distinct from the symbolic realm,"[43] which Gregory L. Ulmer turned into a non-environment of "inventive rhetorical forms."[44] Again, when Giesen holds that "the extraordinary and order, exception and rule, or in-betweenness and differentiation"[45] are reciprocally constitutive, I would radicalize this view by saying that the void of history is transcendentally positioned in this reciprocal process, as I am trying to show here.

Time has, indeed, moved on since Derrida's and Giesen's publications, and over the past years, we are confronted with new colonialisms, the erection of walls, the reinforcement of militarized zones, and, with Covid restrictions, the shielding of national territories on the ground and in the air, and the reinforcement of borders with an intense amount of paperwork, test, and trace, linked to national offices that monitor the movement of citizens and keep noncitizens out of their countries. The wars in Ukraine and Gaza face us with military aggressions, imposed US tariffs with attempts of imposing economic supremacy – a social, historical, and religiopolitical situation that neither Derrida nor Giesen could have foreseen. Instead of working and living in partnership as goals, of mixing people

on interdisciplinarity, see p. 181, can be seen from A. Callinicos, "Critical Realism and Beyond. Roy Bhaksar's Dialectic" (2001/2008). How Critical Realism with its spiritual and practical turn is the "brother" (or should one not say "sibling"?) of feminism and postcolonialism is shown by K. Albert, J. S. Brundage, P. Sweet, and F. Vandenberghe, "Towards a Critical Realist Epistemology?" (2020), 13.

[40] This is the suspicion of K. Flasch,"Meister Eckhart – Versuch, ihn aus dem mystischen Strom zu retten" (1988). He sees Plato as the overcomer of the "all being one" mystical abyss of Eleatism and its ensuing mystical tradition, also rejecting those of the Plotinian and Proclian pre- and post-enlightenment thinkers who tried to reapproach Eleatism and Plato's rationality. Yet one gets a sense that this kind of Aristotelian reading of Plato is a problematic form of division too that makes rationality incompatible with forms of spirituality at the expense of the latter, which seems to go against Plato's sense of the unknown, the timeless, and spaceless or eternity of the one idea.

[41] See, for example, Aristotle, *Physics* 192a. 209b11–12.

[42] C. Yates, "A Question of Necessity: Deconstruction, Khora, and Faith" (2009), 315.

[43] T. Rickert, "Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention" (2007), 260. See J. Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language* (1984).

[44] T. Rickert, "Toward the Chōra: Kristeva, Derrida, and Ulmer on Emplaced Invention" (2007), 267. See G. L. Ulmer, *Heuretics: Logic of Invention* (1994).

[45] H. Wydra, "In-Betweenness: The Extraordinary as the Ground of Social Reality" (2011), 193.

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of different origins, international circulation has been limited, and new hot war walls have been erected so that even people's online communication is intercepted and interrupted by totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian forces.

Not only is this new social and political situation demanding further thoughts about the status of frontiers and borders and what they have carved out as living areas. It tends to move our regard to the space in between such borders. It sharpens frontiers as lines of brutal demarcation under the claim of protection that operate "by themselves and in themselves, anonymously and impersonally, based on their own logics."[46] In contrast to this, the deconstructivist, postmodern, and postcolonial views, on the one side, and the post-Trump, post-Covid, and in-war developments, on the other, I suggest zooming in on the concept of borders to conceptualize space not as something contained between those but as something that constitutes borders as highly precarious spaces, just as these spaces are co-constituted by what limits them.[47] What I mean by this will be developed in two approaches, first in pointing out the fluid nature of frontiers and second in understanding borders as representations and enforcements of non-linearities, space as carvings of in-between strata.

To go back to our archaeological simile. The frontiers between one stratum and the next stratum are not fine lines drawn on political maps but sometimes thin and often thick layers of intermediate spaces that have been marked out by digging for lower strata. These in-between spaces indicate shorter or longer spans of time between strata. Even though archaeologists are more interested in remains that reveal a structure, a wall, or other indications of human activity, the spaces in between are not simple gaps, not just rubbish and junk – just like the hotel rooms were not simply that, as seen from Koolhaas – even if they are neither clearly defined nor stable. They often reveal important clues for understanding what existed before or what came later, even though the spaces themselves are not the target of research but the few items they contain. On the one hand, the space in-between is defined by borders marked as formative traces, deposits, structures, or finds (such as road surfaces, house structures, solid contexts, assemblages, features, or fills), which allow the stratigraphically working archaeologists to make cuts, put finds in relation with other clusters, or

[46] So A. Mbembe, *Brutalisme* (2020), 67.

[47] See, for example, T. Last, "Deaths at the Borders Database: Evidence of Deceased Migrant's Bodies Gound along the Southern External Borders of the European Union" (2017).

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interpret a sequence of layers as phase(s).[48] On the other hand, as one can quickly observe visiting an archaeological site, archaeologists focus on those discrete traces and contexts that have been conceptualized as phases, often representing former land surface or occupation horizons and levels. The space in-between those phases and strata is not made up of clear textures, of compactness, densities, or determinable depositions that do not even feature in an archaeological glossary,[49] let alone attract the attention of historians. And yet, as we have seen, they are marks of transitory periods, just like hotel bookings in the diary of Koolhaas. They extend to the upper stratum but also link this one to the lower ones, even though the density in the inter-space of finds from the lower stratum might be noticeably poorer and not feature material from the upper stratum, except if through old digs or pits by which the upper stratum could reach deeply into the intermediate space.

What these samples teach about the nature of borders is their necessity and their constructed and extended nature.

And yet strata and their defining edges do not simply exist. They are made by humans, and they change with time and social, cultural, and political circumstances. The biggest change in my life was the Berlin Wall ending in 1989. But I have seen other borders and, along with them, frontiers change, even if not geographically, then socially and culturally.

Having been born not far from the then French-German border with relatives living on both sides, which has always blurred my experience and feelings about frontiers, I still vividly remember the border crossings with, on the one side, the German officers in their light green uniforms, similar to the police of the time, but gray trousers and black ties, and on the French side, the nation's officers in dark blue jacket, crossed by a black leather strap and belt (and from 1970 with their revolver), their shining light blue trousers, and a rounded hat. The historical uniforms can still be seen in the frontier museum of Habkirchen near my birthplace, which is described as a symbol of "once German, once French, borders came,

[48] See E. C. Harris, "The Stratigraphic Sequence: A Question of Time" (1975); E. C. Harris, *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (1989). The Maine Archaeological Society defines a "phase" as "an archaeological construct possessing traits sufficiently characteristic to distinguish it from other units similarly conceived; spatially limited to roughly a locality or region and chronologically limited to the briefest interval of time possible," "Glossary: Terms and Definitions" (2018).

[49] See, for example, Maine Archaeological Society, "Glossary: Terms and Definitions" (2018).

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borders went – a European school of history."[50] While my father was proud of smuggling white and red wines from our relatives in Alsace to our home in Saarland – just as my grandmother was smuggling butter across the Bavarian-Prussian border near Saarbrücken years before – today, only the changing house architecture reminds the traveler of passing from one Schengen country into the next one, and old, overgrown border stones between Bavaria and Prussia are difficult to find even for the locals.

It is not just the definition of frontiers and the location of borders that move. Having grown up near a physical border, the nature of borders also changes. The dividing, often painful stop at the border control has made way in this spot of the earth to pass some remnants of the past – empty control houses, broader roads with car parks that are no longer used, except for tourists or haulers pausing and refreshing themselves. Where nerves were stressed, people who wanted to pass have been rejected, fines handed out to them and security threats feared, an old camping site is left as the only attraction. And yet, only recently, COVID imposed a repopulation of the control points by border forces, which hindered the daily commuters from crossing the old borders on the way from their house to their work-place as decades before. Borders come, borders go, and sometimes they return and go again.

Borders might be compressed to the political definition of a frontier line on a map so that no inter-space, no in-betweenness seem to exist. They might also be placed in a landscape or be located in the middle of a river. Yet what is the middle of a constantly, if only slightly, changing flow of water? Borders can be as broad as the demarcation zone between North- and South Korea or the old death strip between the former GDR and West Germany. The two strips are known for their deadly history and cruel nature. At the same time, during these years, as no-go zones, they developed a flora and fauna that have become natural reserves,[51] and, in Germany, a tourist attraction for hikers and cyclists.[52] But even for borders

[50] K.-O. Sattler, *Die besonderen Museen. Ungewöhnliches, Skurriles, Erotisches, Nachdenkliches, Phantastisches, Tierisches, Abgelegenes, Gewagtes* (1995).

[51] See K. Kim, *The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) of Korea: Protection, Conservation and Restoration of a Unique Ecosystem* (2013), 12–13. M. Ullrich, *Geteilte Ansichten: Erinnerungslandschaft deutsch-deutsche Grenze* (2006), 206.

[52] A. Haertel, *Grünes Band – Der Süden auf dem Fernwanderweg entlang der ehemaligen innerdeutschen Grenze: von Bad Elster nach Walkenried: 37 Tagestouren* (2020); A. Haertel, *Grünes Band – Der Norden auf dem Fernwanderweg entlang der ehemaligen innerdeutschen Grenze: von Walkenried nach Boltenhagen: 33 Tagestouren* (2020).

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that seem to be no wider than an imagined line,[53] their lived experiences are broader. Border controls extend far beyond the control points at the borders; they take place in airport terminals, ports, trains, rivers, and motorways; they write themselves into maps, school books, onto tombstones, memorials, and mentalities. Customs territories exist, so, for example, is the entire Principality of Liechtenstein a Swiss customs territory just as the island of Helgoland is one of Germany. As children, we were told that our car was stopped on the way home from school by customs officers, and the presence of the US military was felt everywhere. One night, when my car broke down on the motorway near Kaiserslautern, I was picked up by US military police to be brought to a garage. On our way, after leaving the motorway at the next exit, they drove me for over an hour on exclusively military roads straight through the city that I did not know from this perspective. America seemed to have run straight through the city where I lived without noticing its American substructures. Two worlds existed in one, unknown to me as its citizen.

The fluidity and extension of borders vary, sometimes tragically in one day,[54] which they also do in history. An example of both is the *Landesmuseum Mainz*. It not only comprises the most important historic cultural collection of Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany, but with over 2,000 stones, it is one of the biggest collections of Roman stone artifacts north of the Alps, encompassing a great collection of Early Christian material. Until recently, the museum's findings were presented "strictly chronologically."[55] One could study and admire on the ground floor the prehistoric finds up to and including the mentioned Roman stones, whereas moving up to the first floor, one entered the collection of Medieval artifacts, beginning with the Christianized objects of the Constantinian era. Christianity, so it seemed, was defined as a product of the first "Christian" emperor.

Historians who worked in the first four centuries of our era were divided into those who studied the Pagan past and those who studied Christian objects. They were separated along politico-religious lines that separated Antiquity from the Medieval era. Objects that had been regarded as genuinely Christian were part of the Medieval collection on the first floor,

[53] See S. Dorsch and J. Vinzent, *SpatioTemporalities on the Line: Representations – Practices – Dynamics* (2018).

[54] See for this the paper wall that closed and opened in a single day, a closure in 1940 that cost the life of Walter Benjamin, for this see Chapter 4; see also M. Carr, *The Savage Frontier: The Pyrenees in History and the Imagination* (2018).

[55] G. K. E. Rheinland-Pfalz, "Die Dauerausstellung" (2021).

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while those that did not display discernible Christian features were housed on the ground floor. Supported was this separation between the two collections by a historiographical divide between early Jewish and Christian art, which assumed that Christians did not produce art during the first two hundred years of our era in contrast to written outputs that showed a distinctive and multiple non-Jewish identity from the first century onwards or at the latest from the beginnings of the second century.[56]

The *Landesmuseum Mainz* only serves as one example, which can be multiplied. It is being remodeled, and the novel presentation is proudly announced as an "unusual and multifaceted" (*ungewöhnlich*, *vielseitig*) display.[57] The reversal of its collection mirrors a change in historiography that has taken place over the past decades, and which in another example is captured in the project *Episteme in motion* of the Freie Universität Berlin with their spokespersons Gyburg Uhlmann and Andrew James Johnston. Against an understanding of knowledge as statical, the project takes knowledge transmission as a dynamic process called "economies of knowledge." According to the project's description, a "multidirectional dynamism of premodern processes of knowledge change" is assumed, as well as analytically making "accessible the implicit norms, selection processes, invisible rules, and power structures that shape the transformation of knowledge."[58] In the respective publication on economies of knowledge, one insists that earlier assumptions of knowledge as something static were combined "with the ideas of disruption or revolution, based on concepts of periodization of history that were explicitly or implicitly following a narrative of progress."[59] Most recently, "momentum" has been highlighted as playing "a key role … designed to yield insight into the particular impulses within the multidirectionality that is central to knowledge change."[60] As in the restructured museum of Mainz with its new layout and display, one aspect of multidirectionality is a reading of objects across epochs, focusing, for example, on "re-lectures"[61] or, more broadly, on an appreciation of

[56] See, for example, E. Dinkler, *Signum crucis. Aufsätze zum Neuen Testament und zur Christlichen Archäologie* (1967), 11; B. Brenk, *Spätantike und frühes Christentum* (1977), 17; R. M. Jensen, *Understanding Early Christian Art* (2000), 8–9; for a critique of this position, see M. Vinzent, 'Earliest "Christian" Art is Jewish Art' (2016).

[57] G. K. E. Rheinland-Pfalz, "Die Dauerausstellung" (2021).

[58] G. Uhlmann and A. J. Johnston, "Episteme in Motion" (2021).

[59] A. J. Johnston and G. Uhlman, "Zum Geleit. Wissensoikonomien" (2021), v. (own trans.).

[60] G. Uhlmann and A. J. Johnston. "Episteme in Motion" (2021).

[61] So, for example, A. Neuwirth, "Wissenstransfer durch Typologie" (2016).

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perspectivity that is implied in the writing of history. The latter is exhibited in a critical assessment of the category of "late antiquity," which has been firmly established in Western universities over the past few decades yet is absent from most of the Eastern centers of learning.[62] Hence, the emphasis that "the transfer of knowledge happens in a variety of modes and speeds, with different conditions, partly across languages, geographies, social conditions, but also technologies, materials, religions and other specific borders of identities."[63]

Though multidirectionality touches on my own reassessment of borders and in-between strata, the emphasis on "continuity and stability," on "institutions, canonical forms of texts and other normativities" or of "iterations of transforming repetition" separate this approach from what is being undertaken here,[64] where the focus is directed to the borders and in-between strata themselves.

To take the mentioned notion of "late antiquity." What was missing in the Mainz Museum, an interval between the Roman and the Medieval period, has emerged over the past decades and can be described as a new category of periodization, a kind of "canonization,"[65] with its own dictionary: *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (2012).[66] "Late antiquity" is based on antique and contemporary conceptualizations,[67] as *Episteme in Motion* shows. Yet, in our context here, it seems to me to be a wonderful example of how borders and boundaries first move, merge, and separate, and the interspace becomes a fertile ground constitutive for an intellectual process of discovery and readjustment of previous categories. So to speak, on the stairs between the ground floor of the museum's display and its first-floor rooms, on the interspace that was used for a long term only to climb from one historical period to the next one, on the staircase that was neglected by visitors and intellectuals and a platform of labor and interest only for cleaners and historians of architecture, evolved the new layer of "late antiquity," which not only added a further inter-floor layer to the

[62] N. K. Schmid and A. Neuwirth, "Vorwort" (2016), ix.
[63] N. Schmidt, N. Pissis, and G. Uhlmann, "Wissensoikonomien – Einleitung. Wissensoikonomien" (2021), 1 (own trans.).
[64] Ibid. 2.
[65] P. Gemeinhardt, "'Multiple Spätantiken'? Denkräume und Ungleichzeitigkeiten in der Geschichte des Christentums" (2016), 533.
[66] S. F. Johnson, *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity* (2012). See already P. Rousseau and J. Raithel, eds., *A Companion to Late Antiquity* (2009); M. J. Edwards and S. Swain, eds., *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire* (2004); G. W. Bowersock, *Late Antiquity: A Guide to the Postclassical World* (1999).
[67] See H. Inglebert, "Late Antique Concepts of Late Antiquity" (2012).

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museum but revolutionized its exhibition culture entirely. Such disruptive emergence combines the fluidity of borders with their spatial and temporal breadth and demonstrates the explosive power of innovation that is stuck in what, for times, was a void of history.

Instead of perceiving the creation of "late antiquity" as a further filling of a gap between floors and a certain canonization of a lingering feeling of researchers who missed a refinement of periodization, so that what was separated only needed to be joined by the population with the content of a meaninglessly leading up the stair, the staircase turned the display into its "new, unusual and multifaceted" form. It is not as if scholarship now had been given the missing link for a better understanding of the continuity of our progressive historical narrative. Still, my suggestion here is that the existence of the unrecognized inter-space, the void of history, the breaks, and the ruptures provided the precondition for a restructuring and reconstruction that removes or at least challenges the dominant narrative of continuity.

Despite the reshuffling of the *Landesmuseum Mainz* and the mentioned innovative projects deconstructing borders between Paganism and Christianity, between Roman times and the Medieval period, and making space for "late antiquity," older limitations do not simply disappear. There are more than corners in the intellectual architecture of academia that resist restructuring. Not much has changed in the disciplinary institutionalization of the study of theology, philosophy, and religions since I read these subjects at the Catholic faculty of Eichstätt University in Bavaria from 1978 to 1982, with a year in between that I spent at the Institut Catholique, the Institut Protestant, the Institut Oecuménique, the Centre Sèvre of the Orthodox, the Collège de France, the Ecole Pratique, and the Sorbonne. Knowledge was boxed within drawers that were labeled with various religious and denominational -isms. Still, in 2022, when I took early retirement from King's College London – the College was in need of saving money and getting rid of the older professors of the faculty – and since then, the history of religions has been taught in separate faculties carrying the same labels as in 1978 and long before this time. One wonders if and when the time will come for institutions to crumble to make way for intellectual necessities. As at the old layout of the *Landesmuseum Mainz*, the institutional division of a matrix of spaces and times extends the religious and denominational frontiers into the future. Surely, for decades, scholars have endeavored to work together beyond religions, across denominations and sub-denominations; departments of divinity or theology have changed names, added "religious studies," turned into religious studies

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departments, and independently religious studies departments have been created around the globe.

The first such independent "Department of Religious Studies" in the UK is a case in point.[68] It was created by the "founding professor"[69] Ninian Smart (2001–1927) in 1967 at the University of Lancaster,[70] for which Smart had to leave the University of Birmingham. At Birmingham, he was the first to hold the H. G. Wood chair of Theology (1967–1961), years before I was appointed to it. Despite having been head of the department, he was unable to turn the then "Department of Theology," which comprised only Christian theology, into what it would become a few years later when I was head of the department, namely the present "Department of Theology and Religion." Times and sentiments differed at his time, when "the emergence of Religious Studies as a higher-education subject was then controversial."[71] Having advised Lancaster on creating the first such department (soon followed by Newcastle), he left Birmingham for Lancaster to start the new venture.[72] Though religious studies has been implemented in universities around the globe, Early Christian Studies is closely attached to the more traditional departments of Christian theology, particularly in those countries where contractually binding concordats between the Vatican and the State or agreements between the Protestant Church and the State, as in Germany, exist. Particularly in these areas, appointments to lectureships and chairs are still subject to religious institutions and leadership. Nobody can be appointed to a chair for the study of the Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, of Patristics or Church History, in a Catholic faculty worldwide without explicit consent of the Vatican, equally no such chair can be filled in Germany, for example, without the Protestant Bishop of the Landeskirche agreeing to it. Jews, Muslims, and anybody of another religion or without religion cannot be

[68] See, on the history of "religious studies" from the perspective of its conceptual history – an institutional history is still a desideratum – W. H. Capps, *Religious Studies: The Making of a Discipline* (1995).

[69] A. Cunningham, "Obituary for Ninian Smart" (2001), 325.

[70] See on him the chapter "Ninian Smart and the Phenomenology of Religion," in which the author voices his criticism against Smart's essentializing or reifying of "religion," T. Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000), 54–71, 56.

[71] A. Cunningham, "Obituary for Ninian Smart" (2001), 325. In the meantime, of course, the debate has continued and suggestions have been made to give up the notion of "religion" in the study of sociocultural analysis altogether, see T. Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (2000).

[72] See J. Hick, *John Hick: An Autobiography* (2002), 141–142. Later, he also served as the founder of "Religious Studies" at the University of Santa Barbara, California.

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called to such chairs in either faculty; if institutes of Jewish or Islamic Studies exist, they are attached to either faculties of history or languages. Today's religious landscape and map have been laid over the world's academia. Only recently, for example, the highest German lawmakers have endorsed that the right of religious institutions to regulate the appointed chairholders and dismiss those who do not follow the self-defined religious orthodoxies has greater weight than academic freedom and the right of free speech of an academic.[73]

With regard to the study of Early Christianity, this policy of segregation leads to damaging results and disastrous knock-on effects on students, scholars, and the world at large. How can conflicts like those between Russian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, and Western Catholic or Protestant people, between Jews in Israel, Muslims in Gaza, the surrounding countries and Western people of other religious affiliations, between Northern Irish Protestants, Catholics, and those of Southern Ireland, between Confucian-led states and those of other religiously oriented ones be resolved, if in academia we have an institutional divide of the study of these religions and their history around the globe? Even if individual scholars, scholarly societies, journals, conferences, and series exist that attempt to bridge those divides – as long as a full reorganization of the entire intellectual field is not undertaken like at the *Landesmuseum*, there is little chance that cultural plurality is not drowned by national self-interests, enforced and disguised by religious and denominational divisions.

The language divide enhances such divisions. This can be shown in the field of Early Christianity. The number of scholars who deal with the Latin West of the Roman Empire is far greater than those who work in the Greek-speaking East. Even fewer scholars occupy themselves with oriental languages, of which there are quite a few. Early Christianity itself, however, is already a language-based special field of the history of religions, as almost exclusively all surviving writings of the first two centuries of our era are written in Ancient Greek. And yet, as many have tried to show – I am among them – Early Christianity is a misnomer for at least the first fifteen decades of this time. Not only is it essential to study this period taking into account the surviving material written in Hebrew, Aramaic, Nabatean,

[73] See the case of Gerd Lüdemann (2021–1946), Bundesverfassungsgericht, Leitsätze zum Beschluss des Ersten Senats vom 28. Oktober 2008 – 1 BvR 462/06 – (Bundesverfassungsgericht - Entscheidungen – Zur Zulässigkeit der Veränderung des Aufgabenbereichs eines Professors der Theologie bei Distanzierung von wesentlichen Glaubenssätzen – Verhältnis von Wissenschaftsfreiheit von Hochschullehrern der Theologie und Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Religionsgemeinschaft).

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Coptic, Syriac, Greek, Latin, and other languages, but it is vital that it is not separated into that of Pagan, Jewish, and Christian origin. Categories that only emerge during this time and will take a while until they root themselves into maps, minds, and hearts should not be anachronistically retrojected into such studies, as happens already through the religious and denominational framework in which the study of this period is being undertaken.

I would like to mention just one of the research areas in which I have been and still am involved. I have noticed the hurdles that are hard to overcome, neither because scholars are unwilling to do so nor because the material points to the early existence of a religious and denominational divide: the writings of Paul.[74]

No other figure of Early Christianity has been as instrumental as Paul in manifesting the separation and division between Protestants and Catholics, as the reading of Paul made Luther discover his insights that led to the Reformation and the split of the Church in the West. Similarly, nobody else stands in between the Jewish and the Christian traditions, being both a link and the border between these two. One could also argue that by writing Greek and drawing on Greco-Roman philosophy and literature, he combined and separated Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian cultures, particularly as his letters were received over time.

His writings, which are almost universally accepted as genuine, derive from a collection that is in existence at the earliest from around the end of the second century CE, supported and promoted by bishop Irenaeus of Lyon. Hence, the foundational collection is found within a Greek context and at a time when Jewish and Christian cultures, Aramaic/Hebrew and Greek/Latin speaking people are already moving apart, gearing toward a separation of traditions that had already been noticeable in the time before without clear boundaries.

Ever since Alexander the Great invaded Asia Minor and went further East and South, these countries had come under the spell of the Macedonian and Hellenistic cultures. Since the Jews had been expelled and left Jerusalem after the invasion of the Babylonians in 587 BCE and settled in the diaspora, mainly in Babylonia, the diaspora was turned into a Persian place, overriding much of the earlier Jewish traditions. Similarly, a little later, with the presence of the Romans in Alexandria in Egypt, in the

[74] See M. Vinzent, M. G. Bilby, J. Bull, K. L. Lotharp, *Die älteste Sammlung der paulinischen Briefe und die Entstehung der kanonischen Paulusbriefsammlung* (2025); M. Vinzent, *Von Paulus zu Saulus* (2025).

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land of the Nabateans, Palestine, and Syria, we have a cultural exposure, mixture, and cross-fertilization that makes precise labeling of people difficult.[75] For this reason, apologists, ideologists, and defenders of religious and political interests insist on difference, mark out traditions, create aitiologies of properties, and claim ownership over lands, times, calendars, languages, legal systems, gods, and people. We notice the rise of revered writings, influential wisdom traditions, uncontested poets, legal reference works, great philosophers, writers, prophets and teachers, divine mysteries, and religious practices. From today's perspectives, they are studied in separate departments worldwide, partly because they seem to classify themselves according to languages and related cultures and religions. They are partly structured through a scholarly tradition of over two thousand years. With it comes that scholars research these writings from their denominational homes and inclinations. As regards not only the Christian tradition, more apologetic works are preserved than those that speak for an interreligious or intercultural crossover. No single text is part of the canonical New Testament that is of any other language except for Greek, even though it was soon translated into Latin and other languages. The Jewish Bible of antique and late antique times exists in Hebrew, Aramaic, Samaritan, Syriac, Coptic, Greek, and Latin.

Paul's writings, as contained in the canonical New Testament, are preserved in Greek, even though he claims in these writings that he is of Hebrew origin, a Pharisee, and remained a Jew, following the teachings of Jesus (1 Cor 9:20; Phil 3:5; 2 Cor 11:22; Gal 2:15).

While scholarship on Paul's Jewishness exists, and some classicists have dealt with and are interested in him too as a Greek writer, most Pauline scholars are members of Christian faculties. Compared to the vast numbers of annual output on canonical Paul, few of them showed and show interest in noncanonical writings of Paul, even if writers of the second century tell us of an older collection of his writings that preceded the collection, known by Irenaeus of Lyon. To date, no critical edition of this earlier collection of Pauline letters exists, one of the reasons why I have engaged myself in this field of research.[76] The reason for such a focus on the canonical writings is no oversight of scholars but a tunnel vision that is instilled by

[75] See M. Vinzent, "Race, Ethnicity and Family in Late Antique Judaism and Early Christianity" (2023).

[76] See the above mentioned study M. Vinzent et al., *Die älteste Sammlung paulinischer Briefe und die Entstehung der kanonischen Paulusbriefsammlung* (2025); M. Vinzent, *Von Saulus zu Paulus* (2025).

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denominational reliance and insistence on the canonical basis of their tradition, just as Jewish studies is largely confined to studying the Jewish Bible and the Rabbinic tradition throughout the ages. Muslims occupy themselves largely with the Quran and the Quranic traditions, and other religions do the same with their respective holy books and religious practices. So, academics of these different traditions do their research within their circles in different institutions, on different floors, at different conferences, publish in different journals for different audiences, and – with few exceptions – cement the often nationalized differences, even if within their fields they may argue for the contrary. When doing so, as I experienced and still experience in my own field, they are sometimes ridiculed, not taken seriously,[77] relegated and disinvited,[78] things not to be taken personally, as it is part of shielding one's traditional standing.

However, research on the older collection of Pauline letters shows that it is worth unearthing this earlier layer, which gives unknown insights into a certain polyphony of Pauline voices of the second century, to grasp a central notion of New Philology.[79]

This can be seen when comparing the two letter collections. While the later canonical collection comprises fourteen such letters, the older one contains only ten. Interestingly, the four letters that the later canonical collection has, in addition to the older one, are, according to today's research, widely regarded as inauthentic pseudepigraphical letters (the so-called Pastoral Letters: 1–2 Timothy, Titus, and Hebrews). This in itself should make one question whether the collection that contains only pseudepigraphic letters on top of the letters of the earlier collection might also be less reliable than this one. As the later canonical collection encompasses all ten letters that are present in the earlier collection, would it not be more likely that a collection that adds four pseudonymous letters to ten Pauline letters not also present the ten letters in a broadened format that would also show pseudonymous additions and alterations? *Prima vista* one might think of these additions and alterations being reworkings of the

[77] See judgments like me being abducted, being a "pan-Marcionist" who "topples over into absurdity" (Wickham), R. Pearse, Has "Markus Vinzent Been Abducted by Aliens?" (2011); J. Lieu, "The Enduring Legacy of Pan-Marcionism" (2013); L. Wickham, "Review of M. Vinzent, *Christ's Resurrection in Early Christianity*" (2012).

[78] Despite the fact that, in a footnote, the editor of a special issue refers to me as the inspiration for this issue, I had been explicitly disinvited to take part in the discussion, U. Heil, "Themenheft Marcion and His Gospel" (2017).

[79] C. Baswell, "Talking Back to the Text: Marginal Voices in Medieval Secular Literature" (1992).

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earlier, shorter texts, hence the earlier collection being more trustworthy and coming closer to Paul than the later one.

Quite the opposite is true when looking at the state of scholarship. From the time that Irenaeus, during the late second century, in his "Against the Heretics," had claimed that the ten-letter collection, which he credits to Marcion of Sinope, had been an abbreviation of the fourteen-letter collection,[80] Marcion had become seen as the one heretic who made use of and distorted the writings of the Church. Scholarship mainly followed Irenaeus's judgment. Only a few voices from the late eighteenth and nineteenth century onwards, like W. C. van Manen,[81] Hajo Uden Meyboom,[82] Thomas Whittaker,[83] Joseph Turmel,[84] John Knox,[85] R. Joseph Hoffmann,[86] David S. Williams,[87] Andrew Gregory,[88] Joseph Tyson,[89] Judith Lieu,[90] and Matthias Klinghardt, Jan Heilmann, Alexander

[80] Just as Marcion had shortened the Gospel of Luke to produce his own.

[81] W. C. van Manen, *Marcion's brief van Paulus aan de Galatiërs* (1887). This work is mostly overlooked by recent scholarship (Roth, Lieu, Klinghardt, Goldmann, Flemming), or is only touched upon, U. Schmid, *Marcion und sein Apostolos. Rekonstruktion und historische Einordnung der marcionitischen Paulusbriefausgabe* (2012), 7; J. BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (2013), 208, 358–359.

[82] H. U. Meyboom, *Marcion en de Marcionieten* (1888), 146–164.

[83] T. Whittaker, *The Origins of Christianity with an Outline of Van Manen's Analysis of the Pauline Literature* (1904).

[84] J. Turmel, *"Martyr to the Truth": The Autobiography of Joseph Turmel* (2012); H. Delafosse, *Les écrits de Saint Paul I. L'épître aux Romains, traduction nouvelle avec introduction, notes et commentaires* (1926); H. Delafosse, *Les écrits de Saint Paul II. La première épître aux Corinthiens, traduction nouvelle avec introduction et notes* (1926); H. Delafosse, *Les écrits de Saint Paul III. La seconde épître aux Corinthiens, les épîtres aux Galates, aux Colossiens, aux Ephésiens, à Philémon, traduction nouvelle avec introduction et notes* (1927); H. Delafosse, *Les écrits de Saint Paul IV. L'épître aux Philippiens, les épîtres aux Thessaloniciens, les épîtres pastorales, l'épître aux Hébreux. Traduction nouvelle avec introduction et notes* (1928).

[85] J. Knox, *Marcion and the New Testament: An Essay in the Early History of the Canon* (1942), 79–81.

[86] R. J. Hoffmann, *Marcion. On the restitution of Christianity: An Essay on the Development of Radical Paulinist Theology in the Second Century* (1984), 113–334.

[87] D. S. Williams, "Reconsidering Marcion's Gospel" (1989), 478.

[88] A. F. Gregory, *The Reception of Luke and Acts in the Period before Irenaeus: Looking for Luke in the Second Century* (2003), 173–210.

[89] J. B. Tyson, *Marcion and Luke-Acts: A Defining Struggle* (2006).

[90] Lieu's position is difficult to grasp. In her *magnum opus*, if I have not overlooked anything, there is no clearer statement than the following: "The narrative account of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus most probably was already referred to as 'the Gospel,' although that title was not identified exclusively with a particular text in written form; rather, it was he [Marcion] who so labeled the authentic version that he 'restored.' The written text with which he was familiar bore a strong resemblance to canonical Luke, particularly as attested within some surviving textual traditions. Still, likely it was in several

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Goldmann, Tobias Flemming,[91] and myself[92] disagreed with the bishop of Lyon. More recently, some advocated that Marcion had neither abbreviated nor redacted these letters but relied on an earlier collection that gives us letters that are closer to Paul than the ones we have in the canonical New Testament.[93]

Overbeck had already noted that "it is the nature of canonization to obscure its objects so that one can state about all the writings of our New Testament that from the moment of their canonization, they had ceased to be understood."[94] I would add to this statement that such canonization also obscures those other writings that were excluded from the canon. Branded as heretical texts, they could neither be understood in subsequent times. Prior to Irenaeus – and perhaps even sometime after he wrote "Against the

respects shorter," J. M. Lieu, *Marcion and the Making of a Heretic: God and Scripture in the Second Century* (2015), 436. According to this quote, Lieu seems to assume that Marcion was familiar with older material, but whether this was accessible to him in oral or written form is not explained. It would be helpful to know what the author meant by "familiar": did Marcion, as assumed by Klinghardt and his students, use only one text, or did he write or edited it?

[91] M. Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien Band 1: Untersuchung. 2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (2020); M. Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien Band 2: Rekonstruktion | Übersetzung | Varianten. 2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (2020). M. Klinghardt, *The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels* (2021). M. Klinghardt, "Marcion's Gospel and the New Testament: Catalyst or Consequence?" (2017); M. Klinghardt, "Inspiration und Fälschung: Die Transzendenz konstitution der christlichen Bibel" (2013); M. Klinghardt, "The Marcionite Gospel and the Synoptic Problem: A New Suggestion" (2008); M. Klinghardt, "Gesetz" bei Markion und Lukas" (2006); M. Klinghardt, "Markion vs. Lukas" (2006); J. Heilmann, "Die These einer *editio princeps* des Neuen Testaments im Spiegel der Forschungsdiskussion der letzten zwei Jahrzehnte" (2018); T. Flemming, *Die Textgeschichte des Epheserbriefes. Marcion änderte nichts: Eine grundlegend neue Perspektive auf den Laodicenerbrief* (2022); A. Goldmann, *Über die Textgeschichte des Römerbriefs. Neue Perspektiven aus dem paratextuellen Befund* (2020).

[92] Older research is discussed in D. T. Roth, "Marcion's Gospel and Luke" (2008); M. Vinzent, *Marcion and the Dating of the Synoptic Gospels* (2014), 145–158.

[93] See M. Klinghardt, *Das älteste Evangelium und die Entstehung der kanonischen Evangelien Band 1: Untersuchung. 2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage* (2020); J. BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (2013); A. Goldmann, *Über die Textgeschichte des Römerbriefs. Neue Perspektiven aus dem paratextuellen Befund* (2020); T. Flemming, *Die Textgeschichte des Epheserbriefes. Marcion änderte nichts: Eine grundlegend neue Perspektive auf den Laodicenerbrief* (2022).

[94] "Es liegt im Wesen aller Kanonisation ihre Objecte unkenntlich zu machen, und so kann man denn auch von allen Schriften unseres neuen Testaments sagen, dass sie im Augenblick ihrer Kanonisierung aufgehört haben verstanden zu werden," F. Overbeck, *Zur Geschichte des Kanons* (1880), 1.

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Heretics" – the grounds between orthodoxy and heresy were not fenced off yet,[95] and even the difference between Greco-Roman, Egyptian, Jewish, and other religious connotations were not clearly defined, let alone that of what was called "messianic" or "Christian." However, during the third century, these labels were enforced and entered the apologetic discourses. Perhaps the term that Irenaeus uses – like before him Justin – "hairesis" to denote a school of thought was more sharply understood than one of the mentioned labels.[96] When Mark Edwards reads Tertullian, he notices that specific terms like *substantia* may derive their sense, as some argue, "from common parlance." At the same time, it can also be "a technical term of philosophy," whereby we can hardly distinguish between the two, and the latter position "may be only a more precise formulation of the first."[97]

Borders and markers of strata are often highlighted, whereas the grounds in-between, be it between strata or within borders themselves, seem remote and hardly noticeable. Irenaeus sticks out, but soft shades often go unnoticed and need the scholar's senses of a bat. As with no-man's lands there are no particular maps for these.

In-betweenness applies to almost all fields, textual grounds, and evidence that we are faced with, which is being regularly used in historical research, but which is not often reflected upon but captured in the notion of "reading in-between the lines." Gérard Genette (2018–1930) has shown the ubiquitous phenomenon of the hidden nature of what matters: "Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says."[98] The overshooting of narrating is only the veiling of its strategy of covering up. In this, I am not speaking about conscious strategies of concealing, causing disappearance or suppressing,[99] of disallowing, distracting or deceiving or even attracting attention as, for example, in the widespread forms of disguise or camouflage,[100] mimicry,[101] or

[95] See, for example, M. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (2009), 41.
[96] See on *hairesis* A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque IIe-IIIe siecle* (1985); D. T. Runia, "Philo of Alexandria and the Greek Hairesis-Model" (1999).
[97] M. Edwards, *Aristotle and Early Christian Thought* (2019), 40.
[98] G. Genette, "Mood" (2004), 249.
[99] See, for example, K. F. Parthé, *Russia's Dangerous Texts: Politics Between the Lines* (2004), 51–74.
[100] See A. Elias, R. Harley, and N. Tsoutas, *Camouflage Cultures: Beyond the Art of Disappearance* (2015); R. R. Behrens, *Camoupedia: A Compendium of Research on Art, Architecture, and Camouflage* (2009); R. R. Behrens, *Art & Camouflage: Concealment and Deception in Nature, Art and War* (1981), 9.
[101] See, for example, H. Bhabha, "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse" (1984).

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trickery.[102] Of course, there are further genres where the hidden layers under the surface of what we can sense are more obvious, as, for example, in poetry, where the art of evasion is part of its nature. To take one example, the American writer and poet Emily Dickinson (1886–1830) has become known to play on evasion, a kind of "circumference, the disintegration of the either/or, the ascendancy of linguistic motion," which is "a movement outward from the circumscribed self."[103] Such circumference, perhaps "the" key term that describes her poetry, or as she stated: "My Business is Circumference,"[104] is set in words by her in the poem "A Route of Evanescence":

A Route of Evanescence
With a delusive wheel
A Resonance of Emerald
A rush of Cochineal
And every Blossom on the Bush
Adjusts it's tumbled Head –
The Mail from Tunis – probably –
An easy morning's ride –[105]

How easily the poet took the writing of these lines can be seen from the seven extant variants of this poem in which she plays in the second line with the description of the "wheel," alternatives that range from "delusive" to "dissolving," "dissembling" to "renewing." Though most copies have "revolving," it is this elusiveness of even contradictions, further reflected in the contrasting colors from carmine red to emerald green, the combination of "Resonance" and "Rush" as a "Mail from Tunis" – though Carmine might be regarded *haraam*, forbidden, today because derived from insects – Muslim carpets dyed with Cochineal Carmine show us that it was a precious color not only in the Christian world but also in the Muslim

[102] See, for example, H. J. Scheuer, "Der urbane Trickster. Religiöse Intelligenz und elementares Weltwissen am Beispiel einer Denkfigur antiker, mittelalterlicher und frühneuzeitlicher Literatur" (2021).

[103] D. J. Forman, "Emily Dickinson and the Art of Evasion," PhD diss. (1998), 71. See on her R. W. Franklin, Ed. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1998); E. A. Dickinson, *Emily Dickinson: An interpretive Biography* (1955); E. Dickinson and T. H. Johnson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Including Variant Readings Critically Compared with All Known Manuscripts* (1955); W. Martin, *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson* (2007); W. Martin, *The Cambridge Companion to Emily Dickinson* (2002).

[104] See on this the chapter "The Business Is Circumference: Meaning in Poetry," in T. H. Johnson, *Emily Dickinson: An Interpretive Biography* (1967), 134–154.

[105] R. W. Franklin, ed., *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1998), 1305–1308.

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one and beyond.[106] Writing like living was seen by the poet as a form of disappearing – as can be seen again in a poem that Dickinson also sent as a note of condolence:

The Face in Evanescence lain
Is more distinct than our's –
And our's surrendered for it's sake
As Capsules are for Flower's –
Or is it the confiding Sheen
Dissenting to be won
Descending to enamor us
Of Detriment divine?[107]

Again, the variations that exist underpin the contrasting movements of the poet, when she replaced "surrendered" with "considered," enhanced "Dissenting" with "defying," and alternated "Descending" with "Consenting," "established" and "imparted."

Obscurity, hiddenness, and the lack of expression have been reflected by Dickinson and expressed when she confesses:

I found the words to every thought
I ever had – but One –
And that – defies Me –
As a Hand did try to chalk the Sun

To Races – nurtured in the Dark –
How would your Own – begin
Can Blaze be shown in Cochineal –
Or Noon – in Mazarin[108]

Cochineal returns in this poem and creates a link to the one before, but it is more this pondering about the One, the word that could express her Own, but which she misses, has not at hand and even "defies" her.

Poetry has no straightforward message, no message that can be scraped from its surface, and no data for empirical sets and statistical evaluation, even if Dickinson's poetry has been submitted to computer concordance.[109] The sense of poetry and, as she shines through, the sense of life and death is inscrutable.

[106] See E. Phipps, *Cochineal Red: The Art History of a Color* (2010), 42–43.
[107] R.W. Franklin, ed., *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1998), 1331–1332.
[108] Ibid. 458–459. See on this D. Fagan, *Emily Dickinson's Unutterable Word* (2008).
[109] S. P. Rosenbaum, *A Concordance to the Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1964).

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What we may grant to poetry is met in almost every text, document, or other form of evidence. Much of what they say is not to be found in what they say but often in what they conceal and do not say. This is the reason why Carlo Ginzburg, inspired by Marc Bloch (1944–1886), started "to reflect on traces of evidence" rather than on what was given to him as evidence.[110] While in his early days, Ginzburg did not question "the connection between deciphering traces" and narrating what he saw as the historical reality behind them, Arnaldo Momigliano (1987–1908) made him aware of the "canceled . . . distinction between historical and fictional narratives."[111] However, instead of embracing this view, he suggested that "the relation between the two" is one of "competition for the representation of reality." Following Bloch, Ginzburg was trying to isolate within "testimonies an involuntary, hence, deeper, core."[112] He even compares this approach with archaeology, talking about "digging into the texts," finding the "opaque zones," and drawing from them "uncontrolled voices," even "against the intentions of whoever produced them," so that what was hidden is "made to emerge."[113] According to Ginzburg, as quoted above, the historian's agency imparts sense, a historiographical reading of tracks that he sees following in the wake of Walter Benjamin.[114] Still, despite being critical of chronological developments, Ginzburg tried to see systematic connections, "mutual relationships," and, borrowing from Wittgenstein, "the connections" and "finding the intermediary links."[115]

Looking back at our example of Paul – it seems more obvious to trace his person through the canonical writings, confirmed and supported by the long Christian tradition through the ages. Obscured through it, concealed and marginalized are pre-canonical traces, later pushed aside as heretical and lost in transcriptions of the better propagated canonical texts. Nevertheless, once something has been voiced, even put into writing, there are chances of rediscovery, and in this case, even the possibility of reconstruction, though only in approximate forms. However, I have always seen reconstructing lost voices as one of my foremost tasks. The PhD I wrote resulted from a nondeliberate detour from the original topic. I had started in the year 1986 to work, as suggested by my supervisor Reinhard M. Hübner, on a pseudo-Athanasian tract, the *Fourth Oration against the Arians*, to check out the hardly remembered thesis by a young scholar, Anton Stegmann, who had died during WWI of this work being written by

[110] C. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive* (2012), 1. [111] Ibid. 2.
[112] Ibid. 3. [113] Ibid. [114] Ibid. 4.
[115] C. Ginzburg, *Ecstasies: Deciphering the Witches' Sabbath* (1991), 15.

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Apolinaris of Laodicea.[116] Having worked my way through this work, I noticed that it relied heavily on Eusebius of Caesarea's books against Marcellus of Ancyra, written in the 330s. In these books, Eusebius quotes from the debate that Nicene Marcellus had with one of the inspirations and teachers of Arius and his followers, Asterius of Cappadocia, better known as Asterius, the Sophist. With amazement, I discovered that no sound edition of the surviving fragments of Asterius existed and that nobody had attempted to describe his philosophical and theological positions and distinguish these from his student Arius and other so-called Eusebians or Arians. So, I stumbled from scrutinizing the potential work of one "arch-heretic," Apolinarius, into the remnants of the other "arch-heretic," Arius, and tried to disentangle the fragments of his thoughts from those of his master Asterius.[117] The initial study on Apolinarius I then worked out as my Habilitation and added a volume on the fragments of Marcellus, who later was seen as unorthodox too.[118] Innocently looking for a scholar who would question again the catholic consensus on the definition of the Trinity, as established by the Cappadocian Fathers and the ecumenical councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, I came across the work of the Medieval Dominican Meister Eckhart (ca. 1328–1260) some of whose theological positions were posthumously banned by the papal bull *In agro dominico* from 1329.[119] It seems the rediscovery of scholars who had been abandoned by the catholic mainstream became one of the tasks of my life. Hence, also the unknown Paul before Paul.

This ignored Paul is a prime example of how the singling out of research areas, sometimes linked to canonization, and the disconnection between various fields hinder research progress. Soon after the "Romantic Century" ended around 1850,[120] romantic waves reached the shores of the history of theology. What do I mean by that? While "an enlightenment mind …

[116] A. Stegmann, *Die pseudoathanasianische "IVte Rede gegen die Arianer" als "kata Areianōn logos" ein Apollinarisgut* (1917).

[117] See M. Vinzent, *Asterius von Kappadokien, Die theologischen Fragmente: Einleitung, kritischer Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar* (1993).

[118] See M. Vinzent, *Pseudo-Athanasius, Contra Arianos IV: Eine Schrift gegen Asterius von Kappadokien, Eusebius von Cäsarea, Markell von Ankyra und Photin von Sirmium* (1996); Marcellus and M. Vinzent, *Die Fragmente: Der Brief an Julius von Rom* (1997).

[119] See M. Vinzent, "Questions on the Attributes (of God): Four Rediscovered Parisian Questions of Eckhart" (2012); M. Vinzent, "'Meine Demut gibt Gott seine Gottheit' (Meister Eckhart, Predigt 14) – neue handschriftliche Zeugnisse und eine neue kritische Edition" (2019).

[120] See the flagship journal *Studies in Romanticism* and its description.

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would study … events in social and economic terms" a romantic one is "interested in preventing – in actively countering – such a focus of concentration" and turns its reading into narration, into "the more homely and immediate discomforts," senses like "sympathy and love" or others.[121] The Swiss Heinrich Corrodi (1784–1719), who came from a pietist family in Zürich but was heavily influenced by studying Leibniz and Wolff and following his teacher Johann Salomo Semler (1791–1725), taught at the *Collegium Humanitas* at Zürich. Here he published in the year 1792 his important *Versuch einer Beleuchtung der Geschichte des Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibelkanons welches Beleuchtungen der Geschichte des Christlichen Kanons enthält* (*An Attempt at Illuminating the History of the Jewish and Christian Canon of the Bible which contains Illuminations of the History of the Christian Canon*). In it, for example, he suggested that "the accusation of the church fathers that the Marcionites had distorted and adulterated the letters of the Apostles and rejected others … is wrong."[122] A few years after Corrodi, the Protestant Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1827–1752), who taught New Testament in Saxe-Gotha and Oriental languages at the University of Jena, notes that the number of Pauline letters was disputed. On the one side, ten were suggested; on the other, either thirteen or fourteen, while he himself shows in a study of over eighty pages that the so-called Pastoral Epistles were not written by Paul.[123] He also disproved Paul's authorship of Hebrews in a further study of over one hundred pages.[124] Hence, he concluded:

> "Only ten letters, the same that Marcion regarded as genuine" are those of Paul, "consequently Marcion's Ἀπόστολος or his Ἀποστελικὸν (βιβλίον) should be more correct than the Ἀπόστολος or the *Instrumentum apostolicum* of the Catholic church. Now, shall this surprise us? Marcion's collection was far older than that of the Catholic church."[125]

[121] J. J. McGann, "Romanticism and Its Ideologies" (1982), 578.

[122] "'Die Marcioniten werden von den Kirchenvätern beschuldiget, daß sie die Briefe der Apostel verstümmelt und verfälscht, und andere verworfen hätten …' eine 'Beschuldigung,' die 'falsch ist,'" H. Corrodi, *Versuch einer Beleuchtung der Geschichte des Jüdischen und Christlichen Bibelkanons* 2 (1792), 158. See also ibid. 206–214

[123] J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament Bd.* 3, *Hälfte* 1 (1812), 329–410.

[124] J. G. Eichhorn, *Einleitung in das Neue Testament Bd.* 3, *Hälfte* 2 (1814), 411–526.

[125] "Nur zehn Briefe, dieselben, welche Marcion für ächt annahm, (gehören) ihm zu. Demnach wäre Marcion's Ἀπόστολος oder sein Ἀποστελικὸν (βιβλίον) [sic] richtiger gewesen, als der Ἀπόστολος oder das *Instrumentum apostolicum* der katholischen Kirche. Und darf uns dieses Wunder nehmen? Marcion's Sammlung war weit älter, als die der katholischen Kirche," ibid. 528.

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Such critical assessments during the Enlightenment were replaced by the traditional apologetic views of Irenaeus and other heresiologists in the post-enlightened, the Romantic period. By redating the canonical writings in the version of the later canonical collection into the first century, the novel discipline of "New Testament Studies" that had been formed in the last third of the nineteenth century was given its basis and goal, the circular frame within which the discipline still is stuck today.[126]

Over the past decades, as can be seen from the broadening of the scope of New Testament Studies, scholars have seen only the damaging limitations of the field to canonical writings. C. Kavin Rowe indicates this, talking about the "cul-de-sac," the "demarcation of the NT," for example, of writing a "New Testament Theology."[127] Helmut Köster (2016–1926) has tried since the 1970s to unlock the New Testament from its canonical carcer to transcend the limits of the canon.[128] And yet, he has been criticized for being "inconsistent" by giving the title "New Testament" to a work that encompasses "some sixty non-canonical writings or fragments."[129] Heikki Räisänen (2015–1941), therefore, calls Köster's work "a massive challenge to New Testament study, and he differentiates between an 'ecclesial,' 'canon-centered study,' and a 'history-of-religions' approach."[130] The canon-centered study is endorsed by Irenaeus toward the end of the second century, even more recently taken as a confirmation of its kind.[131] In contrast, voices have been raised to criticize this kind of scholarship on the New Testament. Still, they persistently fail "to ask critical questions about the New Testament considered as a whole" and to challenge "the contingencies of canon-formation," and do not locate these texts "within a wider early Christian literary landscape."[132] In his self-critical assessment of his time as editor of *New Testament Studies* during

[126] See, on the novel discipline of New Testament Studies, M. Hengel, M. F. Bird, and J. Maston, *Earliest Christian History: History, Literature, and Theology. Essays from the Tyndale Fellowship in Honor of Martin Hengel* (2012), 459.

[127] C. K. Rowe, "New Testament Theology: The Revival of a Discipline. A Review of Recent Contributions to the Field" (2006), 393, 407.

[128] See H. Koester, *Introduction to the New Testament* (1982).

[129] H. Räisänen, *Beyond New Testament Theology: A Story and a Programme* (1990), 83.

[130] Ibid. 100–102.

[131] A. Sáez, "The New Testament's Canonical Consciousness and Its Place within the Transmission of the Apostolic Heritage (III). The Participation of the Collection of Apostolic Writings in the Normativity of the Christian κανών" (2023).

[132] F. Watson, "Critical Reflections on the Role of the Canon in New Testament Scholarship" (2024), 111.

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the years 2018–2014, Francis Watson gives a survey that shows the comparatively small number of articles during these years that dealt with noncanonical writings, even though he notices an "increased attention to non-canonical literature and reception."[133] His main (self-)critical note, set in italics, reads: "The New Testament itself is implicitly viewed as a neutral container for its component texts or text-groupings" to which he adds (no longer in italics): "The question of the selection of just these early Christian texts is bypassed; for the most part, reception is reduced to transmission, the domain of a textual criticism concerned exclusively with New Testament manuscripts rather than early Christian literature as a whole."[134] While Watson suggests thinking of the canonical New Testament as an "anthology" rather than as a "collection," and, therefore, looks into the conceptualization of the "New Testament" during the fourth century, particularly in Eusebius of Caesarea, I have explored the "New Testament" as a whole in light of a redacted collection,[135] for which, my reconstruction of the ten letter collection of Paul, particularly the introduction to it, is providing the supportive arguments. Especially a comparison between the ten-letter collection, as attested for and attributed to Marcion of Sinope, with the fourteen-letter collection that can be found in the canonical New Testament shows the redactional nature of the latter: Those four Pauline Epistles that have been added to the ten letter collection, as spelled out before, are intrinsically linked to those parts that are, compared to the ten-letter collection, additions in the fourteen letter collection and to canonical Acts and the Catholic Letters. If, however, the ten-letter collection would not only be the earlier version but also were more trustworthy in content, and if, likewise, the one gospel within this New Testament of Marcion were the oldest that we do know of – granted that both the ten-letter collection as well as the one gospel in Marcion's New Testament most likely are being themselves based on earlier collections –,[136] then the reconstruction of the history of the beginnings of Christianity looks quite different from the way it is traditionally described. Gerhardus Van den Heever, in a yet unpublished paper, writes:

[133] Ibid. 115. [134] Ibid.

[135] M. Vinzent, *Christ's Torah: The Making of the New Testament in the Second Century* (2024); M. Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings* (2023).

[136] So also J. BeDuhn, *The First New Testament: Marcion's Scriptural Canon* (2013); M. Klinghardt, *The Oldest Gospel and the Formation of the Canonical Gospels* (2021).

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> The obvious implication of this is that the reasoning above places the eventually-canonical writings of the New Testament (the Gospels and letters) in the middle of the second century and later … right in the middle of that spurt of immense literary production that characterized the second century. There is therefore no reason to posit a New Testament over against the corpus of "apocryphal" gospels, acts, and letters; over against the Apostolic Fathers, the early martyrologies, the Apologists, or the early church fathers; over against movements like the New Prophecy/Montanism, and so on. The apocrypha are then no longer baroque embellishments of the (more sober) Gospels and Acts, but simply the "co-choristers" (different voices in the same choir) constructing miracle-working holy men from Jesus and the apostles, martyrs as imitating Christs, and so on ….
>
> And so, finally, to completely dispense with the coherence of the tradition … to fully complete the fracturing: What we are dealing with is a case of witnesses to the witnesses to the witnesses to the tradition. If "tradition" connotes the vast stream of traditions about Jesus, some oral and some finding fixity in fluid textual traditions, then the first set of witnesses are the fragmentary material evidence fixing those traditions in material form, but also the texts we now believe materialise the tradition …. And thus, to follow the logic to its end: the making of Christianity as a tradition inspired by Jesus of Nazareth-became-the-Christ is relegated to the early Middle Ages. It is the increasing textualizing of the tradition (and by tradition, I mean the inclusive tradition of the ongoing events-plus-interpretation-plus commentary) that constructs Christianity.[137]

Van den Heever's dispensation with the coherence of tradition leaves the origins of Christianity a black box.[138] If one were to write the history of Christianity for the first 100 years, it would not be what one is used to reading.[139] Because of the lack of evidence and the absence of finds, we look into a void of Christian history, and all we can do is write Greco-Roman and Jewish history.

That staring into the nonexistent is not simply a negative experience, I would like to show in Chapter 2. Here, however, I conclude that already the inter-space opened our eyes to the discontinuous nature of history.

[137] G. Van den Heever, "The 'Formation' of Jesus in the Long Second Century" (forthcoming).

[138] So the description in M. Vinzent, *Resetting the Origins of Christianity: A New Theory of Sources and Beginnings* (2023), 6.

[139] See, for example, U. Schnelle, *The First One Hundred Years of Christianity: An Introduction to Its History, Literature, and Development* (2020).

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Ginzburg's traces do not provide a continuous line once one reverses the direction, and Theseus's gift from Ariadne to find "his bearings in the labyrinth," locate the Minotaur, and "slew him" is itself cut into millions of pieces.[140] Where no evidence is left, the orientation gets lost. Even though inter-space is foundational for the concept of space, for the layers above and underneath, it is transcendental for those layers without being a layer itself. It is neither a stopgap nor a makeshift that can be squeezed out – as with further fine graining and differentiations of layers. It upsets an existing systematic organization like that of the *Landesmuseum* to reshuffle research areas. Once one realizes that one is part of the black box, we can switch borders like overnight hotels; they serve for a while but are not reified. They offer space but do not bind, can easily move, change, be altered, overlooked, and are often hidden and forgotten, but – limited as examples are – they also indicate the precarious nature of structures that mark ruptures. Black boxes open up and allow for creativity.

In what follows with Chapter 2, I am trying to dig even deeper, not only looking for the inter-space. This space still could serve as a connecting phase but ask what we can learn from those moments where all traces become faint, evanescent, and where they finally disappear. How can we describe a location without any dimension where we face the end of a track? Instead of history, which is often constructed like a tower of building blocks that neatly sit on each other or a road from the past into the future, the end of the road has not even grout or dots that remind of a line.

[140] C. Ginzburg, *Threads and Traces: True, False, Fictive* (2012), 1. See, on Ariadne's thread, M. Vinzent, *Writing the History of Early Christianity: From Reception to Retrospection* (2019), 58–59.

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