

The Ancient Word

GENDERED VIOLENCE IN BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

THE DEVOURING METAPHOR

Esther Brownsmith

ROUTLEDGE 

Gendered Violence in Biblical Narrative

This book uses three examples of violent biblical stories about women, explored through the lens of conceptual metaphor theory in relation to culinary language used within these texts, to examine wider issues of gender and sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible.

Utilizing the tools of conceptual metaphor theory, feminist criticism, and classic textual analysis, Brownsmith interrogates some of the most troubling biblical passages for women—neither by redeeming them nor by condemning them, but by showing how they are intrinsically shaped by the enduring metaphor of woman as food in the Hebrew Bible, ancient Near East, and beyond. The volume explores three main case studies: the Levite’s “concubine” (Judges 19); Tamar and Amnon (2 Sam 13); and the life and death of Jezebel (primarily 1 Kings 21 and 2 Kings 9). All depict violence toward a woman as perpetrated by a man, interwoven with culinary language that cues their metaphorical implications. In these sensitive but critical readings of violent tales, Brownsmith also draws on a broad range of interdisciplinary connections from Ricoeur to ancient Ugaritic epics to modern comic books. Through this approach, readers gain new insights into how the Bible shapes its narratives through conceptual metaphors, and specifically how it makes meaning out of women’s brutalized bodies.

Gendered Violence in Biblical Narrative: The Devouring Metaphor is suitable for students and scholars working on gender and sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East more broadly, as well as those working on conceptual metaphor theory and feminist criticism.

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The Ancient Word

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Gendered Violence in Biblical Narrative

The Devouring Metaphor

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1 Amuse-Bouche

(a) Like a Bone to Dogs

One hundred and twenty-five years ago, the feminist author Elizabeth Cady Stanton had already encapsulated the message of this book. In her discussion of the book of Judges, she wrote:

There are many instances in the Old Testament where women have been thrown to the mob, like a bone to dogs, to pacify their passions; and women suffer to-day from these lessons of contempt, taught in a book so revered by the people.¹

Both of my central points are present in this quote. First, the Hebrew Bible imagines women as food, playing out that imagination in its stories; and second, the depiction of women as food has a dangerous and still lingering resonance.

These are grim observations. The mute gesture of a dying victim of gang rape, the agonized pleas of a trapped princess, and the gnawing of dogs' teeth on the bones of a queen: these horrifying moments comprise the focus of my investigation. Yet my role is not that of the doctor, who brings healing and health, but that of the forensic pathologist. The victims of these crimes are past saving; no amount of creative exegesis will un-rape Tamar or un-slaughter Jezebel. What a forensic eye contributes is knowledge for the future—a greater understanding of the crimes, in order to prevent their recurrence.

As William Faulkner famously said, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past.”² The most unsettling thing about these “texts of terror” is not that fictional³ women were abused, nor even that an author, thousands of years ago, wanted to write about fictional women being abused. Rather, what unsettles me is that the method of depicting their abuse relied on shared assumptions about women that persist even into the present day. As long as women are still being marginalized, from fleeting

1 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible*, Part 2, 16.

2 William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, 92.

3 I use “fictional” here loosely, of course; a real Queen Jezebel may have existed. Yet even if she did, the stories about her are likely a heavily fictionalized version of whatever her real reign involved.

microaggressions to the epidemic of femicide, it remains crucial to dive into the sordid history of literary violence against women and recover an understanding of its functioning.

I am hardly the first to examine these passages; addressing the Bible's passages of violence against women has long been an interest of feminist biblical scholars.⁴ Yet in all their varied analyses, these prior attempts have not focused on a pervasive metaphor that has been extensively identified outside the Bible: the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD. One reason for prior neglect of this metaphor may be that, unlike other major biblical metaphors (e.g., "God is king"), it rarely appears in linguistic form. In other words, beyond select passages in Song of Songs, women are not directly described as food. But linguistic metaphors are not the only ways that conceptual metaphors can appear in a text. To the contrary, the conceptual metaphor at the center of this study shapes biblical narrative and poetry no less than overt linguistic metaphors. Thus, as an overarching methodological concern, I will address how a conceptual metaphor realizes itself in literary narrative, and produces a "thick description" of how texts manifest its presence.

The significance of these narratively realized metaphors should not be underestimated. As Caitlin Hines has said, "Conceptual metaphors are not arbitrary; indeed, their insidious power hinges on the degree to which they 'make sense.' When a metaphor captures a felt truth, its compelling logic seduces us into accepting unstated conclusions."⁵ In other words, when we can identify a conceptual metaphor at play in multiple narratives, it indicates that the metaphor reflects a "felt truth," one which may have wide-ranging implications. For this reason, I am unconcerned with the distinction between "live" and "dead" metaphors that occupies many metaphor theorists. If anything, "dead" metaphors can have a stronger ultimate impact on our perceptions; as Andrew Goatly has noted:

What is powerful qua metaphor (active and original), thereby becomes more noticeable and debatable and therefore relatively powerless ideologically. What is relatively powerless qua metaphor (inactive or dead)—the literal or the conventionally metaphorical—becomes all the more powerful ideologically through its hidden workings.⁶

This ideological power is my concern. In the chapters that follow, I will demonstrate that all three texts under examination involve literary realizations of the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD. This metaphor's success relies upon its preexisting familiarity to readers, but it also reiterates and enforces itself as "felt truth." As a result, these

4 In addition to Phyllis Trible's foundational *Texts of Terror*, major interlocutors include Mary Bader (*Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible*), Mieke Bal (*Lethal Love*), Cheryl Exum (*Fragmented Women; Plotted, Shot, and Painted*), Tikva Frymer-Kensky (*Reading the Women of the Bible*), Esther Fuchs (*Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative*), Rhiannon Graybill (*Texts After Terror*), and Frank Yamada (*Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*).

5 Caitlin Hines, "Rebaking the Pie," 146.

6 Andrew Goatly, *Washing the Brain*, 29.

texts both assume that women are consumable *and* seek to persuade the reader that women are consumable. By unveiling their underlying metaphor, this monograph seeks to halt that “vicious circle” and expose its functioning.

(b) Overview of Chapters

After this introduction, I begin with a chapter of theoretical background, in which I establish the broad strokes of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), the presence and functioning of narratively realized metaphors, and the history of depicting women as food, both generally and within the Hebrew Bible and ancient Near East. These observations pave the groundwork for the specific case studies that follow.

My main argument consists of three case studies: the Levite’s “concubine” (Judges 19); Tamar and Amnon (2 Sam 13); and the life and death of Jezebel (primarily 1 Kings 21 and 2 Kings 9). These texts have numerous commonalities that make them appropriate to consider together. All three sets of texts depict violence toward a woman as perpetrated by a man; in all three, that violence is one stage of a broader story that results in the deaths of men. All three sets of texts are clearly narrative and prosaic—which differentiates this from most prior research on metaphor in the Bible—but contain significant culinary language. In all three, the woman is literally or metaphorically torn apart. Finally, all three sets of texts allude to the sexual desirability of their woman victim, opening the door for the woman to be culpable for her own assault—a stance that has been argued openly for all three texts. All these features will be addressed in turn.

In Chapter 3, I begin the case studies with the tale of the Levite’s secondary wife (whom I name Tizkoret). I examine her story in the light of two lenses: the analysis of woman as meat by Carol Adams, and the comic book trope “Women in Refrigerators.” Drawing parallels between Tizkoret and the original comic book “woman in a refrigerator,” I argue that she undergoes Adams’ process of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, as the text reduces her to a device that furthers the male plotline. Specifically culinary language contributes to this metaphorical depiction of the women as food.

Chapter 4 moves on to Tamar’s rape by Amnon, where once again culinary language proves to be a major theme of the story. I analyze the language used in the chapter, particularly the term *levivot*, to argue that the narrative reflects the lustful mindset of Amnon as he contemplates his half-sister. Part of this lustful mindset involves the metaphorical comparison of his sister to the food she is making for him, a parallel that plays itself out in their encounter and contributes to her objectification—an objectification that the author ultimately encourages us to question.

In Chapter 5, I turn to the story of Jezebel. I argue that Jezebel’s initial portrayal pushes back against the metaphor of woman as food, depicting her instead as one who (unnaturally) acquires food herself. However, she ultimately undergoes the same steps of Adams’ process in the story of her death, a realized metaphor that is heightened by the specific metaphor of Jezebel as a grapevine in need of pruning. Finally, I pause on the figure of Anat, whose encounter with Aqhat parallels

4 *Amuse-Bouche*

Jezebel's encounter with Naboth, and explore the question of why Anat avoids the narrative backlash that Jezebel receives.

In my conclusion, I return to the problem that I posed in this introduction: How do the processes visible in these biblical texts still persist in modern depictions of women, and how can we resist them? Entire books could be (and have been) written on this question; yet it deserves continuing attention. If biblical women are bones to be fed to dogs, then the process of biblical interpretation empowers us to act as God did in Ezekiel 37: to breathe life and dignity into the bones, so that they live and flourish. This is a bold statement—on par with Eve's remarkable assertion of Cain's co-creation (Gen 4:1)⁷—but not an inaccurate one. Our stories shape us, which is why this exegetical work is so important; yet the power of interpreting those stories ultimately gives us the final word in mediating their impact.

The subject of a forensic pathologist is the dead, but the dissection's conclusions are vital to us, the living. By investigating how and why the biblical text treats women as food, we can understand and thus combat the marginalization of women today.

⁷ Cf. Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible*, 44, for a discussion of this.

2 Stocking the Pantry

Any delicious meal relies on preexisting ingredients, and this book is no different. While a full literature review of either metaphor studies or ancient food studies would be unnecessary (and tedious), my broader argument relies on two claims that cannot be taken for granted. First, I circumvent most of the metaphor work in biblical studies by introducing a specific kind of metaphor: *realized metaphor*, in which the “vehicle” of a metaphor is literally true within a fictional narrative. Second, I argue that the metaphor of *women as food* is far from novel; it persists across time and culture, albeit with varying details, and it was clearly present in the milieu of the biblical author. My discussion of these two realms, metaphor and food symbolism, will provide a theoretical foundation for the three case studies to come. In addition, I conclude the chapter with a reflection on the tension between universalism and contextualization that characterizes my metaphorical–philological approach.

(a) Metaphor in Narrative

Twenty years ago, Paul Werth wrote, “The study of metaphor is, probably, the most venerable topic in the whole of the humanities.”¹ From Aristotle to cutting-edge cognitive linguistics, scholars across time have been fascinated by the human phenomenon wherein we say one thing and mean another. An attempt at a comprehensive overview of metaphor theory would be both inadequate and redundant²—especially as a great deal of metaphor studies are only tangentially relevant to the present study. Instead, I will begin with an overview of the concepts in Lakoff and Johnson’s foundational work and then describe how it can be extended to apply to the realized metaphors that shape the three narratives in this book.

(i) Metaphors We Live By

In the field of metaphor, and especially nonlinguistic metaphor, the impact of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s *Metaphors We Live By* (1980) cannot be

1 Paul Werth, *Text Worlds*, 313.

2 For an overview with a focus on biblical studies, the reader is directed to Andrea Weiss’s “An Introduction to the Study of Metaphor” in *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative*, 1–34.

overstated. Lakoff and Johnson’s central achievement was to transform the metaphor from a figure of speech into a structure of thought. To them, the linguistic expression of a metaphor (e.g., “He shot down all of my arguments”³) is a reflection of a deeper conceptual metaphor—in this case, ARGUMENT IS WAR.⁴ Indeed, they argue, “the human conceptual system is metaphorically structured and defined”⁵; metaphors permeate virtually every aspect of our thought. Each of these metaphors comes with entailments that emphasize certain aspects of concepts while concealing others; for instance, if we focus on ARGUMENT IS WAR, we are less likely to consider the ways that ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, for example, “I *follow* your point, but we *diverge* at this issue.”

These entailments derive from the fact that metaphors ultimately connect “experiential gestalts.”⁶ That is, a metaphor does not merely make observations about concrete points of similarity between two topics: “argument is like war, because it has two parties, and they’re both striving to win.” Rather, the metaphor brings in the full gestalt of experience and knowledge about argument and war, emphasizing the ways in which the two overlap (both involve an initial attack; both can result in victory, loss, truce, or stalemate; both require clever planning for success; etc.) and deemphasizing those elements of the gestalts that do not overlap (for instance, wars result in prisoners and collateral deaths; arguments generally do not). These gestalts grow even more complicated when a given topic is the subject of multiple metaphors, whose entailments may connect in overlapping ways. “Though such metaphors do not provide us with a single consistent concrete image, they are nonetheless coherent and do fit together when there are overlapping entailments, though not otherwise.”⁷

Crucially, Lakoff and Johnson observe that metaphors *shape* thought structures, rather than merely *reflecting* them:

Metaphors may create realities for us, especially social realities. A metaphor may thus be a guide for future action. Such actions will, of course, fit the metaphor. This will, in turn, reinforce the power of the metaphor to make experience coherent. In this sense metaphors can be self-fulfilling prophecies.⁸

Indeed, this aspect of metaphor theory ended up as a primary concern for Lakoff, who wrote several books promoting the importance of conceptual metaphors to political science and worked for a progressive think tank from 2003 to 2008.

3 Example taken from George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4. Note the male pronoun; as Meryl Altman has observed (“How Not to Do Things with Metaphors We Live By”), their examples tend to be imbalanced in gender, using male subjects as the default and female subjects only for specific topics, for example, “She’s just a pretty face” (Lakoff and Johnson, 37).

4 Following Lakoff and Johnson’s example, I use small capital letters to indicate a conceptual metaphor.

5 *Ibid.*, 6.

6 *Ibid.*, 81.

7 *Ibid.*, 105.

8 *Ibid.*, 156.

In what some called the conflicting “worldviews” of liberals and conservatives, he saw the difference of two fundamental conceptual metaphors; both believe that THE COUNTRY IS A FAMILY and GOVERNMENT IS A PARENT, but diverge drastically in the gestalt understanding of parenthood in this context. Their opposing metaphorical entailments both reflect and shape their opposing political beliefs.⁹

Metaphors We Live By is not a perfect work; its treatment of gender is problematic, disability is essentially nonexistent in its discussion of embodied metaphor, and many of its concepts have been expanded or refined in later works by its authors and others. Moreover, linguistic purists have objected that it simply misuses the term “metaphor,” which ought to remain fundamentally a name for a figure of speech. To be sure, Lakoff and Johnson expand the meanings of “metaphor” beyond its historical sense, but they do so in a consistent and coherent way that would feel more clumsy with an entirely different term. For Lakoff and Johnson, and in this work as well, “metaphor” on its own can mean one of two possibilities: either a specific realization of a metaphor, whether linguistic or nonlinguistic (see below on this), *or* a conceptual metaphor present in human thought (represented in SMALL CAPS), which may then manifest in various ways. When there is ambiguity, I refer specifically to linguistic metaphors, nonlinguistic/realized metaphors, or conceptual metaphors.

(ii) *Gender in Metaphor Theory*

*Her goodly eyes lyke Saphyres shining bright,
Her forehead ivory white,
Her cheekes lyke apples which the sun hath rudded,
Her lips lyke cherryes charming men to byte.*

—Edmund Spenser, “Epithalamion”

In 1954, as part of his groundbreaking essay on metaphor, Max Black gave one “straightforward” example of how metaphor is a useful shortcut: “we say ‘cherry lips’, because there is no form of words half as convenient for saying quickly what the lips are like.”¹⁰ One must wonder whether Black would ever ascribe “cherry lips” to an adult man, no matter how plump and reddened the man’s lips might be.¹¹ To borrow Lakoff and Johnson’s categories, the *perceptual* qualities of a cherry are red and round, but its *purposive* quality is to be enticingly edible.¹² To call lips cherries is to designate them for someone’s consumption; and because Black’s assumed subject is male, and his assumed object is female, the prospect of consumption is so natural as to be invisible.

9 See, for example, *Moral Politics: How Liberals and Conservatives Think* (2016) for an overview of this stance.

10 Max Black, “Metaphor,” 280.

11 This strongly gendered tendency reaches all the way back to the origins of “cherry lips” in Renaissance discourse; cf. Armelle Sabatier, *Shakespeare and Visual Culture*, 50.

12 Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 162.

My purpose with this example is to demonstrate that metaphor studies, even when they do not explicitly address gender, nonetheless interact with it. The only question is whether that encounter is deliberate or unintentional. One might defend Black's 1954 essay as a product of its time, but its approach changed little in the decades that followed. In a 2004 article that I will utilize in a later chapter, Zacharias Kotzé provides examples of various manifestations of cognitive metaphors, such as the following metaphors drawing on the source domain "OPPONENT IN A STRUGGLE":

I'm *struggling* with my anger. [ANGER]

I was *seized* by anger. [ANGER]

Anger *yielded* to his anger. [ANGER]

She's *devastating*. [LUST]

She bowled me over. [LUST]

She's dressed to kill. [LUST]¹³

In this selection of metaphors, the bias toward a male heterosexual subject and a female object is transparently clear. This bias has not gone entirely without criticism; as early as 1990, Meryl Altman noted that "those who have this metaphor-generating experience have had the cultural power to impose it on those of us whose physiological experience of sexuality is different."¹⁴

In contrast, positive examples of interaction between gender and metaphor theory are important to highlight. In 1988, shortly after the publication of her groundbreaking work on metaphor theory,¹⁵ Eva Kittay discussed "Woman as Metaphor." Observing the many metaphors where men harness female experience as a metaphor (from Liberty as a woman to the philosopher as midwife), Kittay concludes that "much of the conceptual and experiential organization of men's lives depends on retaining the Otherness of Woman—i.e. her potential as Metaphor."¹⁶ She called for "more general studies of the underlying metaphors employing woman as vehicle" and "studies directed at cultural differences in the symbolic use of Woman,"¹⁷ a call that unfortunately largely went unanswered.

The journal *Semeia* included a special 1993 issue on *Women, War and Metaphor*, whose contents are highly relevant to my discussion; several of the articles will be addressed below. That said, Bal's response at the end of the volume incisively notes that "most papers in this collection select among the terms,"¹⁸ focusing on women and war to the detriment of metaphor, or metaphor and war to the detriment of women. Even the introductory essay, "Metaphor in Feminist Biblical Interpretation:

13 Zacharias Kotzé, "Women, Fire and Dangerous Things in the Hebrew Bible," 244. Note that Kotzé draws these examples from Lakoff's *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, but he does so without criticism, and other examples in his essay primarily reflect a similar viewpoint.

14 Altman, "How Not to Do Things with Metaphors We Live By," 500.

15 Eva Kittay, *Metaphor*.

16 Eva Kittay, "Woman as Metaphor," 80.

17 Ibid, 80.

18 Mieke Bal, "Metaphors He Lives By," 186.

Theoretical Perspectives,” provides an excellent overview of modern metaphor theory, but it rarely extends that theory to focus on gender in particular.

Moving to the twenty-first century, in *Language and Gender* (2003), Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet devote a section to metaphor—both “Sex/gender as the source of metaphor” (such as EARTH IS A MOTHER) and “Sex/gender as the topic of metaphor” (such as SEX IS BASEBALL)—with an excellent overview of the individual studies that have focused on each.¹⁹ They also note the important cross-cultural tendency to diminish women’s capacity as metaphor-makers, which may contribute to the way that, despite the fact that languages are used equally by men and women, most common metaphors reflect the male experience.

While gender has rarely played a key role in biblical examinations of metaphor, Hanne Løland Levinson’s *Silent or Salient Gender* (2008) is a noteworthy exception. Løland Levinson examines the Bible’s metaphors that posit God as a woman, focusing particularly on excerpts from Isaiah that form a fertile ground for such exploration. She asks whether the gender in these metaphors is, to quote her title, silent or salient to the authors’ (and our) understanding of God, and concludes that it is indeed salient; “there is no conceptual difference between male and female god-language in the Hebrew Bible.”²⁰ However, valuable as Løland Levinson’s work undoubtedly is, it follows Kittay by focusing on metaphors where women are the vehicle, not the tenor²¹—that is, her focus is God as a woman, not women as something else. For more on this distinction and its importance, refer to my article “Mind the Gap: Biblical Philology, Gender, and the Two Mothers.”²²

Dozens of other short studies have examined specific instances of interaction between gender and metaphor; several of them will be cited in a later section on the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD. Yet comprehensive work on the way that gender has silently influenced metaphor research still remains to be done. It must also be noted that the above studies were largely rooted in a traditional binary approach to gender—one that views society as divided neatly into men and women, rather than reflecting a diverse range of genders and forms of gender expression.²³ A more modern gender-theoretical approach could look at the places where that binary begins

19 For an overview of the research in the decade after *Language and Gender*, refer to the resources indexed under “Metaphor” in Heiko Motschenbacher, *Interdisciplinary Bibliography on Language, Gender and Sexuality* (2000–2011).

20 Hanne Løland Levinson, *Silent or Salient Gender*, 196.

21 Here, and throughout this monograph, I follow I.A. Richards’ convention of using “tenor” for the subject of a metaphor (i.e., what it “really” signifies) and “vehicle” for the imagery of a metaphor (i.e., how it is described).

22 Esther Brownsmith, 388–98.

23 One welcome exception is Ken Stone’s “Judges 3 and the Queer Hermeneutics of Carnophallogocentrism,” which addresses the “WOMEN ARE ANIMALS” conceptual metaphor from the discerning perspective of queer studies. However, it does so outside the language of conceptual metaphors; the word “metaphor” does not even appear within the article’s text. In contrast, Christopher Meredith’s “‘Eating Sex’” does not deal primarily with ontological metaphors of women, but it makes a fascinating point: when a man “eats” a woman metaphorically, “the woman has penetrated the male lover. His body has become openable and the traditional invasive structures of heteronormative sex have been momentarily reversed” (352). I return to this idea in my conclusion, as it deserves further consideration.

to blur—such as the midwife as metaphor for Plato or YHWH, or the metaphor of men as “beefcakes”—and pursue a queer, trans-inclusive exploration of gender and metaphor. In short, the focus of my research is the use of a specific metaphor for women, but the study of metaphor and gender must not stop with women alone.

(iii) *Metaphor Theory and Biblical Studies*

Like feminist approaches, the study of metaphor in biblical literary texts has been a productive line of inquiry for the past several decades.²⁴ Literally hundreds of books and papers have addressed the use of metaphor within the biblical texts. However, studies of biblical metaphor have most often focused on poetic metaphors for subjects like divinity,²⁵ prophecy,²⁶ and sin.²⁷ Meanwhile, metaphors that lie outside of the scope of the relationship between the deity and the nation, particularly those related to gender, have received comparatively little attention—revealing an implicit bias toward theologically oriented inquiries. (To be fair, this bias extends far beyond the specific field of metaphor theory.)

Yet a further bias is present that makes most existing scholarship on biblical metaphor theory only tangentially related to the present study. Because of the historically narrow definition of “metaphor” to indicate “a word that signifies something other than its ordinary meaning,” the vast majority of scholarship has focused on linguistic metaphors, such as *GOD IS A SHEPHERD*. This is indeed a fertile and important ground for analysis, as the Bible contains many such metaphors—particularly in its poetic sections, where metaphor is a common literary technique. However, it is not the only venue for analysis of conceptual metaphors, as my discussion of “realized metaphors” in the following section will demonstrate.

Thankfully, the field does appear to be broadening in recent years. As one example, Bonnie Howe and Joel Green’s recent collection of essays, *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies* (2014), contains several pieces that deal with

24 A sample of major studies on biblical metaphor includes Peter Macky (*The Centrality of Metaphors to Biblical Thought*), Jill Munro (*Spikenard and Saffron*), David Aaron (*Biblical Ambiguities*), Pierre van Hecke (*Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*), Zacharias Kotzé (“A Cognitive Linguistic Methodology for the Study of Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible”), Ralph Bisschops and James Francis (*Metaphor, Canon, and Community*), and Andrea Weiss (*Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel*). For a very useful attempt to summarize the field, cf. Tina Sherman’s “Biblical Metaphor Annotated Bibliography.”

25 For example, Marc Brettler (*God Is King*), Martin Klingbeil (*Yahweh Fighting from Heaven*), Sarah Dille (*Mixing Metaphors*), Alec Basson (*Divine Metaphors in Selected Hebrew Psalms of Lamentation*), Løland Levinson (*Silent or Salient Gender?*), and Anne Moore (*Moving beyond Symbol and Myth*).

26 For example, Kirsten Nielsen (*There Is Hope for a Tree: The Tree as Metaphor in Isaiah*), Goran Eidevall (*Grapes in the Desert*), John Hill (*Friend or Foe?*), Mary Shields (*Circumscribing the Prostitute*), Øystein Lund (*Way Metaphors and Way Topics in Isaiah 40–55*), Sharon Moughtin-Mumby (*Sexual and Marital Metaphors in Hosea, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel*), and Job Jindo (*Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*).

27 For example, Gary Anderson (*Sin: A History*), Joseph Lam (*Patterns of Sin in the Hebrew Bible*), and Lesley DiFransico (*Washing Away Sin*).

metaphor beyond the simply linguistic. For instance, S.J. Robinette's "Looking beyond the Tree in Jeremiah 17:5–8" reexamines the conceptual metaphors that undergird traditional interpretations of its passage; instead of reading the text through the lens of LIFE IS A JOURNEY OF TWO WAYS, Robinette proposes trust-based guiding conceptual metaphors like TRUST IS A JOURNEY TOWARDS. This interpretation goes, as its title indicates, "beyond the tree" in its discussion of metaphors, revealing "a whole new coherent network of meanings"²⁸ tied to the new guiding metaphors. The study indicates the rich possibilities for exploration "beyond" basic linguistic metaphors.

In the following section, I will give further examples of biblical scholars who have approached metaphor theory beyond a single-minded focus on linguistic metaphors. However, the vast majority of biblical metaphor writings are focused upon questions that are only tangentially relevant for narrative passages such as the ones in this book.

(b) Realized Metaphors

Even outside biblical studies, most metaphor study has been conducted on linguistic metaphor, for example, "My spirits are high today." As Lakoff and Johnson demonstrated in *Metaphors We Live By*, these linguistic metaphors reflect an underlying conceptual metaphor—in this case, HAPPINESS IS UP. But conceptual metaphors can also manifest in nonlinguistic ways, such as visual images, sounds, and narrative elements. It is this last category that most concerns me. When a metaphor is expressed with a vehicle that is literally true within the narrative, it becomes a *realized metaphor*.²⁹ Benjamin Harshav describes this process in the language of semiotics:

Normally, in the metaphor, "my heart is on fire," one may transfer any property or connotation of fire to the "heart" (which is a metonymy for the domain of feelings and emotions), except for one, the existence property: the heart is not really burning. In a realization of the metaphor, it is precisely this property which is transferred: the real heart of flesh and blood (rather than its metonymic domain) is burning.³⁰

In the discussion that follows, I will use several examples to illustrate that this technique, though rarely discussed in such terms, is widespread in literature and worthy of close analysis.

28 S.J. Robinette, "Looking beyond the Tree," 46.

29 As Daniel Erickson explains it, "Here we have an example of what the Russian Formalists labeled 'realization of metaphor': the metaphor's secondary frame of reference is posited as existing within the textual world, where it would usually only be considered present within the reader's imagination" (*Ghosts, Metaphor, and History*, 18). In *Myth, History, and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible*, discussed earlier, Paul Cho frames this technique in terms of Ricoeur's theories of metaphor, which develop from Aristotelian concepts like *muthos* [plot]. When Cho emphasizes that "the *muthos* of a literary work can be a metaphor for the world outside literature" (30), he is referring to the phenomenon of realized metaphors.

30 Benjamin Harshav (Hrushovski), "Poetic Metaphor and Frames of Reference," 35.

In the sentence, “the memories of my father haunt me,” the speaker uses the conceptual metaphor, UNFINISHED BUSINESS IS A GHOST. But in the play *Hamlet*, a literal ghost appears to convict Hamlet of his father’s unfinished business—a *realization* of the metaphor.³¹ Realized metaphors are most common in supernatural or surrealist literary contexts, or in poetry, but they occur in subtler form throughout all literature.³² While realized metaphors have not been studied extensively within ancient Near Eastern literature, numerous examples exist—both of straightforward realized metaphors and of their inversion. For an example of the latter, I turn briefly to the book of Jonah.

A common biblical conceptual metaphor is FAITHFUL BEHAVIOR IS A JOURNEY, which appears in countless linguistic instances.³³ Knowing this metaphor of “following God,” then, an audience would find it perfectly fitting that Jonah disobeyed God’s calling by hopping on a ship and literally traveling in the opposite direction (Jonah 1:3). In this realized metaphor, Jonah is refusing to follow God’s path in the most literal sense, and negative consequences naturally follow.

As this example illustrates, realized metaphors play upon well-established, even “dead,” metaphors; by reflecting a metaphor already established in the audience’s mind, they can make plot elements seem natural and expected. To give another example, a common conceptual metaphor is IMPORTANCE IS SIZE³⁴; we see this metaphor realized in King Saul’s notable height in 1 Samuel 9:2 and 10:23, which seems to mark him as a natural leader.³⁵ But we also see it unexpectedly inverted in the unimposing size of young David,³⁶ and this subverted realization makes a

31 Cf. the discussion in Erickson, *Ghosts, Metaphor, and History*, 2–4 for further interrogation of this specific realized metaphor.

32 For instance, several works look at realized metaphors within Shakespeare’s corpus, albeit not necessarily with that language. Cf. Antonio Barcelona Sánchez, “Metaphorical Models of Romantic Love in *Romeo and Juliet*,” and Donald Freeman, “Catch[ing] the Nearest Way: *Macbeth* and Cognitive Metaphor.”

33 For example, Ps. 119 begins, “Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD.” Occurrences of this metaphor are too frequent to count; Georg Sauer notes that “The expression *hlk ’ah’arē* ‘to follow after’ is immediately and fully comprehensible to Israelites conversant with nomadic life and can consequently be used to describe the totality of the communal and individual life-style” and provides numerous examples. (ךלד, 369).

34 Goatly discusses this at length, summarizing that “Several metaphor themes use size as a source for quality in general, and height as a multivalent source for positive qualities in particular. Four of these, which overlap to a certain extent, are IMPORTANT IS BIG, POWER/CONTROL IS ABOVE, IMPORTANCE/STATUS IS HIGH and ACHIEVEMENT/SUCCESS IS HIGH.” He cites a political candidate whose height was judged to be taller after his successful election (*Washing the Brain*, 35–39).

35 As P. Kyle McCarter Jr. notes, “Saul’s kingly stature is unmistakable, and like his good looks it was a mark of divine favor. Saul literally ‘stands out’ among the people” (1 *Samuel*, 193). Brian R. Doak analyzes Saul’s height in detail, noting that “his height marks him as the clear heroic body for Israel to choose for the tasks at hand” and situating it in his cultural context: “Key examples from the iconography of kingship in Egypt and Mesopotamia suggest that superior height signals the king’s prominence” (*Heroic Bodies in Ancient Israel*, 132).

36 To be fair, David is never described explicitly as short. Yet the absence of comment about his height contrasts with three other notably tall men in his early introduction: Saul (1 Sam 9:2, 10:23), Goliath (1 Sam 17:4), and David’s brother (1 Sam 16:7). Moreover, A. Graeme Auld notes that the language

theological point precisely by defying the standard metaphor: “Popular acclaim of the handsome, towering son of a powerful Benjaminite nobleman is replaced by the free divine selection of a shepherd boy from Judah.”³⁷

The study of realized metaphors in the Bible is not new, but it has not previously been discussed using that language. Of course, it would be absurd to claim that literary critics have somehow overlooked the presence of all nonlinguistic metaphors. Rather, they have tended to identify the metaphorical connection, but call it by another term. For instance, in an insightful discussion of Ruth, Timothy Stone argues that “the symbolic relationship between food and fertility corresponds to the narrative arc of the book.”³⁸ A lack of food and fertility at the book’s beginning is replaced by an abundance of both at the end, emphasized with specific scenes (e.g., Ruth walking home, weighed down with grain and “struggling, like a very pregnant woman, to return to Naomi”).³⁹ But the word “metaphor” appears nowhere in Stone’s article; instead, he speaks of “symbolism” and a “motif” of food. In my view, his argument could be made even more powerfully by viewing the book in the light of the metaphor FERTILITY IS FOOD, as it realizes itself within narrative events.

Likewise, a frequent biblical metaphor compares times of crisis to the pain and uncertainty of a woman in childbirth, as discussed in Claudia Bergmann’s *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis* (2008). This metaphor appears in linguistic form when prophets declare that a nation will experience “pain as of a woman in labor.”⁴⁰ Like any classic linguistic metaphor, the words cannot be taken at face value—the nation is not literally pregnant—and given the frequency of this metaphor, Lakoff and Johnson would likely identify it as a manifestation of the conceptual metaphor CRISIS IS CHILDBIRTH. Yet those linguistic metaphors are not the only appearance of this theme. In 1 Samuel 4, Phinehas’s wife is on the brink of childbirth when Israel goes out to battle the Philistines. Unfortunately, the Israelites are defeated; the Philistines capture the ark of the covenant, and both Phinehas and his father die. When Phinehas’s wife hears this, “her labor pains overwhelm her” (1 Sam 4:19), and she gives birth and dies, leaving behind a son named Ichabod (אִי-כָבוֹד)—“Where Is [God’s] Glory?” Once again, painful childbirth signals national crisis, but in this case, the pregnancy and birth are real aspects of the narrative. Bergmann mentions this story, but describes it as an “idea” that is “taken up” by texts that use the metaphor⁴¹—not as a realized metaphor in itself.

A final and particularly relevant example is Alice Keefe’s article “Rapes of Women/Wars of Men” (1993). Keefe discusses “three biblical stories where the

in David’s battle with Goliath uses wordplay to emphasize how David is “light” (1–2 Samuel, 210), and Saul’s armor is too heavy for David (1 Sam 17:39). The overall implication is that David is of average height and build at best.

37 McCarter Jr., *1 Samuel*, 277.

38 Timothy Stone, “Six Measures of Barley,” 190.

39 Ibid, 198.

40 For example, Isaiah 13:8.

41 Bergmann, *Childbirth as a Metaphor for Crisis*, 82.

violence of rape and of war seem to intertwine and speak each other's meanings,"⁴² arguing that "in this metonymical relation, the violence between victim and rapist signifies broader social dynamics."⁴³ But as Bal notes in her response in the same volume, "Instead of metaphor, Keefe uses the term metonymy, understandably as metonymy connects its two terms through juxtaposition, and the rapes are causally 'juxtaposed' to the ensuing wars. But the meaning she attributes to the connection is metaphoric, not metonymic."⁴⁴ To understand this distinction, we must refer briefly to Roman Jakobson's *Fundamentals of Language*, in which he identified "the metaphoric and metonymic poles,"⁴⁵ which are marked by similarity and contiguity, respectively. That is, a metaphoric comparison is based on similarity, while a metonymic comparison is based on contiguity or proximity. To compare rape to war based on their contiguity might mean, for instance, to depict a rape as one manifestation of broader violence—something contiguous to it. But Keefe argues that "Tamar's violated body, like that of Dinah and the unnamed woman, functions in the narrative as the field of representation upon which brokenness in the order of human relationships and sacred meanings within Israel is made manifest."⁴⁶ In other words, the violation of rape is *like* the brokenness of war, not merely a symptom of it.

As these examples show, the discussion of narratively realized metaphors in the Bible is rich with potential, but still in its infancy. Yet there are examples outside biblical studies for the discussion of this technique. Zoltán Kövecses provides the most systematic overview in his chapter, "Nonlinguistic Realizations of Conceptual Metaphors." Drawing examples from a broad array of media, he argues that

if the conceptual system that governs how we experience the world, how we think, and how we act is partly metaphorical, then the (conceptual) metaphors must be realized not only in language but also in many other areas of human experience.⁴⁷

For instance, in the Disney movie *Pocahontas*, Pocahontas and her lover cascade down a waterfall, manifesting FALLING IN LOVE IS PHYSICAL FALLING. In classic Christian cathedral architecture, the gaze of the viewer is drawn upward, because GOD IS UP. In *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY becomes the basis for the central plot. Metaphors can also influence the interpretation of historical events, such as the "rape" of Kuwait that led to the Gulf War of 1990, by allowing the United States to act out the metaphorical role of savior to a victim. As the diversity of Kövecses' examples illustrates, there is an enormous range of ways that metaphors can be expressed nonlinguistically.

42 Alice Keefe, "Rapes of Women/Wars of Men," 79.

43 Ibid, 83.

44 Mieke Bal, "Metaphors He Lives By," 195.

45 Roman Jakobson, *Fundamentals of Language*, 76.

46 Keefe, "Rapes of Women," 88.

47 Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 106.

Charles Forceville also discusses a number of nonlinguistic metaphors—primarily visual, but some narrative. For instance, he describes one “structurally embedded metaphor”:

Here is a film scene in *Mary Poppins* (Stevenson, USA 1964): Mary, Bert, and the children visit uncle Albert, who whenever he is happy and has fun literally rises to the ceiling and only by thinking of sad things can get himself back on the ground again. The scene exemplifies HAPPY IS UP, evoking connotations that a verbal equivalent (e.g., “Uncle Bert’s spirits *rose*,” see Lakoff & Johnson, 1980: 15) do not—say, of emphatic humor, and of the inevitability and contagiousness of the effect of laughing (the children join Uncle Albert in his laughing bout and can’t help but being lifted to the ceiling, too).⁴⁸

Notably, Forceville draws from the vocabulary of film studies when he notes that for some metaphors, “a source domain emanates from the diegesis itself (i.e., the story world as presented at that very moment).”⁴⁹ Forceville also notes that diegetic cues can strengthen the presence of a realized metaphor. I quote the following example at length, because it is highly relevant to my strategies of extracting realized metaphors from the biblical narrative:

For another example, recall the scene of the first killing in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (Hooper, USA 1974). Kirk has entered the house and sees a metal door in the dark corridor. We hear the sound of what seem to be nervously grunting pigs. Kirk walks toward the door, the film’s killer, Leatherface, suddenly opens it and quickly butchers Kirk, the grunting sound remaining audible. We could construe this sound as the source of the metaphor KIRK IS A PIG, a pig being a prototypically slaughterable animal. It is not clear whether the grunting is a nondiegetic or a diegetic sound. Even though viewers do not see any pigs in the scene, they could well imagine that there are pigs on a Texan farm, and hence that there was a realistically motivated source for the sound. This “naturalizes” the metaphor, which means that the metaphor is probably less salient (and hence more subtle) than when the source domain would have been cued by a transparently nondiegetic sound. Minutes later Kirk’s companion Pam is also caught by Leatherface. He carries her inside while she tramples and screams. If the audience construed, consciously or subconsciously, the metaphor KIRK IS A PIG, it may now interpret Pam’s trampling and screaming, similarly, as the kicking and squealing of a pig. Indeed, Leatherface proceeds by hanging Pam unceremoniously on a metal hook as if she were an animal, thus reinforcing such a metaphorical construal.⁵⁰

48 Charles Forceville, “Metaphor in Pictures and Multimodal Representations,” 463.

49 Ibid, 471. Indeed, as I considered terminology for this work, “diegetic metaphor” was a close runner-up to using the term “realized metaphor.”

50 Ibid, 473.

This example illustrates the nuanced, pervasive way that realized metaphors can shape a narrative. The elements that point us toward the metaphor LEATHERFACE'S VICTIMS ARE PIGS are numerous and multimodal: they include the auditory presence of actual pigs, the "butchering" of characters (pig-like behavior), and the visual cue of hanging on a hook like meat. In the analyses to come, similarly multimodal blended cues will point toward our metaphor of WOMAN IS FOOD.

This example is also useful because it illustrates the difference between realized metaphor and proper allegory. Shelley Chappell outlines this difference in a dissertation discussing the metaphorical aspects of fantastic transformation:

[A]llegory is a less appropriate term for a variety of reasons, beginning with the fact that allegory in general suggests a superimposition which undermines the story-level signification of a work (which I have argued is important in a work of the fantasy genre). Angus Fletcher's characterisation of allegory as something which "says one thing and means another" indicates this erasure (1964, 2), as does Tzvetan Todorov's account of allegory as "a proposition with a double meaning, but whose literal meaning has been entirely effaced" (1980, 62). Accordingly, allegory suggests a deliberate and potentially explicit use of a fantastic motif in order to explore some other meaning.⁵¹

In other words, an allegory "entirely efface[s]" its diegetic reality; *Animal Farm* is not a story about animal husbandry. Although I cited *Pilgrim's Progress* earlier for its reliance on a particular conceptual metaphor, it is ultimately an allegory; no one would read it as a fantastical travelogue. In contrast, in the examples I have used here, the vehicle of the metaphor comprises a narrative element worth examining in its own right, and not merely through what it represents.

A final biblical example will illustrate this: in Judges 15, Samson is denied marriage to a young woman whom he desired, so he decides to take revenge. Catching 300 foxes, he ties them in pairs with a torch in their tails, then releases them to burn down the Philistines' fields and groves. In this story, we can clearly see the influence of the common conceptual metaphor ANGER IS HEAT (which will be discussed further in later chapters), as the burning of Samson's rage manifests in burning fields. Yet Samson's fiery foxes are no mere allegory for his fury; they literally destroy the Philistines' means of production, and the act ignites (pun intended) a series of escalating revenges.

We thus see the complex interaction described by Erickson: "Realized metaphor makes metaphorical substantialization more apparent, by transferring it from a discursive level to the level of story, where the realized entity gives fictional substance to the underlying intangible tenor."⁵² The burning foxes "give fictional substance" to Samson's anger in a way that seems natural and satisfying to the reader. This

51 Shelley Chappell, "Werewolves, Wings, and Other Weird Transformations," 25.

52 Erickson, *Ghosts, Metaphor, and History*, 42.

process occurs throughout the narratives of the Bible, to an extent that has been largely under-examined by scholars.

I conclude this section by turning to a promising new development in this field. One recent book addressed the role of metaphor in biblical texts: Cho's *Myth, History, and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (2019).⁵³ Cho turns to the sea myth in the Hebrew Bible, using the language of Aristotle and Ricoeur to describe how this myth shapes narratives:

Throughout this book, I will argue that, in so far as myth is a story, we can identify the *muthos* of the sea myth, then demonstrate that biblical writers thought of key events in biblical time—(creation,) exodus, exile, and eschaton—as occurring according to the *muthos* of the sea myth, what we will call the sea *muthos*. The writers, it must be believed, attempted to describe real events—in the past, present, and the future—faithfully; but, in so doing, they conceived those events as happening according to a particular *muthos*. This means that they allowed the sea *muthos* to perform the work of filtering and shaping those events. . . . They “saw” the past, the present, and the future “as” the sea *muthos* displays.⁵⁴

This monograph will return later to these special terms, such as “*muthos*” and “seeing as.” In the meantime, the important overarching theme is that this sea myth is metaphorically manifested in the biblical text itself—not primarily through linguistic metaphors (“The Red Sea is the Great Deep”), but through the narrative structure of events. Thus, to take but one of several examples that Cho discusses:

Deutero-Isaiah discovers in history and creation a coordinated analogy, a plot, for deciphering the trajectory of contemporary events. And the plot, perhaps not surprisingly, is the sea *muthos*. The discovery of this hermeneutical key opens for the prophet a window onto a superordinate reality and enables him to see in present historical events in Babylon a glorious future about to unfold: a new exodus and a new creation to come.⁵⁵

In this case, when the prophet writes about the real anguish of historical exile, *reality* is the metaphorical vehicle, and by projecting the cycle of the sea myth onto real events, Deutero-Isaiah could follow the metaphor to its conclusion about how the story would end. Although I have barely touched on the book's many highlights, it

53 Another book that combines metaphor and myth is Marianne Hopman's *Scylla: Myth, Metaphor, Paradox* (2013). While cultural conceptions of Scylla varied and metamorphized over time, Hopman argues that at least in her early forms, Scylla was the embodiment of the conceptual metaphors WOMAN IS SEA/SEA IS WOMAN and WOMAN IS DOG/DOG IS WOMAN. (I include the metaphors in both orders because, according to Hopman, the source and target change places over time.) Scylla was thus a “real” entity and also a realization of a metaphorical “truth.”

54 Cho, *Myth, History, and Metaphor*, 33.

55 *Ibid*, 169.

serves overall as an excellent exploration of how metaphor theory can be applied to situations where a particular *muthos* or “plot” (e.g., Adams’ plot of objectification/fragmentation/consumption) shapes the author’s conception of a broad narrative.

In the next section, I will turn from this broad technique of metaphor to a new, specific metaphor: the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD.

(c) **Woman as Food: A Cross-cultural History**

Other women cloy

The appetites they feed, but she makes hungry

Where most she satisfies.

—Antony and Cleopatra, Act II, Scene II

The fact that women are metaphorically depicted as food hardly needs demonstrating. From colloquial language (women are “tarts” and “pieces of meat”) to restaurant advertisements, women and food are conflated as consumable delights.⁵⁶ Margaret Atwood’s first novel, *The Edible Woman*, culminates in a scene where the protagonist bakes a woman-shaped cake to offer her fiancé as a substitute for herself.

Yet an overview of the evidence is still helpful, for multiple reasons. First, despite the academic discussion of this metaphor in recent decades, a comprehensive review of scholarship does not, to my knowledge, exist. Second, by examining the details of when and how women are compared to food, we can glean more detailed knowledge of its specific features and entailments, which proves very useful for understanding its workings. Finally, a survey of where this metaphor has been studied—by no means solely in English-speaking contexts—can elucidate the “universality” of the metaphor. Put differently, metaphors are a product of culture, and attempts to find universal constants in culture tend to be (rightly) relegated to wishful Frazerian thinking. Nevertheless, certain aspects of existence are inherent to the human brain and body,⁵⁷ leading to metaphors that have been demonstrated to span vastly different cultures, and the more that WOMAN IS FOOD belongs in this

56 For plentiful visual examples, the reader is directed to Sociological Images’ collection of “Gendered Food,” available at www.pinterest.com/socimages/gendered-food/.

57 This is a dangerous statement to make, I am aware. Too often, “the human brain and body” refers to a very specific set of brains and bodies, and any different features—such as being female, disabled, transgender, non-white, or non-Western—are considered aberrations from the implicit norm. I address this problem in three primary ways:

1. Throughout, I remain conscious of this bias and of the fact that past scholarship on “universal traits” may not be truly universal, even within a given culture.
2. I remain aware of how dominant cultures do (and do not) shape language. On the one hand, both women and men generate linguistic innovation, and the general consensus is that women are actually more likely to push forward linguistic evolution (see, e.g., Paola González, “Women and Men Facing Lexical Innovation,” which found women more likely to use neologisms, and William Labov’s classic work, e.g., in *Principles of Linguistic Change, Vol. 2: Social Factors*, which showed that women use innovative language forms more often). On the other hand, even

category, the more safely we can assume that it likely existed in ancient Israelite thought. (More direct evidence for its presence is reserved for a later section.) In the following discussion, I divide evidence for WOMAN IS FOOD into three related metaphor clusters: WOMAN IS DESSERT, WOMAN IS MEAT, and LUST IS HUNGER. I finish the section with an acknowledgment to the intersectional work already done on this topic within Black studies.

(i) WOMAN IS DESSERT: “The Usual Price/For Just One Slice of Your Pie”

The above quote comes from the musical *Les Misérables* (1980), when a would-be customer approaches a woman to pay her for sex. The metaphor comes and goes so quickly that it could almost be called dead; the audience needs no lead-up, no explanation. (After all, as the childhood rhyme goes, girls are made of “sugar and spice and everything nice.”) What is more, the reference is not particularly anachronistic; in a 1788 dictionary of slang, “slice” was defined as “to take a slice; to intrigue, particularly with a married woman, because a slice of a cut loaf is not missed.”⁵⁸ Meanwhile, as recently as 2022, Megan Thee Stallion could sing “I got cake and I know he want a slice” in her collaboration with Dua Lipa, “The Sweetest Pie.” As this persistent metaphor indicates, “although practically all edible substances are used in the conceptualization of women, the sweet group is perhaps the most prolific one.”⁵⁹

Zoltán Kövecses provides a list of examples from English slang: “buttercup; cookie; cream puff; honey; honey-bun; honey-bunny; puff; sugar cookie; sugar; sweet; sweet mama; sweet meat; sweet momma; sweet patootie; sweet stuff; sweet thing; sweetheart; sweets; sweetums.”⁶⁰ Keith Allan and Kate Burridge additionally provide lengthy examples of sweet metaphors for the female genitalia, such as “jelly roll” or “honey pot.” (A panoply of visual examples is also on display in the 2002 music video for “Baby Got Back” by Sir Mix-A-Lot, which intersperses close-ups of the female derriere with suggestively dancing fruit images: apricots, tomatoes, lemons, pears, oranges, and more.) Yet these examples pale in comparison to the “virtual bakery of dessert terms for women”⁶¹ collected by Hines, from “angel cake” to “tootsie roll.”⁶² Clearly, there is no shortage of evidence that sweets are frequently a metaphor for women (and/or the female anatomy).

if women drive linguistic change in general, most published authors historically were male, and thus the body of historical literature reflects their specific worldview.

3. As much as possible, I integrate studies that examine those “aberrant” bodies (particularly female and non-Western) and their modes of thinking.

58 Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 428. The same source also included the definition, “one lying with a woman that has just lain with another man, is said to have a buttered bun” (Ibid, 82).

59 Irene López Rodríguez, “Are Women Really Sweet?,” 182.

60 Zoltán Kövecses, “Metaphor and Ideology in Slang,” 156.

61 Hines, “Rebaking the Pie,” 145.

62 Ibid, 157–58.

Unfortunately, the aforementioned authors often list examples without a thoughtful analysis of their origin. What they do mention without fail is their gendered nature; Kövecses notes that “it is mostly women whose conceptualization as food receives considerable elaboration,”⁶³ while Allan and Burrige state that “for centuries, women have been described as food objects.”⁶⁴ Hines’ analysis is by far the most detailed, aiming “to call attention to the process by which this derogation is accomplished through metaphor.”⁶⁵ She explores the implications and entailments of the metaphor:

As desserts, women can be bought and sold, eaten, elaborately decorated (as in the use of frosting to describe the makeup of beauty pageant contestants), admired for their outward appearance, dismissed as sinful and decadent—or, in the ultimate degradation, simply done without: desserts are optional/inessential, frivolous, perhaps even a waste of time.⁶⁶

López Rodríguez cites much of Hines’ argument, but she adds a cross-cultural analysis, offering plentiful examples from Spanish of women being described as dessert. For instance:

Like in English, the metaphor WOMEN AS DESSERTS has become so successful in the Spanish language that it has generated a metaphorical network. So young women are presented as different types of sweets (*bombón, pastel, bizcocho*) who take on the role of bakers (*pastelera*) to generate children and whose physical appearance when pregnant resembles a chocolate egg (*huevo de chocolate*).⁶⁷

Thị Bích Hợp Nguyễn found similar results in Vietnamese idioms,⁶⁸ while Zouheir Maalej argued that 16 out of 21 analyzed languages used food as a metaphor for women.⁶⁹ As my discussion below will note, women are also portrayed as desserts

63 Kövecses, “Metaphor and Ideology in Slang,” 156.

64 Keith Allan and Kate Burrige, *Forbidden Words*, 194.

65 Hines, “Rebaking the Pie,” 152.

66 *Ibid.*, 148.

67 López Rodríguez, “Are Women Really Sweet?,” 191.

68 Thị Bích Hợp Nguyễn, Conceptual Metaphor ‘WOMAN IS FOOD’ in Vietnamese.”

69 Zouheir Maalej, “Of Animals, Foods, Objects, Plants, and Others,” 3. Unfortunately, Maalej’s analysis is inadequately documented, and the four linguistic “exceptions” are themselves debatable—for example, the claim that French does not depict women as food, to which Tatjana Đurin and Ivan Jovanović offer concrete counterexamples (“Geese, Planks and Sluts,” 85). See also Dakhlouï Faycel, “Food Metaphors in Tunisian Arabic Proverbs,” which cites proverbs like “The woman is like a date, wipe her before eating her” and “The girl is like bran, you press and it overflows”—though Faycel subsumes these examples under the metaphor A HUMAN BEING IS FOOD. Likewise, Lyra Spang analyzes Belizean songs that portray sex(ual organs) as food, but—even though most of the examples concern female bodies—argues that both genders are represented in this way (“Fruits and Culture: A Preliminary Examination of Food-for-sex Metaphors in English-language Caribbean Music”).

in ancient texts from Mesopotamia to the Bible. In the later chapter on Tamar and Amnon, this metaphoric identification will have particular resonance.

(ii) WOMAN IS MEAT: “I’m a Five-star Michelin/A Kobe Flown in”

In the music video accompanying her 2017 song “Bon Appétit,” from which the title of this section comes, Katy Perry wears a flesh-colored costume as she is removed from plastic wrap, massaged with flour, and tipped into a boiling stock pot. The metaphor could not be more clear: Perry is a piece of meat, designated for consumption.⁷⁰ This multimodal metaphor has a storied history. Masculine identity has long been tied to meat consumption; as the satirical book title goes, *Real Men Don’t Eat Quiche*.⁷¹ In turn, the objects of their consumption, women, play the corresponding role of meat.

The identification of women as meat is not a new trend. In the *Deipnosophistai*, a Greek work from the early third century CE, Athenaeus recounts a series of lengthy banquets. Madeleine Henry has analyzed these banquets and concluded that they are replete with “the persistent association of food with women and the likening of women to food”⁷²—and, in particular, meat. For instance, she quotes one example of conflating women and fish:

A devotee of Epicurus calls an eel “Helen” and rips it apart: “When an eel was served, a follower of Epicurus who was among the diners said, ‘The Helen of dinners is here; and so I shall be Paris.’ And before anybody had yet stretched out his hands for the eel, he fell upon it and stripped off the sides, reducing it to just its backbone.”

(7.298d5–e1).⁷³

Elsewhere, a man who falls in love with a female statue copulates with a piece of meat in its place, and a *hetaira* (courtesan) compares herself with a piece of plated lung. In short, “Athenaeus constructs women and food as usable, consumable, and to be enjoyed by men in nearly identical terms.”⁷⁴

70 Worth noting is that Perry may be attempting to subvert this metaphor; at the end of the music video, her would-be diners are tied up and attacked by her army of chefs, and the video ends with a shot of her sitting before a pie containing human limbs. In other words, she insists that she is not just the piece of meat that people assume her to be. Yet this apparently feminist message is belied by the song’s lyrics, in which she is a willing participant in her consumption: “Well I’m open 24 / Wanna keep you satisfied / Customer’s always right.”

71 For evidence of this, cf. C. Wesley Buerkle, “Metrosexuality Can Stuff It: Beef Consumption as (Heteromale) Fortification,” Jeffery Sobal, “Men, Meat, and Marriage: Models of Masculinity,” Hank Rothgerber, “Real Men Don’t Eat (Vegetable) Quiche: Masculinity and the Justification of Meat Consumption,” and Sandra Nakagawa and Chloe Hart, “Where’s the Beef? How Masculinity Exacerbates Gender Disparities in Health Behaviors.”

72 Madeleine Henry, “The Edible Woman,” 255.

73 Ibid, 256.

74 Ibid, 253–54.

Moving forward in the ancient world, Susan Weingarten examines rabbinic passages that metaphorically depict women as food, specifically meat. She points to Talmudic passages such as B^TSanhedrin 39a:

The emperor said to his daughter . . . God should have [created woman] in front of man's eyes. She said to him: Bring me a piece of meat. They brought it to her. She put it under her armpit, then took it out and said to him: Eat it. He replied: It is disgusting. She said to him: So the first man would have been disgusted if [woman] had been created in his presence.⁷⁵

Based on several examples such as this, Weingarten concludes that the rabbis discouraged illicit sex through “the comparisons of woman to raw, bloody and even putrid meat, where blood would be particularly disgusting to their audience because of religious taboo.”⁷⁶

The metaphor continued to resonate in the centuries that followed. For instance, the vegetarian author Samuel Richardson commented that “daughters are chickens brought up for the tables of other men” in his 1748 novel *Clarissa*.⁷⁷ Pornwipa Chaisomkhun has explored Lao country and folk songs for their metaphorical resonances, concluding that “women tend to be compared with foods in Laotian” views⁷⁸—primarily carnivorous food, such as fowls and grilled fish.

However, the premier examples of the tendency to view women as meat come from Carol Adams, who has published multiple volumes on the subject. Her oeuvre begins with 1990's *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, a foundational feminist work that proposed “a theory that traces parallel trajectories: the common oppressions of women and animals, and the problems of metaphor and the absent referent.”⁷⁹ Adams' purpose is double-sided: she seeks to prove that veg*nism⁸⁰ and feminism are motivated by the same oppressions, so the arguments for veg*nism should also encourage us to uplift women, and vice versa. In the process, she demonstrates both the gendered nature of meat consumption and the consumable view of women; “in a patriarchal, meat eating world,” she later

75 Weingarten, “Gynaecophagia,” 367.

76 Ibid, 368.

77 Cf. the analysis of this text in Maud Ellman's *The Hunger Artists*:

By refusing to eat, [Clarissa] is also refusing to *be* eaten, to sacrifice her body to her family's greed. “Daughters are chickens brought up for the tables of other men” (77), James Harlowe sniggers at one point, while Mr. Solmes is ogling Clarissa hungrily; and Lovelace, too, is later branded as a “woman-eater” (1216). Though her family tries to reassure her, saying, “Mr. Solmes will neither eat you, nor drink you” (267), these images sow the suspicion in the text that marriage is a euphemism for gynophagy. Thus it is significant that the men responsible for the destruction of Clarissa suffer from severe dyspepsia, as if they were unable to digest the female flesh that they devour.

(78)

78 Pornwipa Chaisomkhun, “Lao Songs: Worldview from Female and Male Metaphors,” 283.

79 Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 73.

80 Veg*nism is a term that combines vegetarianism and veganism into a single movement that contains a spectrum of behaviors.

wrote, “animals are feminized and sexualized; women are animalized.”⁸¹ Fourteen years later, Adams would publish *The Pornography of Meat*, a book filled with images that reiterated that general point, blurring the distinction between appetizing food and attractive women in both directions.

Adams’ methodology—and specifically her concepts of the “absent referent” and the “objectification/fragmentation/consumption” cycle—will be adopted as a major theoretical lens in this monograph, and I will return to introduce them in more depth in Chapter 3. For now, it is simply worth noting that Adams harnesses a plethora of evidence, from Jack the Ripper to the myth of Zeus and Metis, to argue that women are viewed as meat both in our society and throughout history. In later interviews, Adams utilized the language of Derrida, speaking of the “carnophallogocentric subject,” who “must be repeatedly enacted”⁸²—in layman’s terms, the male meat-eater must constantly assert his dominance over both women and animals. With this focus on male desire, we turn to the third variant of woman as food.

(iii) LUST IS HUNGER: “Mouth Is Alive with Juices Like Wine/And I’m Hungry Like the Wolf”

In 1982, the new wave group Duran Duran released what would become their most famous song, “Hungry Like the Wolf.” In this song, and in the accompanying music video, the group used a ravenous wolf as a metaphor for sexual desire. Their extended metaphor functioned so effectively because it drew upon a long-standing set of conceptual metaphors: LUST IS HUNGER, SEX IS EATING, and (as a result) THE OBJECT OF LUST IS FOOD. Of course, none of these metaphors are inherently gendered—and indeed, when a woman is placed in the position of subject, we see results like Julius Dixson and Beverly Ross’s 1958 “Lollipop,” where the singer’s male beloved is “sweeter than candy on a stick.” Yet these latter metaphors are a small minority; the voices of literature and song are predominantly male, especially in past centuries, and expressions of female sexual desire have frequently been taboo. Thus, in popular media, the conceptual metaphor may be further narrowed: THE (FEMALE) OBJECT OF (MALE) LUST IS FOOD.

Jenny Lawson explores this concept when she argues that “food and women are subjected to what I have termed the hunger gaze—a matrix of ‘looks’ that incorporate erotic, sensorial, pornographic, voyeuristic, and perspectival ways of seeing and desiring.”⁸³ As evidence for the hunger gaze, Lawson focuses on visual media, such as Busby Berkeley’s 1930s films, which “orchestrated [chorus girls] into kaleidoscopic patterns resembling food, female genitalia, and acts of ingestion and intercourse.”⁸⁴ This metaphor of desire is highly gendered: “both men and women desire (hunger for) and ‘watch’ (consume) food and women in media culture.”

81 Carol Adams and Matthew Calarco, “Derrida and *The Sexual Politics of Meat*,” 165.

82 Ibid, 174.

83 Jenny Lawson, “Good Enough to Eat,” online.

84 Ibid.

The same equation of sexual hunger with alimentary hunger appears cross-culturally in a couple of studies. Michele Emanatian examines Chagga, a language of Tanzania, and argues that humans have “by our very nature, a bias toward the use of certain communicative resources in the expression of lustful feelings and in the articulation of attitudes about sex in general.”⁸⁵ Put simply, “the man is the eater and the woman is the food,”⁸⁶ a basic metaphor which Emanatian expands with pages of examples from Chagga, for example, “ngi’kúndimlya,” “I want to eat her,” which means “I want to have intercourse with her.”⁸⁷ After surveying the many ways that this conceptual metaphor appears in English metaphors, as well as metaphors in other cultures like Brazil, Emanatian concludes that “eating is a readily available and useful metaphorical source domain for sex, in part because its *schematic structure is analagous* to one of the common schematizations of sex.”⁸⁸ Yet despite noting the implicitly gendered nature of the metaphor, Emanatian does not speculate upon why women are necessarily the food, beyond noting that it would be of “particular interest” to learn “how women express their feelings in this domain.”⁸⁹ (His Chagga correspondent was apparently male, leaving it unclear whether women would use similar or inverted metaphors.)

In an article 20 years later, Moses Gathigia et al. examined Gikūyū, a language of Kenya, interviewing ten male and ten female speakers of Gikūyū to discover euphemisms used to refer to sex. They found that eating was one of the major metaphorical domains for these euphemisms; whereas metaphors of companionship (“to see each other bodily/physically”) were predominantly used by women, the food metaphors (“to eat food”) were predominantly used by men.⁹⁰ This small body of evidence reiterates the cross-cultural presence of SEX IS EATING metaphors, while suggesting that their presence is predominantly confined to male communication. In other words, women do not envision themselves primarily as the “eaters” in the metaphor.

A survey of very different literature confirms this observation. G. Genevieve Patthey-Chavez et al. examined a number of romance novels written by and for women for their metaphors of sexuality in 1996. When it came to the domain of hunger and food, the gender divide was clear:

Both men and women *hunger* for sex. However, while most of the male protagonists experience this hunger, only three of 16 female protagonists do, and women never consume men. . . . Women are consumed by men and passion and don’t—metaphorically at least—consume a thing.⁹¹

Indeed, the distinction was so consistent that the authors classified these food metaphors under the broader category of “dominion” metaphors.⁹²

85 Emanatian, “Metaphor and the Expression of Emotion,” 164.

86 Ibid, 167.

87 Ibid.

88 Ibid, 178, author’s emphasis.

89 Ibid, 180.

90 Moses Gathigia et al., “Sexual Intercourse Euphemisms in the Gikūyū Language,” 24.

91 G. Genevieve Patthey-Chavez et al., “Watery Passion,” 91–92.

92 Ibid.

Elicer Crespo-Fernández’s more recent exploration of sexual metaphors in internet forums confirmed this metaphorical imbalance. After examining metaphors of food in connection with metaphors of wild animals (a domain which also appeared in the song lyrics beginning this section), he concludes:

[T]he underlying notion of both metaphors is similar: the man as an experienced, active and dominant agent who plays a leading role in the sexual conquest, whereas the woman, either depicted as a prey or as fruit, is the passive element at man’s mercy.⁹³

This conclusion was based on both male and female speech online.

In short, whether men or women are the speakers in question, THE (FEMALE) OBJECT OF (MALE) LUST IS FOOD. This conceptual metaphor is particularly important because it may prove to be the foundation of the other two metaphors we have discussed (WOMEN ARE DESSERT and WOMEN ARE MEAT). However, speculation about how and where these conceptual metaphors arose is ultimately just that: speculation. The important fact is that they have been documented extensively—particularly in the modern English-speaking world, but also elsewhere across times and cultures. We can also construct an incomplete map of the entailments of WOMAN IS FOOD, based on this section’s observations:

Woman	→	Food
Man	→	The eater
Sexual desire (for women)	→	Hunger
Sex	→	Eating
Sexual attractiveness	→	Culinary appeal
Beautification of women	→	Cooking food to appeal
The male gaze	→	The hunger gaze
Distancing referents: girl, wife, slut	→	Distancing referents: hamburger, steak, nugget

(iv) Racialized Metaphor and Pornotroping

Yet women are not the only marginalized group for whom food is a descriptor. People of color frequently receive culinary epithets, from pejorative terms like “Oreo” and “banana” (someone who is “Black or Asian on the outside, but white on the inside”) to the common use of food language, like “chocolate” or “caramel,” to describe non-white skin tones.⁹⁴ Even here, though, the tendency is most pronounced among women. Silke Hackenesch quotes Langston Hughes’ poem “Harlem Sweeties” (which includes descriptions of women like “Walnut tinted/Or cocoa brown,/Pomegranate-lipped/Pride of the town.”), and observes:

This poem contains of [*sic*] a great variety of signifiers to describe skin shades of African-American women. Most of these expressions stem from

93 Elicer Crespo Fernández, *Sex in Language*, 159.

94 Cf. Irene López Rodríguez, “Are We What We Eat?,” especially pp. 20–21.

the realm of food, such as coffee, chocolate, caramel, honey, walnut, ginger, blackberry, and cinnamon, evoking certain smells and tastes that are generally perceived as sweet, juicy, and pleasurable. By citing various spices and sweet treats, Hughes constructs black women not only as highly attractive, beautiful, and desirable, but also as a commodity ready to be consumed and indulged.⁹⁵

Several articles have noted this specific manifestation of depicting Black women as food,⁹⁶ though none (to my knowledge) use the framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory. Yet it should come as no surprise that, if food metaphors are a way to depict humans (per Hackenesch) as “a commodity ready to be consumed,” they are particularly prevalent in depictions of women who are especially targeted for commodification.

Two important monographs have also investigated this phenomenon: Kyla Tompkins’ *Racial Indigestion: Eating Bodies in the 19th Century* and Valérie Loichot’s *The Tropics Bite Back: Culinary Coups in Caribbean Literature*. Both books, in very different ways, study “the edible and delicious black subject,”⁹⁷ arguing that “[t]he edible woman and man become digestible and assimilated in their metaphorical or metonymic association with ingestible products: bananas, sugar, rum, or chocolate.”⁹⁸ In their focus on “edible woman *and man*,” neither book draws upon Carol Adams’s feminist work, nor do they delve into Conceptual Metaphor Theory or other theoretical metaphor frameworks. Nevertheless, they provide abundant and compelling evidence of how metaphorically positioning a person as food—a person usually already situated as a cultural *Other*—has historically been used to contain and dehumanize specific populations. They also reiterate the connection between eating and sexual intercourse—or, as Tompkins puts it, the “mapping of erotic and alimentary pleasure”⁹⁹—that underscores the widespread presence of metaphors linking the objects of sexual gratification (women) with the objects of mastication (food). These monographs also provide a vital corrective to the white feminist assumption that men are always the subject, the empowered agent, of cultural tropes; their ample examples demonstrate the many ways and places that non-white, and particularly Black, men have also experienced cultural objectification.

An even more relevant concept proposed by Black theorists is “pornotroping.” In Hortense Spillers’ influential article, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book,” Spillers situates Black American depictions in the historical violence of enslavement, focusing on the theoretical category of “flesh.” Spillers argues

95 Silke Hackenesch, “‘To Highlight My Beautiful Chocolate Skin’: On the Cultural Politics of the Racialised Epidermis,” 86.

96 For instance, see Fabio Parasecoli, “Bootylicious”; Nickesia S. Gordon, “Discourses of Consumption”; and Kyla Wazana Tompkins, “‘Everything ‘Cept Eat Us.’”

97 Kyla Wazana Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*, 1.

98 Valérie Loichot, *The Tropics Bite Back*, xx.

99 Tompkins, *Racial Indigestion*, 5.

persuasively “that the language of gender, namely the designation ‘woman,’ does not necessarily include Black women,”¹⁰⁰ because enslavement “marked a *theft of the body*,” such that “the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific.”¹⁰¹ In this context, Spillers states that “the captive body translates into a potential for pornotroping.”¹⁰² While Spillers does not elaborate on this term, other Black theorists have expanded upon its significance: “pornotroping is a process of objectification that violently reduces people into commodities while simultaneously rendering them sexually available.”¹⁰³ In other words, pornotroping is the gaze that reduces people into flesh.

Yet despite Spillers’ focus on the ungendering aspects of enslavement, Tamura Lomax hones in on how its perpetrators can include Black male preachers; “Pornotopia in the sermonic moment invokes the gendering of sexual discourse in religious spaces,”¹⁰⁴ reducing women in particular to (licitious) flesh. The connection between *seeing* and *reducing to flesh* made by the concept of pornotroping is a crucial parallel to the process of objectification, dismemberment, and consumption that will be discussed in depth later, and Lomax is correct in identifying it especially (though not solely) with women.

At the same time, though, pornotroping is a concept with a very specific context: the trauma of the Middle Passage and its echoes through American history. As a white scholar of a radically different time and place, I would find it irresponsible to appropriate the term for my own study of the ways that the gaze can objectify. Therefore, while I acknowledge the vitality and relevance of this important work within Black feminist studies, I have largely avoided using the language of pornotroping in this monograph.

(d) “WOMAN IS FOOD” in the Bible and the Ancient Near East

Conceptual metaphors are woven into our fabric of cognition, reappearing in a multiplicity of guises. Thus, it would be difficult to argue that the Deuteronomistic History manifested a certain cognitive metaphor if that metaphor were otherwise absent from biblical discourse. Fortunately, with the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, that is decidedly not the case. Evidence for the metaphor is present in the Bible in several locations, in both linguistic and nonlinguistic forms. The data points are even more abundant in a broader exploration of the ancient Near East. This section therefore has a dual purpose. Primarily, it compiles those data points, which have not previously been brought together in one place, to demonstrate the ongoing presence of this metaphor in ancient Near Eastern thought. In addition, it shows the broad array of contexts in which the metaphor appears—contexts both positive and negative—and therefore outlines its potential and its limitations.

100 Samantha Pinto, “Black Feminist Literacies,” 26.

101 Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 67, emphasis in original.

102 Ibid.

103 Amber Jamilla Musser, *Sensual Excess*, 6.

104 Tamura Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 53.

(i) *“Sweeter than Wine”: The Delicious Shulammitte*

The clearest and richest biblical source for the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD is undoubtedly the Song of Songs. Throughout the book, culinary metaphors abound—and those culinary metaphors predominantly describe the woman. Athalya Brenner analyzes this tendency with a detailed exploration of food-related terms that appear in Song of Songs, in which she lists various semantic domains and then evaluates whether individual instances are male or female related. For instance, “While the male is a ‘cluster of henna’, not an edible substance (1:14), the female is a cluster of dates” (7:8, 9).¹⁰⁵ She finds unequivocal results:

In the metaphorical language of the SoS the male lover eats and drinks his female lover: primary semantic terms denote that precisely, although she may and does taste him also, especially as “wine.” In other words, “he” is the agent of the action; “she” is the object being acted upon. . . . M[ale] is sweet, in an unspecified manner or as a sweet fruit (once) or a good wine. But F[emale] is much more than that: she *is food*, she is a food production location. When she is “sweet”, she is not only fruit but also and specifically “honey.” She is milk and honey, and wheat, and pomegranate, and a garden/orchard, and wine and juice, and a vineyard, and grape-derived dry fruit.¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately, Brenner does not connect this tendency to the known metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD in other cultures, but her survey of the evidence in Song is thorough and clear-cut. Later authors like Patrick Hunt (“The Lovers’ Banquet”), Jill Munro (*Spikenard and Saffron*), and Christopher Meredith (“‘Eating Sex’ and the Unlovely Song of Songs”) further explored this theme. The latter focuses on the aspects of food connected to excrement and putrefaction, reading them as “a wrinkle in the text where we can glimpse a breakdown in the poem’s Arcadian tone.”¹⁰⁷ Notably, although he does not use the language of realized metaphor, Meredith does grapple with the curious situation of a metaphor (eating) that is also real:

Eating is a modality through which sexual intimacy comes into being as a poetic concept in the Song while sex is the poem’s only way of discussing the sensory experiences of eating. Each idea is a re-organized substrate of the other.¹⁰⁸

Meredith’s focus on abjection and putrefaction means that he does not fully explore the significance of reading for realized metaphors, unfortunately.

To list every culinary metaphor for the woman of Song of Songs would be both tedious and redundant, in the light of previously cited scholarship. The sheer frequency of this genre of metaphor is, regardless, notable. Yet one could argue that the fantasy of hedonistic feasting that permeates the Song provides a natural basis for culinary

105 Athalya Brenner, “Food of Love,” 108.

106 Ibid, 108–09, author’s emphasis.

107 Christopher Meredith, “‘Eating Sex,’” 344.

108 Ibid, 347.

metaphors—one that is not necessarily present elsewhere in the Bible. To demonstrate the breadth of the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, then, I turn to other passages.

(ii) Other Biblical Manifestations

This section will provide a brief survey of other biblical passages that compare women to food, whether through direct linguistic metaphor or through other association. In the interest of space, each example will receive little analysis, but their central meanings are relatively indisputable. In addition to the examples here, the reader is directed more broadly to Ken Stone's *Practicing Safer Texts: Food, Sex and Bible in Queer Perspective*. Stone begins by pointing out that "we can best understand the role of food, and the role of sex, when we take seriously the tendency to use food matters and sexual matters as metaphors for one another."¹⁰⁹ He then applies that lens to the Bible, with rich and varied results. The survey here draws from his observations, but adds various examples of my own, in roughly canonical order.

In another article, Stone notes that the comparison of women to animals occurs as early as Genesis 2, where "first animals, and then the woman, are created as companions for the man and named by him."¹¹⁰ Then, when Eve and Adam's consumption of fruit leads to their expulsion from Eden, their culinary misdeed and its sexual consequences (Gen 3:16) are intertwined; Stone argues that "for both the Yahwist and the early Christian readers, then, the story of Adam and Eve was a story 'about' both food and sex."¹¹¹

The tales of the patriarchs continue this association.

The story of Jacob in Genesis sets up a kind of parallel between Jacob's work for Leah and Rachel, who along with their slave women bear Jacob's children, and his work for goats and sheep who produce young animals for him.¹¹²

While the creation narrative links women with animals more broadly, the goats and sheep of Jacob are specifically livestock, animals kept to produce food. Moving further into the Pentateuch, Ronald Veenker argues that food is a metaphor for sex in Exodus 2:

[W]hen Jethro tells his daughters to invite Moses for a meal, more than breaking bread is implied: "And he said to his daughters, 'Now where is he?

109 Ken Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts*, 3.

110 Ken Stone, "Judges 3 and the Queer Hermeneutics of Carnophallogocentrism," 272.

111 Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts*, 44. To be clear, Stone is not arguing that the Yahwist viewed the story (as later Christians would) as a "Fall" in which Eve's misdeed had sexual connotations. (Cf. Gary Anderson's "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden?," which discusses Jewish interpretations that envisioned sexual intimacy while in Eden.) Rather, his analysis centers around the Yahwist's curse of Eve, which endowed her with desire (הַקָּוָה) for her husband, implying that she might thereby be persuaded to endure childbirth. In short, according to Stone, sexual desire was not the *cause* for the expulsion from Eden, but its *consequence*.

112 Stone, "Judges 3 and the Queer Hermeneutics of Carnophallogocentrism," 272.

Why have you left the fellow? Summon him that he might eat bread!” I.e., ‘perhaps we can make a marriage.’ (Exod 2:20).¹¹³

The blurring of food and sex continues in the legal texts, such as Leviticus 20, which begins with sexual proscriptions but shifts to a discussion of food. Stone discusses this juxtaposition and its implications,¹¹⁴ but he does not touch upon their gender dynamic. Namely, those sexual rules are written almost exclusively for men; they almost all begin “if a man” (וְאִישׁ אֶשְׂרֵךְ), even when they punish the woman involved in the act,¹¹⁵ and when they shift to a second-person prohibition, that second person is masculine (e.g., Lev 20:19). By imagining sex as something that a man does to a woman, then paralleling it with food consumption, the metaphor posits women in particular in the role of food.

Further in the biblical narrative, Nathan’s parable in 2 Samuel 12 clearly imagines a woman (Bathsheba) as food. Specifically, the allegory represents Bathsheba as a female lamb (כִּבְשֵׂה) who is prepared as a meal for a rich man’s guests (2 Sam 12:3). This allegory seems to reflect the broader narrative associations of Bathsheba, for when David invited Uriah to visit Bathsheba, Uriah responded in 2 Sam 11:11, “Should I go to my house to eat and drink and sleep with my wife?” (וְאֲנִי אָבוֹא אֶל-בֵּיתִי לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׁכַּב עִם-אִשְׁתִּי). Consuming food and enjoying his wife are parallel activities.

The associations between women and food continue in the prophets. In Amos 4:1, upper-class women are described as “cows of Bashan” (a fertile region for livestock); as punishment for their excessive lifestyle, these “cows” will be led away, apparently to the slaughter.¹¹⁶ In Hosea 2, the prophet represents Israel as a fecund but unfaithful woman; YHWH threatens, “I will devastate her grapevines and her fig trees” (וְהַשְׁמַתִּי גִפְנֶיהָ וְיַעֲנָתֶיהָ, Hos 2:14), then later promises at their reconciliation, “I will give her vineyards to her” (וְנָתַתִּי לָהּ אֶת-כַּרְמֶיהָ, Hos. 2:17). More broadly, the prophetic image of “Israel as (female) vineyard” appears in multiple places (e.g., Jer 2:21, Ezek 15, and Isa 5), and I will return to it in Chapter 5.

113 Ronald Veenker, “Forbidden Fruit,” 65 n. 34.

114 Stone, *Practicing Safer Texts*, 46–50.

115 The only exception is the prohibition against a woman having sex with an animal (Lev 20:16), which begins “if a woman . . .” (וְאִשָּׁה אֶשְׂרֵךְ). The gender variation in this verse is fascinating, because “animal” (בְּהֵמָה) is grammatically feminine, so the language technically proscribes a woman approaching an animal “to have sex with her” (לְרַבְּעָה אִתָּהּ). However, the punishment (“they shall be put to death; their blood is upon them,” יוּמָתוּ דְמֵיהֶם בָּם) uses the masculine plural to describe the woman and animal together. From this latter, it is fair to assume that the author conceived of a male animal, and thus a definition of sex that still centered around penile penetration. (This definition explains why the Hebrew Bible contains no mention of, let alone prohibition of, sexual contact between women.) Thus, the reason for this exceptional verse is that it involved an otherwise impossible situation: sexual contact without a (human) male involved.

116 The exact nature of their punishment is unclear: “וְנִשְׂאָ אֶתְכֶם בְּצַנּוֹת” (Amos 4:2), but the meaning of צַנּוֹת is disputed; it may mean thorns or hooks, used as goads for cattle, or baskets, used to carry the slaughtered meat. Cf. Francis Andersen and David Noel Freedman, *Amos*, 421–22.

Finally, the book of Proverbs contains such rich associations between women and food that it is surprising that it has not received a focused study on the topic. Proverbs 5 compares a woman’s words to foodstuffs:

Prov 5:3–4

<p>For the lips of the illicit woman drip syrup, and her mouth is smoother than oil. Yet in the end, she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a double-edged sword.</p>	<p>כִּי נִפְתַּת תִּטְפְּנָה שְׂפֵתַי זָרָה וְחֶלֶק מִשְׁמֶן חֶפְזָה: וְאַחֲרֵי־כֵן מְרָה כִלְעָנָה חֲדָה כְּחֶרֶב פִּיּוֹת:</p>
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Later in the same chapter, sex with women is described as consuming water (or perhaps, in verse 19, something stronger than water!) in an extended metaphor.

Prov 5:15, 18–19

<p>Drink water from your own cistern, gushing water from your own well. [. . .]¹¹⁷ Let your fountain be blessed: delight in the wife of your youth, a loving doe, a graceful ibex. May her breasts quench your thirst at all times; may you always be tipsy with her love.</p>	<p>שְׁתֵּה-מַיִם מִבּוֹרְךָ וְנַזְלִים מִתּוֹךְ בְּאֵרְךָ: [. . .] יְהִי־מְקוֹרְךָ בְרוּךְ וּשְׂמַח מֵאִשָּׁת נְעוּרֶיךָ: אֵילַת אֲהָבִים וַיַּעֲלֵת־חַן דְּדָיֶיהָ יִרְוֶךָ בְּכָל-עֵת בְּאַהֲבָתָהּ תִּשְׂגָּה תָּמִיד:</p>
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The same metaphor of drinking is joined by a metaphor of eating in Prov 9. The passage begins with a personified Lady Wisdom inviting guests to a feast: “Come, feed on my food/bread, and drink the wine I have mixed!” (לָכוּ לִחְמוּ בִלְחָמִי וּשְׂתוּ בַיַּיִן מִסְכָּתִי) In contrast, Lady Folly encourages illicit, presumably sexual, encounters with a parallel invitation: “Stolen water is sweet, and furtive bread is delicious!” (מַיִם-גְּנוּבִים יִמְתְּקוּ וְלֶחֶם סְתָרִים יִנְעָם)

In addition to these images of consumed women, Proverbs depicts the “dangerous woman” as one who consumes men as food, hunting them down as prey. (This “mirror image” will become crucial in Chapter 5.) Several passages allude to this metaphor:

<p>Prov 6:26 For a prostitute is worth a loaf of bread, but a man’s wife goes hunting for precious life.</p>	<p>כִּי בַעֲדֵ-אִשָּׁה זֹנֶה עַד-כֹּפֶר לָחֶם וְאִשָּׁת אִישׁ נֹכֵשׁ קָרָה תְּצוּד:</p>
<p>Prov 7:22a He follows her automatically, like an ox goes to the slaughter.¹¹⁸</p>	<p>הוֹלֵךְ אַחֲרֶיהָ פְּתָאֵם כְּשׂוֹר אֶל-טֹבַח יָבוֹא</p>

117 Here I omit vv.16–17, partly for the purposes of space, and partly because v.16 poses a significant problem for interpreters, as it seems to contradict the rest of the passage and encourage metaphorical promiscuity. Recognizing that commentators since antiquity have resolved this problem in various ways, I do not believe it detracts from the broader metaphor of the passage.

118 The final clause of this verse *may* continue the metaphor with a stag running into a trap—cf. the NRSV and Richard Clifford, *Proverbs*, 89–90—but all three of its words are questionable, so I omit it from this discussion.

<p>Prov 22:14 The mouth of the strange woman is a deep trapper's pit; the man cursed by YHWH falls into it.</p>	<p>שוֹחֵה עֲמֻקָּה פִּי זָרוֹת זַעֲוֵם יִהְיֶה יְפוֹל־שָׁם:</p>
<p>Prov 30:20 Such is the way of the adulteress: she eats, wipes her mouth, and says, "I did nothing wrong."</p>	<p>כּוֹ דֶרֶךְ אִשָּׁה מְנַאֲפֶת אָכְלָה וּמָחְתָּה פִּיהָ וְאָמְרָה לֹא־פָעַלְתִּי אָוֹן:</p>

All four of these verses are variants on similar imagery: the Bad Woman (whether an אִשָּׁה זָרוֹת, a זָרוּה, or an אִשָּׁה מְנַאֲפֶת) is a hunter, a carnivorous eater, and men are her prey. Proverbs is rife with binary contrasts, and here, these images are effective precisely because they contrast with the standard metaphor of women as food: the strange/adulterous/whorish woman is bad because she consumes instead of being consumed.

Two last examples come from the Apocrypha. In both the story of Susanna and the story of Judith, consumption of food is intertwined with sexual access to their female protagonist. In Susanna, the two wicked elders discover their shared lust for Susanna when they declare it mealtime, but both secretly turn back to return to the house (Dan 13:13–14). The garden where they approach her is also a classic site of culinary abundance. Later, in her trial, they demand her unveiled, “in order to satiate themselves on her beauty” (Dan 13:32, ἵνα ἐμπλησθῶσι κάλλους ἐπιθυμίας αὐτῆς). Lustful visual consumption is described metaphorically as culinary satiation.

Likewise, when the text introduces Judith, we immediately learn two facts about her: she fasts constantly, and she is very beautiful (Judith 8:6–7). In other words, the good and desirable woman does not consume. (Proverbs would approve.) The not-eating continues when Judith goes to Holofernes' camp and refuses to consume the feast that he offers her, sustaining herself on her modest, vegetarian rations (Judith 12:1–2). But the mixture of food and sexuality reaches its peak the following day, when Judith is invited again to feast with Holofernes, and we see a “confusion of food, sex and death.”¹¹⁹ She responds with an innuendo-laden offer: “Who am I to refuse my lord? Indeed, whatever pleases him, I will hasten to do, and it will be a delight to me until I die!” (Judith 12:14) She joins him in his tent, and her offer is clear: just as they will consume food, he will have the opportunity to consume her sexually.¹²⁰

There are surely other examples of women as food in the Bible, but this overview, particularly concentrating on narrative texts, makes it clear that biblical

119 Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 215.

120 In a moment of irony, Judith and her servant bring back Holofernes' head in their food bag (Judith 13:10). For a moment, it seems that Proverbs was right: the dangerous woman does turn men into food. Yet because the omniscient readers know that Judith always followed the rules—only eating her own food, avoiding sexual contact with Holofernes—Judith escapes a negative evaluation. That said, cf. Caryn Tamber-Rosenau's *Women in Drag* for a discussion of how her positive depiction is more nuanced than it may seem.

readers were well accustomed to equating the two. As a side note, two important female biblical images are also possibly related: the nursing mother, who feeds her baby from her bosom, and the female hostess who, like Lady Wisdom or Abigail, provides food for her guests. Both of these images involve feeding from women; however, as they do not conceptualize the woman herself as food, they remain unexamined here.¹²¹

(iii) Elsewhere in the Ancient World

Outside the Bible, in the ancient Near East, culinary metaphors for women abound in the linguistic realm—particularly metaphors of sweetness and fruit. For instance, in an Old Babylonian love poem, the male lover describes his beloved: “Like honey, she is sweet to the nose; like wine, [her] mood is fruity freshness.”¹²² A song to Ishtar declares “for my husband, I am laden like a grapevine.”¹²³ Indeed, one of the common Akkadian terms for sexual attractiveness, *inbu*, literally means “fruit,”¹²⁴ a metaphor so pervasive as to be “dead.” A forthcoming article by Christie Carr analyzes the metaphor of LUST IS HUNGER in depth within the Sumerian corpus, focusing particularly on the term **h i—l i**, which intertwines the senses of sexual and gastronomic satiation.¹²⁵

But for an example of the metaphor realized in narrative, I turn to a portion of the Ugaritic text KTU 1.23, the so-called Feast of the Goodly Gods.¹²⁶ The god Ilu has been walking on the beach when he encounters two women and is aroused by their behavior.¹²⁷ In response, he engages in some curious archery and cookery.

121 For an alternative perspective, cf. Sara Cohen Shabot, “Edible Mothers, Edible Others: On Breastfeeding as Ambiguity,” who does identify the breastfeeding mother as a type of edible woman. To my knowledge, this perspective has not been brought to the various occurrences of breastfeeding, real and metaphorical, within the Bible, but cf. the discussion of the relationship between breastfeeding and mutual identity in Cynthia Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 125–49.

122 CUSAS 10 8:7–9: *ki-ma di-iš-pi-im ʾa-ba-at a-na ap!-pi-i-im ki-ma ka-ra-nim eš-ši-et in-bi ka-ab-ta-tu*. Of the latter line, Andrew George notes: “just as wine’s ripe fruitiness makes it good to drink, so the girl’s newly mature ‘fruits’ create around her an irresistible sexual allure. Fruit and gardens are stock metaphors for genitals, sexual attraction and desire in Babylonian and other ancient Near Eastern love poetry” (*Babylonian Literary Texts in the Schoyen Collection*, 52).

123 TCL 15 16:46: *ana ha-ri-iá ki-ma ka-ra-nu til-la-<ti> ma-la-ku*.

124 Cf. the many examples in CAD I-J.144–147. Note, however, that there are examples of *inbu* that apply to both women and men; it does not appear to be a strongly gendered metaphor.

125 Carr, “Desire and Hunger; Women and Food.”

126 The lengthiest discussion of this text is Mark Smith, *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods*, but see also Jo Ann Scurlock, “Death and the Maidens,” and Dennis Pardee, “Dawn and Dusk.”

127 The exact nature of that behavior is unclear and much debated. The women are called *mšt ltm*, a word for which various etymologies have been proposed (cf. Smith, *Rituals and Myths*, 74ff, for an overview). I concur with Pardee, who reads it as a Št participle of the verb *ly*, but come to a different conclusion of its sense: as he notes, the Š of *ly* can mean “to mount sexually,” so the reflexive participle could mean “women who mount each other sexually.” The rest of their actions align with this meaning: Ilu watches as they move up and down, “head to ‘basin’” (*l riš. ágn*). After witnessing their mutual oral sex, Ilu’s arousal is immediate.

KTU 1.23.37–39

Ilu has pulled out his “staff”; Ilu has palmed the “rod” with his hand. Raising it, he shoots skyward: he has shot a bird from the sky! Plucking it, he puts it on the embers: in this way, Ilu seduces ¹²⁸ the women.	il. ḫṯh. nḫt il. ymnn. mṯ. ydh yšū. yr. šmmh yr. b šmm. ‘šr yḫrṯ yšt. l pḥm il. āṯtm. k ypt
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When Ilu aims his “staff” at the sky to shoot down a bird, plucks it, and eats it, the actions are both narrative and metaphorical; he is showing the women an innuendo-laden metaphor of what he wishes to do to them. In short, the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD was well-known to the ancient Levantine mind, and we see it manifested both linguistically and in narrative realization.¹²⁹

(e) **What Conclusions Can Be Drawn?**

This monograph draws from a number of different biblical hermeneutics: historical-critical, philological, literary, sociological, gender, reception-historical, and more. With so many different approaches involved, I risk the accusation of picking and choosing methods in order to get my desired results. However, all these methods are ultimately in service to a deceptively simple question: What did the texts mean? In order to answer this question, we must both designate a context—what did they mean *to whom?*—and expand our definition of “meaning” to include both intentional and unintentional content. In short, I aim to produce a *thick description* of the text—one which describes not merely the data being communicated, but the nuances, shared knowledge, and cultural milieu that shape the semiotic significance of that data. The goal of producing “symmetrical crystals of

128 “The use of *pt(y)* here, if correctly analyzed as cognate with Heb. *pth*, denotes the act of a male convincing a woman to engage in sexual activity” (Pardee, “Dawn and Dusk”). Cf. Smith, *Rituals and Myths*, 85ff, for a summary of various analyses of this passage, which are “quite divided” between assuming metaphorical sexual activity and assuming literal preparation of a ritual aphrodisiac. Reading the passage as a realized metaphor, of course, the answer is “both/and”: it is a description of both narrative action *and* metaphorical eroticism.

129 Though this monograph does not primarily deal with Greco-Roman culture, one other ancient specific parallel is worth noting. In the chapter “‘Her Viscera Leapt Out’ (Leucippe and Clitophon 3.15),” Meredith Warren discusses the slaughter and consumption of women in Greek fiction—whether real or, more often, only apparent. These women are notable for the description, often immediately before their sacrifice, of their “divine beauty.” Warren argues that this beauty is an indicator of their identification with the goddess to whom they are sacrificed: “antagonism, radiant beauty, and death intersect to identify the heroines with divinity” (*My Flesh Is Meat Indeed*, 182). Thus, “because they are killed and consumed in the narrative world, they become (and have always been) the deities we always suspected them to be” (186). Warren notes but does not discuss the significance of the difference between “the death of the hero” and “the apparent death *and cannibalization* of the heroines” (185, my emphasis). In other words, the beautiful (thus objectified) women are consumed narratively in a way that their male counterparts are not.

significance, purified of the material complexity in which they were located”¹³⁰ is a fallacy.

The question of context is one that has been amply discussed. Sheldon Pollock eloquently addresses it in a 2014 article where he proposes three “dimensions” or “planes” of analysis: historicism, the attempt to find the text’s original authorial meaning; traditionism, the exploration of the text’s interpretation through history; and presentism, the effort to interpret the text through a modern and necessarily idiosyncratic lens. In the process, Pollock rejects “the belief that these truths are mutually exclusive—indeed, that two of them are not even truths at all.”¹³¹ Philology, he argues, can and should act on all three planes, so they can temper each other’s flaws and share each other’s virtues.¹³² What this means in practice is that, on the one hand, the meaning of a text as understood by its author is distinct from, but not inherently privileged over, the text’s meaning as understood by later redactors or readers.

On the other hand, the interpreter cannot, in Susan Ackerman’s words, “succumb to literary nihilism.” As she continues,

This means that, while I will not assume a historical reality for any of the stories or characters I will be discussing, I do believe it is crucial to assume a historical reality for the authors who wrote these stories and for the audience for whom these authors wrote. I further believe it is crucial to assume that this historical reality matters, that the biblical authors shaped their stories about various “types” of women in a certain way and that the biblical redactors preserved certain versions of tales about women because these narratives somehow “worked” within the context—the mind-set and the worldview—of the authors’ and redactors’ day.¹³³

Of course, the line between authors and redactors, where the Bible is concerned, is an imprecise distinction indeed, which is why I tend to work with the text in its final canonized form; this approach has the virtue of providing something concrete to work with, instead of a necessarily uncertain reconstruction. Regardless, the historical “dimension” of philology is a significant one, and I will primarily be focusing upon it, with a secondary focus on how ancient and medieval interpreters understood the texts. Pollock’s third dimension—what the text means to us today—will largely be set aside for other interpreters, beyond a nod in my conclusion.

It may seem to counter this emphasis on historical philology and thick description when, in order to interpret my historical texts, I bring to bear a number of approaches that were not originally focused on ancient texts, such as modern sociological studies and methods of literary criticism. To be fair, biblical interpreters

130 Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description,” 318.

131 Sheldon Pollock, “Philology in Three Dimensions,” 401.

132 Ibid, 411.

133 Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer*, 14–15.

have been adapting the methods of the humanities long before I came along, even when the “fit” between text and hermeneutic was shaky indeed. But as a more serious defense, I fall back on the same belief that undergirds Lakoff and Johnson’s attempts to find the logic behind apparently universal metaphors like *ANGER IS FIRE*. Ultimately, although humans come in a vast array of bodies and minds, our physical and mental composition leads us along similar paths to similar conclusions. Not everything is a universal constant—hence the need for thick description—but certain fundamental reactions, for example, the desire for “just desserts” as punishment for injustice (cf. Chapter 5), are innate. Likewise, cross-cultural comparisons of metaphors have demonstrated that some metaphors vary radically between different cultural contexts, but others recur again and again, because they draw on the fundamental aspects of the human experience.

There is a tension here, certainly: the classic humanities tension between universalism and relativism. Delving into the specific nuances of an alien text, as shaped by its place and time, is invaluable for understanding its meaning; at the same time, our interest in understanding that text is affectively fueled by the belief that at some fundamental level, it describes the same human behavior that we ourselves engage in. But that affective goal must always be tempered by a deep awareness of the text’s alienness. As one very pertinent example, I have until now used the metaphor *WOMAN IS FOOD* as if the meanings of “woman” and “food” were self-evident and universal. In truth, neither is the case.

To begin with, it is almost a cliché among feminist historians to acknowledge that the meaning of “woman” is no timeless constant. To the contrary, virtually every aspect of it has varied historically. This is one of the chief points of Judith Butler’s classic *Gender Trouble*: that “it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.”¹³⁴ Moreover, modern attempts to define womanhood in a specific and universal way are frequently employed to deny womanhood to those who do not embody it “correctly,” such as masculine women or trans women, and I emphatically wish to distance myself from those attempts. I embrace an inclusive feminism, “an open assemblage that permits of multiple convergences and divergences without obedience to a normative telos of definitional closure.”¹³⁵ Anything less risks doing violence to the already marginalized.

For the purposes of this project, then, I will not attempt to restrict what “woman” means, even as I use the term throughout this monograph. Truthfully, the question of *who* “counts” as a woman is tangential to the question of *what* societies associate with womanhood. Someone male, like Saul, could be textually criticized through association with the feminine (cf. Section 6.b); someone female whose actions defied appropriate female behavior, like Deborah, could take refuge by cloaking herself in a label of femininity.¹³⁶ Therefore, when I state that both ancient

134 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 4.

135 *Ibid.*, 22.

136 Cf. Tamber-Rosenau, *Women in Drag*.

and modern cultures reinscribe the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, I am making a claim about the associations attached to the metamorphic assemblage of womanhood, not about the identities of women.

At first, “food” seems like a more stable and self-evident category. But here, too, the term is culturally conditioned. Where, for instance, does *treif* (a Yiddish variation on Hebrew טריף) fit in? It provides nutriment to the human body, but it makes a person unclean and is not designated for consumption. And what of the grain, meat, and other edible substances that were offered on the altar to be burned? Is a sacrifice a type of food, or a separate category of edible object?¹³⁷ These distinctions have repercussions beyond the semantic. For instance, if *treif* is not truly food, then does Jezebel’s dog-torn body really evoke the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD? Perhaps the metaphor only fits when we squeeze ancient Israelite categories of edible substances into a single monolith of “food.”

A careful linguistic exploration of “food” in the Hebrew Bible as a semantic category would certainly be a desideratum, but it will have to wait for a space beyond this monograph.¹³⁸ In the meantime, I define it for my purposes as *objects ingested for the purpose of nutriment*. This is a teleological definition, but not a species-specific one. In other words, bones may be waste in some cultures and food in others. A dead body may be a corpse to humans but food to dogs. Regardless, by defining food in terms of its *telos*, I point toward the cycle of consumption that is central to my argument. Women are metaphorically positioned as food whenever they are consumed (ingested) to provide nourishment (nutriment) to another.

With these preliminaries out of the way, I can finally turn to concrete case studies. I begin not with the Bible itself, but with a modern comic book: the *Green Lantern* series. My anachronistic comparison is not intended to undo the careful work of this section by suggesting that twentieth-century superheroes inhabit the same world as biblical maidens. Rather, the pop-cultural comparison provides a concrete and incisive example of how portraying women as food can be rhetorically devastating. Drawing a parallel with it helps underline the less overt (but no less devastating) techniques in the biblical text.

137 This question, of course, assumes that the distinction between sacrifice and non-sacrificial food is self-evident, which is itself not a given. Cf. Annette Yoshiko Reed, “From Sacrifice to the Slaughterhouse,” Susan Pattie, “This Is Not a Sacrifice,” and my own discussion in Section 3.e.ii. See also Kathryn McClymond, “Death Be Not Proud,” for an argument from Vedic texts that it is in fact culinary procedures, not killing, that defines Vedic sacrifice.

138 There is a growing body of examinations of food in the Hebrew Bible, such as Nathan MacDonald (*Not Bread Alone*), Cynthia Shafer-Elliott (*Food in Ancient Judah*), and the recent, comprehensive *T&T Clark Handbook of Food in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel*. However, these examinations have generally focused on an anthropological or theological perspective, rather than a semantic conceptual analysis.

3 The Woman in the Refrigerator

Consumption and Objectification in Judges 19

When we first meet Alex DeWitt,¹ the girlfriend of the superhero Green Lantern, she is a nameless woman in a bikini. She looks directly at the reader, leaning forward to put her ample bosom on display. Soon, she will be assaulted, dismembered, and left in a refrigerator by the villain Major Force. Her story would provide the name for a pattern observed by writer Gail Simone: “women in refrigerators,” a term for female comic book characters whose violent death or injury served primarily as plot motivation for male characters.²

Although its name is less than two decades old, the trend is hardly new. Thousands of years earlier, the author of Judges 19 described the similar rape, death, and dismemberment of a woman in a brutal passage that has both repelled and intrigued Bible readers ever since.³ Unlike the characterization of their female characters, the narrative and symbolic parallels between these passages go beyond skin-deep. Analyzing Judges 19 through the lens of consumption and objectification illuminated by comics’ “women in refrigerators” reveals an extended metaphor that explains both some unusual details of the passage and its visceral effect on readers throughout history.

In particular, this analysis answers an ongoing source of fierce debate between feminist and non-feminist exegetes of Judges 19. No one defends the act of gang-raping a woman to death, of course, but many classic feminist readings go further and reprimand the text’s *author* for his⁴ misogynistic behavior. For instance, Phyllis Trible famously lamented,

Of all the characters in scripture, she is the least. Appearing at the beginning and close of a story that rapes her, she is alone in a world of men. Neither the

1 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #48.

2 Cf. “Women in Refrigerators,” the website created by Simone.

3 Major critical commentaries on the text include Robert Boling (*Judges*), Marc Brettler (*The Book of Judges*), Trent Butler (*Judges*), Carl Keil and Franz Delitzsch (*Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*), George Moore (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*), Richard Nelson (*Judges*), Susan Niditch (*Judges*), Tammi Schneider (*Judges*), J. Alberto Soggin (*Judges: A Commentary, OTL*), and Barry Webb (*The Book of the Judges*).

4 I assume a male author here, but more importantly, I assume an androcentric author, to borrow Cheryl Exum’s language. “I view women in the biblical literature as male constructs—that is to say, they are the creations of androcentric (probably male) narrators, they reflect androcentric ideas

other characters nor the narrator recognizes her humanity. She is property, object, tool, and literary device.⁵

In a similar vein, Cheryl Exum calls her “raped by the pen,” arguing that “these literary rapes perpetuate ways of looking at women that encourage objectification and violence.”⁶ Anne Tapp is unequivocal in her condemnation: “The ideologies expressed through these fabulae are both degrading and deadly for women.”⁷

Conversely, mainstream male critics like Jan Fokkelman respond that Tribble “makes a serious misjudgment in this case.”⁸ To the contrary, Douglas Lawrie argues, “The view that the author shows no concern for the concubine in chapter 19 . . . is untenable from a literary perspective.”⁹ As Trent Butler summarizes, “The narrative does not justify the rape and dismemberment of the woman. Rather it condemns such activity and uses it to show the sordid nature and value system rampant in Israel.”¹⁰ So are feminist critics wrong to be outraged by the text itself? Is it instead a sobering depiction of events that it virtuously condemns?¹¹ Answers to these questions have a tendency to collapse into unprovable debates about authorial intent or readers’ response.

Rather than arguing whether the narrator’s response to the violence is repulsed, gleeful, or neutral, this chapter will argue that the narrative itself relies upon and perpetrates a particular metaphor about women. To read and understand the text is, at least provisionally, to accept this metaphor—and thereby to participate in the marginalization of the metaphor’s tenor. This concept is plain in fiction whose metaphors are more overt; for instance, a story that depicted the police as pigs would clearly be promoting a message about police officers in general. The metaphor in Judges 19 is less overt, but no less problematic.

For this reason and others, I have intertwined the stories of Alex DeWitt and the woman of Judges 19 in this chapter. This move deliberately desecralizes the biblical text, allowing us to shift from questions of “why would Scripture depict this?” or “what is the theological moral?” to the same neutral literary analysis that we apply to secular literature. Moreover, it viscerally demonstrates the timelessness of

about women, and they serve androcentric interests” (Exum, “Feminist Criticism,” 69). Even if the author is a woman, she still serves those androcentric interests.

5 Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 80.

6 Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 170.

7 Anne Tapp, “An Ideology of Expendability,” 171.

8 Jan Fokkelman, “Structural Remarks,” 44.

9 Douglas Lawrie, “Outrageous Terror,” 44 ff. 28.

10 Butler, *Judges*, 419.

11 Lawrie offers a middle ground here when he argues:

The shape of the text does not suggest that the author showed or assumed in the audience a callous disregard for women. On the contrary, crimes against women are portrayed to evoke outrage. But this particular form of outrage is not only compatible with patriarchy, but may be a result of it. . . . Female characters are manipulated—not raped—by the pen, because they are “promising material” for an author who wishes to evoke shock and disgust.

(Lawrie, “Outrageous Terror,” 44)

the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD. If the same trends are evident in a modern comic book and an ancient narrative, they can less easily be blamed upon individual misogyny or specific cultural norms—a tendency among those who would “other” the biblical text as something with little relevance in the modern enlightened world. Judges 19 similarly begins by distancing itself from its subject: “this happened when Israel had no king” (Judg 19:1), that is, back in the “bad old days.” But by comparing its grim events to the equally grim tales of a modern comic book, we see that there were no “bad old days”—only past days, inhabited by the same human beings that inhabit our world today.

Thus, after a brief introduction about terminology and text history in Judges 19, I use the framework of Carol Adams to examine the lives and deaths of two brutalized women. Through this framework, I explore the metaphorical underpinnings that motivate their narratives, fueling and guiding both stories. I conclude by observing that despite my focus on the two women, neither of them is ultimately the center of her story. In both cases, they serve as fuel for the central male characters to emote pain and exact vengeance. Thus, despite the vast span of time and space that separates them, both women ultimately exemplify the narrative realization of the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD.

(a) Preliminary Considerations

The central victim of Judges 19’s violence is a *pilegesh* (פִּילְגֶּשׁ). But before we explore her story, we must establish the grounds of our inquiry—a concern with ideological as well as practical relevance. This section briefly discusses the term “*pilegesh*/concubine” and the question of what to call her, and then addresses the text-historical background of the chapter.

(i) *Translating the Untranslatable*

The challenge of translating the word פִּילְגֶּשׁ into English goes back as long as Modern English has existed (if not earlier). In 1650, Edward Leigh defined a פִּילְגֶּשׁ thus:

The Hebrew Pilegish (whereof the Greek *παλλαχη* and Latine *pellex* is borrowed, which we call a Concubine) signifieth an half wife, or a divided and secondary wife: which was a wife for the bed (and thereby differing from an whore) but not for honour, and government of the family, neither had their children ordinarily any right of inheritance, but had gifts of their Father.¹²

Our understanding of the word has changed remarkably little in the past 500 years. Most interpreters still translate it as “concubine” and hew to its basic definition as “a wife for the bed . . . but not for honour.”

12 Edward Leigh, *Critica Sacra*, 189.

Below, the actual meaning of *pilegesh* will be discussed more fully. But when it comes to translation, several pieces of secondary literature have questioned the “concubine” rendering and its implications. For a start, Tammi Schneider notes that “the English translation is troublesome because it has as loose a definition as our understanding of the Hebrew term.”¹³ In addition, Cheryl Exum claims that “the English translation ‘concubine’ gives the impression that this woman is not legally married, whereas the Hebrew word *pilegesh* refers to a legal wife of secondary rank.”¹⁴ (Exum’s own definition, while a solid alternative, still does not capture the full nuances of the term—cf. Section 3.b.ii.1.) Susanne Scholz further argues that the term introduces “assumptions that devalue women (androcentrism) and make the Near East seem exotic (a process called orientalism)” and implores that “it is urgent from an etymological, exegetical, and ethical perspective to establish the meaning of *pilegesh* as a girl who grows up in involuntary sexual bondage.”¹⁵

A different perspective comes from Grace Tsoi, who examines readings of Judges 19 within Chinese Christian communities. Tsoi addresses the fact that for the early twentieth-century translators of the Chinese Union Version (CUV) Bible, concubinage was not some distant ancient practice; it was a “widely accepted part of the marriage system (though not necessarily practiced by all) and firmly rooted in Chinese culture.”¹⁶ Therefore, the translators made various choices based on their negative beliefs about concubines in the culture surrounding them; identifying the *pilegesh* as a concubine had a concrete theological impact. In her book, Tsoi usually refers to the *pilegesh* as a concubine, which is appropriate for a discussion about her connection to Chinese concubinage; however, the fact that Tsoi devotes large parts of the book to discussing the separate and distinct histories of Chinese concubines and *pilagshim* suggests caution about using the translation indiscriminately.

For all these reasons, this work will leave the term *pilegesh* transliterated but untranslated. There simply is no English word that successfully conveys its meanings without adding other associations, such as an Orientalist veneer. By leaving the word in Hebrew, I also acknowledge a necessary ambiguity: not only does English lack a clear equivalent, but the very meaning of the word is still in dispute, despite my attempts below to elucidate it. Without more textual data, the full legal and social connotations of a *pilegesh* remain unknown to us.

(ii) Naming the Unnamed

Names are powerful. The fact that the central woman of Judges 19 remains unnamed is no coincidence, as this chapter discusses below. Most scholars follow the Bible’s precedent and leave her unnamed; I have done the same in the past. But if we are to discuss this woman, we must refer to her somehow. “The woman”

13 Schneider, *Judges*, 128.

14 Exum, “Feminist Criticism,” 83.

15 Susanne Scholz, “Concubine.”

16 Grace Tsoi, *Who Is to Blame*, 6.

is too ambiguous, and “the *pilegesh*” (or, worse, “the Levite’s *pilegesh*”) reduces her to a single role, when in fact she plays many roles: daughter, maidservant, and woman, as well as secondary spouse. A name has the advantage of uniting all these roles in one single character.

I recognize that naming this character is an interventionist move, one that most scholars avoid and some actively condemn.¹⁷ It pushes back against both the misogyny that leaves so many biblical women unnamed, and against the literary motivations for anonymity that the author may have had. But while I acknowledge anonymity’s complex literary function, the text’s efforts to disorient the reader or marginalize women need not extend to disrupting academic analysis. An emic reading of the text may insist upon the woman’s anonymity, but an etic reading can provide constructs for analysis that were not overtly present in the original text. Thus, this chapter follows the footsteps of feminist scholars such as Cheryl Exum and Mieke Bal,¹⁸ albeit for more pragmatic reasons, in giving this woman a name.

“Tizkoret” (תִּזְכֹּרֶת) is a feminine word deriving from the verb זָכַר, “to remember.”¹⁹ In modern Hebrew, it means a reminder or remembrance—“מידע או אירוע שמעלה למודעות דבר שנשכח” (“knowledge or an event that raises awareness of something forgotten”).²⁰ By leaving her unburied and unnamed, Judges 19 depicts its female victim as forgotten in almost every sense, subsumed in her role as inanimate evidence of a national crisis. Yet, despite the text’s intentions of annihilation, the woman of Judges 19 has stubbornly been remembered by feminist scholars. I honor that resistance with the name Tizkoret.²¹

(iii) *Dating the Undated*

The events in Judges 19–21 occur outside the timeline of specific judges that structures the book of Judges—a book that, by scholarly consensus, was composed long after the events it depicts. Indeed, the only internal date these chapters provide is the broadly pre-monarchic period (19:1), though their mention of Phinehas (20:28) places them early in the period of the Judges. The gap in documentation is wide enough (and the story fanciful enough²²) that this discussion will not examine

17 Don Hudson actively argues against the practice in “Living in a Land of Epithets,” claiming that naming the woman is a “violation” of them (64). More convincingly, he argues that “anonymity also demands that the reader endure the ambivalence and ‘uncomfortability’ of the namelessness,” (Ibid, 64) and that the anonymity is a deliberate technique by the text to confront its reader with the dissolution of social norms.

18 Bal names her Beth (“house”; *Death and Dissymmetry*, 90), while Exum names her Bath-Sheber (“daughter of breaking”; *Fragmented Women*, 176).

19 I owe Lianne Ratzersdorfer gratitude for her suggestion of this name.

20 Milog, “תזכרת.”

21 For a fuller discussion of my motivations and the stakes in naming her, cf. Esther Brownsmith, “‘Call Me by Your Name’: Critical Fabulation and the Woman of Judges 19.”

22 “Our story begins with the ordinary and escalates toward exaggeration, forcing readers who are attempting to read it as history to swallow greater and greater improbabilities. We will instead read it not as history but as story” (Jo Ann Hackett, “‘Missing Women’ in Judges 19–21,” 188).

issues of whether and when the events may have taken place in reality. In Brettler's words, "Judges 19 does not reflect ancient events; rather, it creates them."²³ Instead, I here address two key questions: Can the text be read as a narrative whole, and can we date when it was composed?²⁴

The answer to the first question appears to be a qualified "yes." By general and long-standing consensus, Judges 19–21 (and often also 17–18) are an "appendix" (or "editorial divergence"²⁵) to the book as a whole.²⁶ Although the general redactional history of Judges is a well-discussed problem, most recent commentators ascribe chapter 19 (save perhaps its preface in v.1a) to a single author. The immediately following events of 20:1–7, where the Levite retells the story, probably also belong to the same single narrative.²⁷ The story of 19:1–20:7 sets up central characters (the Levite and Tizkoret), introduces a central crisis for those characters (the rapist advances of the men of Gibeah), and follows them through their final fate (the Levite summarizing his tale, with Tizkoret its secondary victim). The following two chapters, as the narrative turns to a broadening circle of violence, are usually but not universally ascribed to the same single author/redactor. In short, despite the repetition in the feasting with the father-in-law (19:4–9), the text as a whole does not show signs of being a composite.²⁸ To the contrary, as J. Alberto Soggin points out, it "gives an impression of unity and coherence."²⁹

As for the date of the text, it is an involved question that is ultimately irrelevant to my analysis. Some ascribe a pre-exilic date,³⁰ though the majority of modern

23 Brettler, *Judges*, 107.

24 I do not address a third, important question: Does Judges 19 constitute an individual narrative at all, or must it be read with Judges 20–21? Fokkelman argues the latter, claiming that most critics "have wrongly separated the text of 19:1–20a from v. 30b plus chaps. 20 and 21, and have practiced diachronical hypercriticism" (Fokkelman, "Structural Remarks," 42). I see merit in Fokkelman's observations. Nonetheless, my analysis focuses on chapter 19 and the beginning of chapter 20 only, as I am concerned with the character of Tizkoret and her portrayal, rather than the broader narrative structure of the text.

25 Yaira Amit uses this phrase deliberately instead of "appendix," arguing that "the tensions that exist between it and the texts to which it is appended" indicate that it is "not integrated within the implied editing," and therefore is not an appendix proper (Amit, *The Book of Judges*, 315).

26 See, for instance, Keil and Delitzsch (*Judges*, 1) and Julius Wellhausen, who argues that chs. 19–21 "were introduced very late into the history" (*Prolegomena* IX.III.1) and contrast greatly with the rest of Judges (*Ibid.*, VII.I.2).

27 Contra Hans-Winfried Jüngling, who argues that chapter 19 was originally a stand-alone story, with the other two chapters added later (including the Levite's testimony). Cf. *Richter 19*, esp. 259ff.

28 Contra Moore, who concludes that chapter 19 is primarily "a very old story" which "may be derived from J," but which, along with chs. 20–21, received a late redactional layer in the 4th century (Moore, *Judges*, xxxi). He argues for two strands in chapter 19, but notes that "to separate the two strands seems impossible," and that "from v.15 on the narrative runs smoothly and straightforward [*sic*]" (*Ibid.*, 407). Against this division, see Boling's note that "repetition with variation is characteristic of Hebrew narrative" (*Judges*, 275). Regardless, even if Moore were correct, it would not substantially change my argument, as the primary difference he sees is the schedule of feasting at the father-in-law's house and the mention of Jabesh of Gilead.

29 Soggin, *Judges*, 279.

30 Robert O'Connell notes (with many others) the clear anti-Saulide elements of Judges 19, and thus dates the text, along with the rest of Judges, to "the ostensible situation of 2 Samuel 1–4," with the

scholars date the text after the Exile.³¹ Thus, the answer to “can we confidently date when it was composed?” appears to be, for now, “no.” Little consensus has emerged among scholars, and my focus in this chapter is not on providing solid proof for any one of the specific claims. Fortunately, the substance of my analysis does not rely on a specific date for the text. Whether composed early or late in the history of biblical redaction, the author was writing about a period many years prior, utilizing an ahistorical “fairy tale” approach. Few of the text’s major cruxes would be solved by dating it earlier or later; nor would dating affect the conceptual metaphors that guide its plot.³² In conclusion, this chapter operates under the assumption that Judges 19 was primarily composed (or at least redacted into its current form) by a single hand, but that arguments that rely on dating that hand are uncertain at best.

(b) Tizkoret as Absent Referent

With those preliminaries established, I turn to the text that will shape my analysis of Judges 19. In 1990, just four years before Alex’s death, Carol Adams published the first edition of her groundbreaking and controversial work, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*. Adams points out the deep connection between society’s attitude toward meat and toward women; her examples span cultures and time periods, and she even briefly mentions the case

intention that “readers would endorse the dynasty of David over that of Saul” (*The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges*, 344). For a recent summary of these elements, including some that have not been previously discussed, cf. Sara Milstein, “Saul the Levite.” (However, Brettler notes that the debate over Saul persisted to the post-exilic and even rabbinic period [*Judges*, 106], and therefore that Judges 19 cannot be automatically dated to an early monarchic period.) Butler also gives the text an early date, to “the political chaos after Solomon’s death when Saulides of Benjamin, Jeroboam of Ephraim, and Rehoboam of Judah vied for control” (*Judges*, 416). Gale Yee dates the text as later but still pre-exilic, during the time of Josiah, based on ideological criticism that interprets its goal as the same centralization of power and minimization of Levites that characterized Josiah’s reforms (“Ideological Criticism,” 145–47).

31 Boling labels chapters 19–21 as a “Postview” added by an exilic sixth-century Deuteronomist (*Judges*, 30); as evidence, he notes that “the fact that in the finished story Gibeah has become a sizable town is in keeping with the nation-state dimensions of the later monarchy” (279). Dating the text even later, Athalya Brenner views chapters 19–21 as part of “a second editing ‘wave’ that includes the factors concerning women figures,” one that took place relatively late, “perhaps in the same early Second Temple period” (“Women Frame the Book of Judges,” 136). Cynthia Edenburg, and Philippe Guillaume following her, use philological data to argue for “an early Persian context, expressing a Judaeian reaction against Benjamin when Jerusalem was beginning to recover” (Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah*, 205). Finally, Niditch considers chapters 17–21 to be the work of “the humanist,” whose “worldview is congruent with those of some Persian or early Hellenistic period biblical writers” (*Judges*, 12).

32 One can imagine a counterpoint to this: What if the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD was only prominent in Israelite thought during a particular compositional period? This would be rather unlikely; as discussed in Chapter 2, the metaphor is attested in numerous times and cultures. Regardless, without firmer dating for the various realizations of the metaphor, such a claim would be difficult to substantiate.

of Judges 19.³³ Two key concepts guide her discussion: the idea of the “absent referent,” and the “cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption.”³⁴

(i) Defining “Absent Referent”

An absent referent occurs when the description of a thing points away from the thing itself.³⁵ For instance, the word “steak” points the reader away from the cow that comprises it; “cow” is the absent referent. The word “wife” points away from individual personhood to position someone in relation to a spouse; “woman” is the absent referent. This simple concept becomes slightly more complicated in the case of metaphor. As Adams puts it, “Animals are the absent referent in the act of meat eating; they also become the absent referent in images of women butchered, fragmented, or consumable.”³⁶ In both cases, whether the word “steak” or the phrase “treating women like meat,” the death of the animal is absent, yet referred to.

Absent referents encourage dissociation between acts of violence and their actual victims; conversely, as Adams says of butchering narratives, “To make the absent referent present—that is, describing exactly how an animal dies, kicking, screaming, and is fragmented—disables consumption and disables the power of metaphor.”³⁷ Likewise, when scholars like Exum and Bal give Tizkoret a personal name, they not only represent her but “re-present” her, making her personhood once more present. As long as the absent referent remains out of view, the reader’s focus will remain anywhere but on her.

This concept helps explain one defining characteristic of “women in refrigerators”: that they are not, primarily, women. Instead, they are girlfriends, wives, and daughters, defined by their relationship to the man who remains the primary target of their brutalization.³⁸ For instance, in one list of “The 10 Worst Women in Refrigerators,” every single woman—whether “mundane” or superhero—is described in some relation to a male superhero, most often her husband or boyfriend.³⁹ The *Green Lantern* comic makes Alex’s status as an absent referent clear; after her death, Kyle rages that Major Force took away “the only thing that was

33 Naomi Graetz also applied Adams’ theory to Judges 19, along with the other texts in this monograph, in an SBL conference paper, “Nebalah—The ‘Outrage’ of Women Treated as Meat.” Although this work was developed independently, in parallel with hers, we share the central thesis that both Adams and Judges 19 describe the same phenomenon.

34 Carol Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 73.

35 Adams (Ibid, 13) acknowledges deriving the phrase from Margaret Homans, *Bearing the Word* (4), but her structuring of the term expands upon what was originally a stray phrase rather than a key concept.

36 Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, 13.

37 Ibid, 79.

38 “The woman is typically the protagonist’s partner, family member, or love interest” (Geek Feminism Wiki, “Women in refrigerators”). Compare Brenner, who notes that in Judges, most women “fulfill traditional, male-relational roles: mothers, wives, secondary wives, daughters, or a combination thereof” (“Women Frame the Book of Judges,” 129).

39 Zach Oat, “The 10 Worst Women in Refrigerators.”

important to me,”⁴⁰ “the best *thing* I ever *had*.”⁴¹ For a parallel, one needs to look no further than the book of Judges as a whole; after summarizing the many appearances of women in the book, Brettler concludes that their common theme is the way that “Women are useful for characterizing the men around them.”⁴²

(ii) *The Many Roles of Tizkoret*

The concept of the absent referent explains the changing terms with which Judges 19 describes Tizkoret. Just as the same portion of flesh can be cow, beef, hamburger, or a Big Mac patty, depending on its context and the desired degree of linguistic disconnection, so does Tizkoret’s title shift by her context—to the extent that Jennifer Matheny exclaimed, “One cannot help but ask through the narrative, *who is this woman?* Why are there shifts in her identity?”⁴³ Below is a summary of the various epithets that Judges 19 calls her, each with its immediate context:

19:1b	וַיִּקְחֵהוּ אִשָּׁה פִּלְגֶשֶׁת מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה:	He got himself a certain <i>pilegesh</i> from Bethlehem of Judah. ⁴⁴
19:2a	וַתִּזְנֶה עָלָיו פִּילְגֶשֶׁת וַתֵּלֶךְ מֵאִתּוֹ אֶל־בֵּית אָבִיהָ אֶל־בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה	But the anger of his <i>pilegesh</i> was aroused at him, so she left him and went back to her father’s house in Bethlehem of Judah.
19:3b	וַתְּבִיאֵהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אָבִי הַנְּעֻרָה וַיִּשְׂמַח לְקִרְאָתוֹ:	When she brought him into her father’s house, the young woman’s father saw him and greeted him warmly.
19:4a	וַיִּקְרַבּוּ חָתָנוּ אָבִי הַנְּעֻרָה	Then his father-in-law, the young woman’s father, took control of things.
19:5b	וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי הַנְּעֻרָה אֶל־חָתָנוּ סַעֵד לֶבֶד פַּת־לָחֶם וְאַחַר תֵּלְכוּ:	But the young woman’s father said to his son-in-law, “Build up your strength with a bit of food; afterwards, you can go.”
19:6b	וַיִּשְׁתּוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי הַנְּעֻרָה אֶל־הָאִישׁ הוֹאֵל־נָא וְלִין וַיֵּטֵב לֶבֶד:	While they were drinking, the young woman’s father said to the man, “Come now. Stay here and enjoy yourself.”

40 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #55, p. 7.

41 *Ibid*, 22, my emphasis.

42 Brettler, *Judges*, 108.

43 Jennifer Matheny, “Mute and Mutilated,” 642; author’s emphasis.

44 For the use of *אִשָּׁה* here, compare the introduction of the Levite in the same verse: וַיְהִי אִישׁ לְוִי (“There was a certain Levite”). Gesenius (*Hebrew Grammar*, §131b) lists this as an example of “genus and species” apposition.

19:8b	וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי הַנְּעִמָּה סַעֲד־נָא לְכַבֵּדָה	But the young woman 's father said, "Please, build up your strength; linger here until after the heat of the day."
19:9a	וַיָּקָם הָאִישׁ לָלֶכֶת הוּא וּפִילְגֶשֶׁשׁוֹ וַנְּעִרֹו	The man got up to go—he, his pilegesh , and his servant.
19:9b	וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ חֹתְנוֹ אָבִי הַנְּעִמָּה הִנֵּה נָא רַפָּה	But his father-in-law, the young woman 's father, said to him, "Please, wait!"
19:10b	וְעִמּוֹ צֶמֶד חֲמֹרִים חֲבוּשִׁים וּפִילְגֶשֶׁשׁוֹ עִמּוֹ	With him was the pair of saddled donkeys—and his pilegesh was with him.
19:19b	וְגַם־תְּכַן גַּם־מִסְפּוֹא יֵשׁ לְחֲמֹרֵינוּ וְגַם לְחֵם וְיַיִן יִשְׁלִי וְלֹא־מִתְּדָה וְלִנְעֵר	"There's even straw and feed for our donkeys, along with food and wine for me, for your slave-girl , and for the servant."
19:24a	הִנֵּה בְּתִי הַבְּתוּלָה וּפִילְגֶשֶׁהּוּ אוֹצִיאֶנָּה־נָא אוֹתָם	"Look at my virgin daughter and his pilegesh . Let me bring them out."
19:25b	וַיַּחֲזֵק הָאִישׁ בְּפִילְגֶשֶׁשׁוֹ וַיֵּצֵא אֶלֵיהֶם הַחוּץ	So the man grabbed his pilegesh , and he sent her out to them.
19:26a	וַתָּבֵא הָאִשָּׁה לַפְּנוֹת הַבֹּקֶר	The woman returned as morning arrived.
19:27b	וַהֲגִהָ הָאִשָּׁה פִּילְגֶשֶׁשׁוֹ נִפְלְתָה פֶתַח הַבַּיִת וַיָּדִיחָ עַל־הַסֶּף:	But there was the woman—his pilegesh —collapsed just outside the house, her hands on the threshold.
19:29a	וַיָּבֵא אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכָלֶת וַיַּחֲזֵק בְּפִילְגֶשֶׁשׁוֹ וַיַּנְתְּחֶהָ לַעֲצָמֶיהָ לְשָׁנָיִם עָשָׂר נִתְחָמָם	When he arrived home, he took the butcher's knife, grabbed his pilegesh , and cleaved her through her bones into 12 pieces.
20:4a	וַיַּעַן הָאִישׁ הַלֵּוִי אִישׁ הָאִשָּׁה הַנִּרְצָחָה	Then the certain Levite—the husband of the murdered woman —answered.
20:4b	הַגְּבֵעָתָה אֲשֶׁר לְבִנְיָמִן בְּאֵתִי אָנִי וּפִילְגֶשֶׁשִׁי	"To Gibeah in Bethlehem, I came—I, and my pilegesh ."
20:5b	וְאֵת־פִּילְגֶשֶׁשִׁי עִנּוּ וַתָּמָת	"They raped ⁴⁵ my pilegesh so that she died."
20:6a	וָאֲחֹז בְּפִילְגֶשֶׁשִׁי וָאֲנִתְחֶהָ	"I took my pilegesh , and I cleaved her up."

45 Regarding the translation of the verb ענא as "rape," cf. Sandie Gravett, "Reading 'Rape,'" 297ff.

As this survey shows, Tizkoret is referred to with four different nouns: *pilegish* (פִּילְגֵשׁ), young woman (נַעֲרָה), slave-girl (אִמָּה), and woman (אִשָּׁה). Each noun will be discussed in turn.

(1) *Pilegish*

Tizkoret is first⁴⁶ called a *pilegish* when the text describes her initial situation and travel to her father. This noun is relatively common in the Bible, though its legal connotations remain ambiguous.⁴⁷ However, every time it appears, it invariably has one of two contexts. Either it distinguishes secondary wives from primary wives,⁴⁸ usually for the purpose of children’s inheritance, or it emphasizes the sexual availability of the *pilegish*. A summary of the term’s appearances is below.

***Pilegish* in the Hebrew Bible**

Gen 35:22	Reuben lies with his Bilhah, his father’s <i>pilegish</i> .
Judg 19–20	(discussed here)
2 Sam 3:7	Ishbaal accuses Abner of sleeping with his father’s <i>pilegish</i> .
2 Sam 15:15, 16:21–22, 20:3	Absalom sleeps with his father’s <i>pilagshim</i> .
Ezek 23:20	An unusual (corrupted?) instance positions male <i>pilagshim</i> as illicit sex partners.
Esther 2:14	The <i>pilagshim</i> become the occupants of the king’s “harem” (lit. “house of women”) after spending a night with him.
Gen 22:24, 25:6, 36:12; Judg 8:31; 2 Sam 21:11; 1 Chr 1:32, 2:46, 48, 3:9, 7:14	<i>Pilegish</i> is contrasted with “wife” with regard to offspring.
2 Sam 5:13, 19:6; 1 Kgs 11:3; Song 6:8–9; 2 Chr 11:21	<i>Pilagshim</i> are paired with wives as a group of royal spouses/consorts.

Several data points emerge from this study. Most often, *pilegish* is paired with wife (אִשָּׁה), whether as a collective mention of the king’s women, or as a distinction for

46 Here I ignore her actual first referent of “woman” (v. 1), because it forms part of an introduction formula that the text uses for male characters as well; compare the Levite in v.1, the old man in v.16, or the scoundrels in v.22.

47 For discussion of the connotations of *pilegish*, see the recent summary in Isabelle Hamley, “Dis(re)membered and Unaccounted for,” esp. 418–19. Also cf. Schneider (*Judges*, 128–29), Bal (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 80–93), Diane Kriger (“A Re-Embrace of Judges 19,” 59–63), and all the major commentaries on Judges 19.

48 As Kriger notes, this meaning is reflected in rabbinic folk etymologies: “it seems that the *pilegish* must be located in relation to wives but as an inferior type” (Kriger, 60).

the sake of children's succession. Clearly, it exists in the same broad semantic field as wifehood, as a woman and potential mother with a legal tie to a man. Likewise, the children of *pilagshim* were akin to children of wives; for instance, 2 Chr 11:21 summarizes that Rehoboam had 18 wives and 60 *pilagshim*, fathering 88 children, a number that groups both the wives' and the *pilagshim*'s children together. *Pilagshim*, like wives, could hold power commensurate with their social rank; in 2 Sam 15:16, David's *pilagshim* manage (שמר) his household in his absence, and in 2 Sam 21:10–14, Saul's *pilegesh* Rizpah brings about the burial of his sons (some of whom were also hers).⁴⁹

The case of Bilhah is especially interesting, as she is referred to variously as Rachel's slave (הַפְּדָה in Gen 29:29 and elsewhere, הַמָּאָה in Gen 30:3), as Jacob's wife (הַשֵּׁאָה, Gen 30:3 and Gen 37:2), as *Jacob's* slave (הַפְּדָה, Gen 32:22), and as Jacob's *pilegesh* (Gen 35:22). Similar confusion occurs with Keturah, who is Abraham's wife in Gen 25:1 but his *pilegesh* in 1 Chr 1:32. It seems that the same woman could be considered a wife in some contexts and a *pilegesh* in others; the question is what about the context determined the shift.

Various proposals have attempted to explain why Gen 35 calls Bilhah a *pilegesh*,⁵⁰ but I believe the answer is fairly straightforward. After surveying the above passages, it seems clear that a *pilegesh*, regardless of her social rank, was associated with two related activities: procreation and sexual pleasure.⁵¹ Thus, her status was relevant for parentage or for sexual activity. The latter seems clear from Esther 2:14, which discusses the fate of the women who failed to catch the king's eye; they lived in the women's quarters "unless the king desired her" (כִּי אִם-הִתְחַפְּצוּ בָּהּ הַמְּלִכָה), that is, as a source of sexual pleasure. Ezekiel 23:20 likewise associates *pilagshim* with raunchy sexual activity, not procreation, though they appear to be male in this context. The stories of Gen 35, 2 Sam 3, and 2 Sam 15–16 all involve a son having intercourse with his father's *pilagshim*; no children derive from these pairings, so the status of *pilegesh* is not relevant for purposes of lineage. Instead, Bilhah and the others are described as a *pilegesh* in order to sexualize them, to emphasize that the son is taking sexual pleasure from his father's "possession," thereby bringing shame upon him.⁵²

49 See Ackerman's discussion (*Warrior, Dancer*, 236) of "concubines" who held "a very powerful position." However, the fact that these women held social power does not disprove the argument that they were enslaved to their husbands, as male slaves could also hold substantial social power in the ancient Near East; cf. the story of Joseph and mentions of Abraham's slave Eliezer.

50 For example, Hamley, "Dis(re)membereD and Unaccounted for," 420–22. For a recent, detailed look at the various legal codes involved in this verse, cf. Helen Jacobus, "Slave Wives and Transgressive Unions," 63–68. For an discussion of *pilegesh* here, cf. Tammi Schneider, *Mothers of Promise*, 133–34.

51 The sexual connotations are not always observed by commentators, but Hamley notes that "It is astonishing that every narrative that showcases a פִּילגְשִׁים as a character is a story of sexual violence" (Hamley, "Dis(re)membereD and Unaccounted for," 433–34). This is no "astonishing" coincidence but a deliberate connotation of the term.

52 For a discussion of this model of sexual honor and shame, discussed specifically around Judges 19 rather than around the other *pilegesh* narratives, cf. Ken Stone, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19."

Midrash Sekhel Tov, in its discussion of Genesis 35:22, even supports this sexual connotation with a folk etymology: “מהו פילגש פילוג שימוש”. (“What is a *pilegsh*? Divided [between multiple men] (*pilug*) is the function (*shimush*).”) Kriger paraphrases this as “the implication of a woman ‘used’ by different men.”⁵³

Since no other wife or children are present in this story, then, Judges 19 paints Tizkoret from the beginning in a sexual light.⁵⁴ *Pilegsh* is her most common epithet, and with the exception of her initial introduction, it always comes with a possessive pronominal suffix—**his** *pilegsh*. Thus, we see the word used whenever her most important connection is to the Levite—in particular, during the various journeys, when she is attached to the Levite and no other men. We also see the word used twice during the scene leading to her gang rape, when the old man offers up “his *pilegsh*” (v. 24) and the man tosses “his *pilegsh*” to the mob (v. 25). In this scene, one is strongly reminded of the stories of Reuben, Ishbaal, and Absalom sleeping with their father’s *pilagshim*, thus shaming him; the point is the sexual accessibility of the *pilegsh* to a man. In this case, Tizkoret is still the absent referent, but she has been distanced even further from existing in the narrative: she is defined through both the Levite who ostensibly possesses her and through the rapists who assault her.

(2) *Young Woman*

“Young woman” (נַעֲרָה) is the second most common epithet for Tizkoret. During the Levite’s visit to her father’s house, she is referred to through her father, “the father of the young woman (אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה).” While נַעֲרָה has a somewhat amorphous lexical range, referring to a young woman who could be either unmarried or a new wife, the only other biblical occurrence of the construct phrase אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה is in four places in Deuteronomy 22, where it refers to a man who receives monetary compensation after a man slanders or rapes his daughter.

Within the honor-shame complex it is not only a woman’s conduct but also the conduct taken toward her that reflects upon the honor of the men thought to be responsible for her sexual purity. . . . Thus, although the men of Gibeah did not bring dishonor upon the Levite directly by raping him *as if he were a woman*, they nevertheless manage to challenge his honor in another way: *through his woman*.

(p. 100, author’s emphasis)

See also the article’s discussion in Harding, “Homophobia and Masculine Domination in Judges 19–21.”

53 Kriger, “A Re-embrace of Judges 19,” 59.

54 Although she denies its sexualizing connotations, Exum agrees that naming the woman a *pilegsh* serves a rhetorical purpose, as it “predisposes readers to view the rape of this nameless ‘Levite’s concubine’ less sympathetically than they might view the rape of a lawful wife” (Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 177). In this, she rightly moves beyond the focus of most scholars, who treat the term as an objective categorization.

<p>כִּי־יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבָא אֵלֶיהָ וַיִּשְׁנְאוּ: וְשָׂם לָהּ עֲלִילֹת דְּבָרִים וְהוֹצִיא עָלֶיהָ שֵׁם רָע וְאָמַר אֶת־הָאִשָּׁה הַזֹּאת לָקַחְתִּי וְאָקְרַב אֵלַי וְלֹא־מָצָאתִי לָהּ בְּתוּלִים: וְלָקַח אָבִי הַנְּעָר [הַנְּעָרָה] וְאָמַר וְהוֹצִיאֹ אֶת־בְּתוּלִי הַנְּעָר [הַנְּעָרָה] אֶל־זִקְנֵי הָעִיר הַשְּׂעָרָה: וְאָמַר אָבִי הַנְּעָר [הַנְּעָרָה] אֶל־הַזִּקְנִים אֶת־בְּתִי נָתַתִּי לְאִישׁ הַזֶּה לְאִשָּׁה וַיִּשְׁנְאוּ: וְהִנֵּה־הוּא שָׂם עֲלִילֹת דְּבָרִים לְאָמַר לֹא־מָצָאתִי בְּתוּלִים וְאֵלֶּה בְּתוּלֵי בְּתִי וּפָרְשׂוּ הַשְּׂמָלָה לְפָנַי זִקְנֵי הָעִיר: וְלָקַחוּ זִקְנֵי הָעִיר־הַהוּא אֶת־הָאִישׁ וַיִּסְרוּ אֹתוֹ: וַעֲנִשׂוּ אֹתוֹ מֵאָה כֶּסֶף וַנִּתְּנוּ לְאָבִי הַנְּעָרָה כִּי הוֹצִיא שֵׁם רָע עַל בְּתוּלַת יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה לְאִשָּׁה לֹא־יִוָּכַל לְשַׁלְּחָהּ כָּל־יָמָיו: (Deut 22:13–19)</p>	<p>If a man takes a wife, and he goes in to her and hates her, and he accuses her of wicked deeds, bringing ill upon her name, saying, “This woman—I took her and came in to her, but I did not find her a virgin,” then <i>the young woman’s father</i> and her mother should prove the young woman’s virginity to the elders at the city gate. <i>The young woman’s father</i> should say to the elders: “My daughter—I gave her to this man as a wife, and he hated her. Look—he accused her of wicked deeds and said, ‘I did not find your daughter a virgin.’ But here is my daughter’s virginity!” Then he should spread the garment before the city’s elders. The elders of that city must take the man and chastise him, and they must fine him a 100 silver pieces, which they will give to <i>the young woman’s father</i>, since he made wicked accusations against a virgin of Israel. (She will be his wife; he may not divorce her, ever.)</p>
<p>כִּי־יִמְצָא אִישׁ נַעֲרָה [נַעֲרָה] בְּתוּלָה אֲשֶׁר לֹא־אָרְשָׁה וּתְפָסָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה וַנִּמְצְאוּ: וַנִּתְּנוּ הָאִישׁ הַשֹּׁכֵב עִמָּה לְאָבִי הַנְּעָרָה [נַעֲרָה] חֲמִשִּׁים כֶּסֶף וְלֹא־תִהְיֶה לְאִשָּׁה תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר עָנָה לֹא־יִוָּכַל שְׁלַחָהּ כָּל־יָמָיו: (Deut 22:28–29)</p>	<p>If a man finds a virgin young woman who is not engaged, and he grabs her and sleeps with her, and it is discovered, then the man who slept with her must give 50 silver pieces to <i>the young woman’s father</i>. (She must become his wife. Due to his raping her, he may not divorce her, ever.)</p>

As Carolyn Leeb notes in her examination of the נַעֲרָה,

That phrase [אָבִי הַנְּעָרָה] is used elsewhere in the Hebrew scriptures in only one place, the collection of laws regarding the penalties for the misuse, on her own part or on the part of another, of the sexuality of a נַעֲרָה in Deuteronomy 22. Surely its use in this narrative would sound a note of warning to female listeners.⁵⁵

While I question how many “female listeners” this text would have had, I do not find the idea of a Deuteronomistic allusion in the Deuteronomistic History that far-fetched. Moreover—since an allusion based on a single phrase is inevitably on shaky ground—even if the reader was not expected to invoke Deut 22 immediately, the legal text exemplifies the dependent status of the נַעֲרָה and the link between her and her father in questions of honor.

By evoking these situations of “damsels in distress,” the text shifts from an emphasis on sexual availability to an emphasis on vulnerability. Like the young women in Deuteronomy, Tizkoret has been mistreated by her husband.⁵⁶ Like the

55 Carolyn Leeb, *Away from the Father’s House*, 141–42.

56 This may refer, as foreshadowing, to the Levite giving her to rapists; or it may refer to whatever unstated quarrel led the woman to leave the Levite in the first place and return to her father.

young women in Deuteronomy, her father is the ultimate wronged party; when the city elders fine the husband, the money goes to the young woman's father, not to the young woman herself. And like the young women in Deuteronomy, Tizkoret must ultimately return to her husband for good, even though this section of the text is concerned more immediately with her father. She is still an absent referent, but this time the story is framing her in terms of a different man.

(3) *Slave-Girl*

Eventually, Tizkoret's father can delay her husband no longer,⁵⁷ and she departs, a *pilegesh* once more. They journey on to Gibeah, where she moves into a sphere of a different man, thereby earning a different name: the Levite tells the old man that she is "your slave-girl (הַמְּאָרָה)" (v. 19). Her reference has shifted once more. It may not be a coincidence that the same word (הַמְּאָרָה) is used for Bilhah, also only once, in the moment when Rachel gives Bilhah to Jacob to bear his children (Gen 30:3); in both situations, it emphasizes the powerlessness of the *pilegesh* and the right of her owner to transfer ownership to another. The Levite wishes to deemphasize his own claim to the girl, so he picked a more subservient term and coupled it with the second-person pronoun: *your* slave-girl. The absent referent, Tizkoret, has now been defined in terms of their elderly host.

(4) *Woman*

Finally, when she stumbles home in the morning, battered and abandoned, the text refers to Tizkoret as simply הַמְּאָרָה, the woman (v. 26). Like a "cow carcass" from which the meat and leather has been extracted, her only moment of non-absent reference coincides with her lack of use to others. In this moment—abandoned by her rapists, not yet reclaimed by her husband—she is no one's but her own.⁵⁸

The power of the absent referent is visible in the following verse, when the Levite sees Tizkoret in the morning: "וַיַּרְא הַלֵּוִי אֶת הַמְּאָרָה בַּבֹּקֶר" (v. 27b). *Hinneh*, the focalizing Hebrew term that draws the reader's attention to a new detail, begins an abrupt thought process that reminds one of the breathless exclamations of comic books: "Look! The woman! His *pilegesh*!" The moment of recognition is simultaneously a moment of repossession: **the** woman becomes **his** *pilegesh*.

The final references to Tizkoret take place in the first part of Judges 20, when the Israelites gather to hear her story. Unsurprisingly, when he retells the tale, the Levite refers to her as "my *pilegesh*" throughout—emphasizing her status as his, in

57 As Keil and Delitzsch note, "The interchange of the plural and singular may be explained from the simple fact that the Levite was about to depart with his wife and attendant, but that their remaining or departing depended upon the decision of the man alone" (Judg. 19:9,10).

58 Cynthia Chapman has observed in correspondence that this treatment may be paralleled in the stories of Hagar and Ruth. In both cases, the women tend to be described with epithets—"Hagar the Egyptian" (Gen 21:9 etc.) and "Ruth the Moabite" (Ruth 2:2 etc.)—or with descriptors like "her daughter-in-law" (Ruth 2:20 etc.). However, at the moment of sexual intercourse (Gen 16:4, Ruth 4:13), they are simply Hagar and Ruth. At that moment, their other identities are irrelevant.

order to argue that the ultimate crime was done against him. He pointedly fronts his own personal pronoun to reiterate the message: “**Me**, they intended to kill!” (אֹתִי דָּמּוּ לְהַרְגֵנִי, Judg 20:5b). Yet when the narrator introduces the Levite in the scene, he does so with a fascinating tangle of referents: he is “the certain Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered” (הָאִישׁ הַלְוִי הַיָּשׁ הַנֶּאֱשָׁה הַנִּרְצָחָה, Judg 20:4a). This is the only place where the verb “murder” (רָצַח) appears in the entire book of Judges, despite its ample bloodshed, and its rarity means that it is surely a carefully chosen term here.

Murder (רָצַח) is “illegal behaviour against the community which is always directed against an individual”⁵⁹; it is homicide, whether premediated or not, and it is one of the crimes prohibited by the Decalogue (Ex 20:13, Deut 5:17). One of its only other narrative appearances in the Deuteronomistic History is 2 Kings 21:19, when Elijah accuses Ahab of murdering Naboth (a text that will be examined in Chapter 5); again, the emphasis is on personal culpability for an unforgivable crime against an individual. Thus, we have here an example of what Adams described as “mak[ing] the absent referent present”: a woman has been murdered, and the text finally says so plainly.

In this sole place, instead of defining Tizkoret in terms of the Levite, the narrator defines him in terms of her, as “the husband of the woman.” (Of course, this is an impression that the Levite will immediately attempt to counteract, as mentioned above, with his attempts to center his own suffering.) It would be unwise to rest too much significance on this single allusion to Tizkoret’s presence, as weighted against the many, many absent references to her, but one wonders whether Judges 20:4 represents a small moment of sympathy by the narrator—a moment in which, for once, he allowed the reality of a woman’s death to emerge. Yet, more likely, it is the other side of murder that this moment represents—the fact that, as Koehler and Baumgartner’s definition states, it is “illegal behaviour against the **community**.”⁶⁰ The murder of a single woman represents the breakdown of order for an entire society, a threat of profound lawlessness; indeed, murder/רָצַח has this meaning in the Prophets and other poetic texts.⁶¹ So by focusing on Tizkoret as a murdered woman, the text emphasizes the significance of the event to all Israelite society, instead of as an individual loss to an individual man.⁶²

59 Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Vol. 3, 1283.

60 Emphasis mine. For a discussion of biblical murder and its connection to other ancient Near Eastern legal codes, cf. Pamela Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World*. In particular, note the implications of the elaborate rituals that must be performed to rid a community of the blood-guilt of a discovered corpse, which demonstrate “the concept that a slaying could pollute those in whose midst it occurred” (Barmash, *Homicide in the Biblical World*, 104).

61 For example, Isaiah 1:21: “She was full of justice, and righteousness dwelled in her—but now, murderers” (מְלֹאֲתֵי מִשְׁפָּט צָדֵק יָלִין בָּהּ וְעֵתָהּ מְרַצְחִים). See also, for instance, Hos 4:2, Ps 94:6, and Job 24:14, where murder is a synecdoche of civic collapse into lawlessness.

62 Alternately, the phrase הָאִישׁ הַנֶּאֱשָׁה הַנִּרְצָחָה may not even be original to the text; Moore cites arguments that “the words are a gloss” (Moore, *Judges*, 425). If this is the case, the pattern for Tizkoret’s referents becomes even clearer: she is only a woman when she belongs to no one else.

(c) Objectification

We have seen how Tizkoret is an absent referent in Judges 19, but for Adams, this tactic merely serves the greater destructive cycle that she identifies as objectification, fragmentation, and consumption. She notes that this happens on multiple levels: literal, literary, and linguistic.

I propose a cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, which links butchering and sexual violence in our culture. Objectification permits an oppressor to view another being as an object. The oppressor then violates this being by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women that denies women freedom to say no, or the butchering of animals that converts animals from living breathing beings into dead objects. This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption. While the occasional man may literally eat women, we all consume visual images of women all the time. Consumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity. So too with language: a subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself.⁶³

Before delving into how these steps manifest in the stories of Tizkoret and Alex DeWitt, a reminder about objectification will be helpful. In this quote, Adams essentially equates objectification with oppression. Yet objectification, in itself, is a morally neutral act; it simply means the creation of a metaphorical space where a living being takes on, in some respects, the qualities of a non-living object. To call Juliet the sun or God a fortress is to objectify them, yet in both cases, the intention is to impart positive qualities of the object. (The Lutheran hymn “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” does not imply that God is subject to weather’s decays, or capable of being ruled by a despot, or drafty in the winter.) Thus, the problem is not that metaphor can objectify, but that metaphor can objectify someone into a blended metaphorical space that is more amenable to abuse. (To return to the fortress, a suitor might metaphorically depict a woman as a fortress *to be overthrown*, thereby justifying aggressive romantic “onslaughts” in pursuit of “victory.”)

I am of course not the first to observe the objectification of women in the Bible more broadly—and specifically to observe negative implications of the objectification. For instance, Nehama Aschkenasay argues:

In many of these tales, the man is time and the woman is translated into a spatial element, an object with an opening, or a territory to be invaded. Man is history and woman is geography; he represents chronological progression, and she the subjection to the immutable rules of nature; he is the creator and

63 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 73.

mover of civilization, and she is the inanimate terrain, the silent and passive witness to the march of men through history.⁶⁴

In other words, in their depictions of women, many biblical narratives give women the metaphorical characteristics of an object, with entailed connotations of passivity and vulnerability. As Aschkenasy later notes, in her discussion of Dinah's rape, "She is the object of violation by a man, a commodity in commercial negotiations between two male communities, a catalyst of cementing or ruining male bonding."⁶⁵ An object can have many facets, and so can a woman's role in a given biblical text. Some of these facets may not even be inherently negative. Nonetheless, they are worth documenting.

And so to the texts. The goal of objectification is to depict a living being as a functional object: Babe into bacon,⁶⁶ or a woman into a "babe." Both Judges 19 and the *Green Lantern* comics accomplish this with startling efficiency, reducing their female characters into sex objects from the first appearance. By beginning with discussion of how this objectification functions in the comic book, we can more easily trace its tools and features in the Hebrew Bible.

(i) *The Sexy Girlfriend*

As the opening of this chapter discussed, Alex DeWitt first appears on-page in a sexually suggestive pose, with a bare modicum of clothing. The second time we see her, her boyfriend Kyle knocks on her door in the middle of the night to show off his newly acquired superpowers. Despite just waking up, Alex wears scarlet lipstick and a sleep shirt that reveals both her thighs and her improbable cleavage. In the following comic, when she helps Kyle test his new abilities, she tells him to create an energy construct of something he is "intimately familiar with,"⁶⁷ so he creates a construct of Alex, flaunting her body in stripper's clothing and a pin-up pose. (She is unamused.)

Alex's next clothing change is a minidress, then lingerie, then silhouetted nude in a shower. In short, Alex is depicted, from first appearance to last, as a supremely sexual object—a judgment validated by her killer, who tells Kyle it was a "shame" to kill a "good-looking girl like that."⁶⁸ But while Major Force and Kyle openly objectify Alex, most of the examples just cited were not dictated by either of them.

64 Nehama Aschkenasy, *Women at the Window*, 18.

65 *Ibid*, 56.

66 Incidentally, in what may be viewed as a betrayal of Adams' goals, I here take a morally neutral stance on violence toward animals. Undoubtedly, the meat industry does objectify, dismember, and consume animals, metaphorically treating them as objects lacking an inherent right to life; yet the question of whether this process is morally objectionable is more complex than Adams would portray it, and is in any case far beyond the scope of this monograph. One can, I believe, adopt the idea that she insightfully describes the semantic scope of the food metaphor, without concluding that the metaphor is inappropriate to apply to animals.

67 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #52, p. 5.

68 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #54, p. 16.

Rather, by portraying Alex in sexual pose after sexual pose, the *comic book* encourages the *reader* to objectify Alex.

These visual cues are supplemented by the fact that the arc of Alex and Kyle's relationship is measured by her sexual availability. Initially, Kyle and Alex are estranged, but Kyle progresses from sleeping on Alex's couch to receiving an open invitation to sex. If sexual access is the culmination of their relationship, then Alex's value can be measured by her sexuality. Alex has been objectified; she has been depicted with a metaphoric blend that emphasizes the traits of a sexy girlfriend, thereby obscuring personal traits that do not revolve around Kyle's benefit. If Alex were a simple human, then her storyline would be a tragic example of how a vibrant life can be cut short by random violence. But once she has been reduced to a treasured object, first tantalizingly distant but ultimately attained, the reader can gasp at her death, then cheer on Kyle as he finds the courage to keep fighting after *his* loss.

(ii) *The Sexy Pilegesh*

Although the Bible speaks with a different language than comic books, using word choice, syntax, and narrative structure instead of imagery, it sets up the woman of Judges 19 in similar fashion. To quote Tribble's foundational analysis, "She is property, object, tool, and literary device."⁶⁹ One concrete example of Tizkoret's objectification is in v. 18, when the Levite complains about the town's inhospitable residents: וְאִין אִישׁ מְאַסֵּף אוֹתָי הִכְיָתָהּ ("not one person has brought *me* indoors"). Brettler claims that "he totally forgets about her,"⁷⁰ but forgetfulness is too charitable an explanation; the Levite simply does not consider her a person and potential house-guest, any more than his servant (also unmentioned)⁷¹ or his donkeys. Her lack of personhood is also conveyed in her anonymity, as "namelessness reflected in narrative terminology reflects the dehumanization of the victim."⁷² Finally, her very experience of rape is dehumanizing, or, to use Tracy Lemos's term, "animalizing": "rape completely eliminates the agency of the victim in a way that is animalizing. Rape and animalization frequently go hand in hand."⁷³

Tizkoret's primary form of objectification, however, is through her sexualized associations, as established right at the beginning of the story.

69 Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 80.

70 Brettler, *Judges*, 99.

71 Indeed, the servant boy (נַעַר) has an intriguing position in this story. He has the opportunity to speak (v. 12), unlike Tizkoret, and he is never offered to the mob for sexual access as a proxy for his master. A fuller examination of his role in this story's dynamics is beyond the scope of this study, but it would be a fascinating contribution to scholarship on the intersectionality between gender and social class.

72 Hudson, "Living in a Land of Epithets," 61. Of course, the Levite, the old man, and the father are also unnamed; Hudson addresses this concern by distinguishing between multiple reasons for leaving biblical characters unnamed, such as the function of "universalizing" characters and events (Ibid, 59).

73 Tracy Lemos, *Violence and Personhood*, 82.

Judges 19:1b-2

<p>וַיְהִי אִישׁ לְוִי גֵר בְּיַרְכְּתֵי הַר־אֶפְרַיִם וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ אִשָּׁה פִּילְגֶשֶׁת מִבֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה: וַתִּזְנֶה עָלָיו פִּילְגֶשֶׁת וַתֵּלֶךְ מֵאִתּוֹ אֶל־בֵּית אָבִיהָ אֶל־בֵּית לָחֶם יְהוּדָה וַתְּהַיֵּשֶׁב שָׁם אַרְבָּעָה חֳדָשִׁים</p>	<p>A Levite man had been staying in the backcountry hills of Ephraim, and he got himself a <i>pilegesh</i> from Bethlehem of Judah. But the anger of his <i>pilegesh</i> was aroused at him, so she left him and went back to her father's house in Bethlehem of Judah. For four months, she stayed there.</p>
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The first clue is the term *pilegesh*, whose sexual connotations have already been discussed. Like the stories of Bilhah and several other *pilegshim*, Tizkoret is a woman whose primary value consists in her sexual access. Two “double entendres” in the first two verses reiterate this association. The Levite, in verse one, comes *בְּיַרְכְּתֵי הַר־אֶפְרַיִם*: to use colloquial but accurate English, “from the ass-end of Ephraim hill country.” The Hebrew term *יַרְכָּה* (equivalent to Akkadian *warkatu*, “buttocks, rear side”) is indeed used elsewhere as a location, but the only other instances where it describes a concrete geographical area are confined to the far north, *יַרְכְּתֵי צָפוֹן* (Is 14:13) or *יַרְכְּתֵי לְבָנוֹן* (2 Kgs 19:23)—not central Israelite regions like Ephraim. In other words, its use here is highly unusual, a choice likely justified by its masculine form: *יַרְךָ*, the bodily region of thighs and genitalia.⁷⁴ In fact, the Septuagint translates this phrase even more unambiguously: *ἐν μηροῖς ὄρους Εφραῖμ*, “in the thigh of the mountain-country of Ephraim.”⁷⁵

Similarly, considerable ink has been spilled to understand the meaning of *זָנָה*, the behavior in verse two that precipitated the *pilegesh*'s departure to her father.⁷⁶ On the one hand, every other instance of the verb in the Hebrew Bible refers to literal or metaphorical sexual activity, whether adultery or sex work.⁷⁷ Tammi Schneider and Isabelle Hamley note, as additional evidence for this erotic meaning, that the Levite's four-month wait makes sense as a delay to see whether his

74 Compare earlier in Judges, which clarifies that Gideon's 70 children “*יָצְאוּ יָרְכוֹ*,” “came out from his loins” (Judges 8:30).

75 Cf. Jeffrey Henderson: “*διαμηρίζειν*, to spread and penetrate the thighs, seems to have been a common vulgar term. In Aristophanes it is used of both heterosexual (Av 669, 1254) and homosexual (Av 706) rape” (*The Maculate Muse*, 153).

76 Virtually every commentary discusses the difficulty of this verb, but cf. Jason Bembry, “The Levite's Concubine,” for a recent and thorough examination of the relevant evidence, including the conflicting LXX translations. For discussion of the verb *זָנָה* more broadly, cf. Phyllis Bird, “‘To Play the Harlot.’”

77 Both adultery and sex work have been suggested here; regarding the latter, Pamela Reis (“The Levite's Concubine”) and Susanne Scholz (*Sacred Witness*) have argued that the Levite was actually prostituting her to others, rather than having her act without his consent. Reis translates the verse, “And his concubine whored for him and went from him to the house of her father” (Reis, “The Levite's Concubine,” 129). Such an interpretation is innovative but lacks philological support.

pilegesh had gotten pregnant by someone else.⁷⁸ On the other hand, its Akkadian parallel of *zenû* has the non-sexual meaning of hatred, as does the Septuagint's translation of ὀργίζω⁷⁹—a much weaker philological argument, but one that makes much more sense in the narrative. After all, scholars note, the Levite travels to petition for the woman's return, implying that he was at fault for her departure.⁸⁰ A third option retains the original meaning of adultery, but views it as metaphorical—the argument that simply by leaving her husband, the woman was engaging in faithlessness, that is, “adultery.”⁸¹ Rather than trying to pin down the text to one meaning, as most scholars do, I see this as a layering of meanings, either synchronic or diachronic.

The *diachronic* answer is proposed by Bemby in his excellent and extensive analysis of ancient textual variants of this verse. He suggests that the story originally stated וַתִּזְכֹּר (“and she became angry”) rather than וַתִּזְנֶה—a difference of a single stroke—but that the alteration was no mere mistake. Rather, it stemmed from

a late ideologically driven desire to mitigate the horrific nature of the story of a raped and murdered innocent. . . . If she was previously guilty of sexual misconduct, her rape and murder may be interpreted as a fitting punishment.⁸²

In other words, while justified anger may have made more sense in the original story, Tizkoret was deliberately sexualized—that is, portrayed as promiscuous—in order to justify her punishment.

The *synchronic* answer retains the original וַתִּזְנֶה, but reads it as an ambiguous double entendre. (This is the solution of Koehler and Baumgartner, who posit two meanings for the verb זנה.⁸³) Like the נִרְכָּתִי, a more obscure meaning, known from Akkadian, makes sense for its narrative context. But as my later analysis of Jezebel demonstrates, readers who hear about a woman engaging in זנה would surely have

78 Schneider, *Judges* 253; Isabelle Hamley, “What’s Wrong with ‘Playing the Harlot?’,” 57.

79 It is worth noting that ὀργίζω, the verbal form of ὀργή (anger), is linguistically connected to the English word “orgasm.” The inflammatory emotions of anger and desire frequently show linguistic overlap.

80 Reis’s recent interpretation that the woman was forced into sex work by her husband, though an innovative alternative, lacks real basis or parallel; a “pimp/prostitute” relationship does not apply to any other uses of זנה. As Bird points out in her analysis of the verb, it “invokes two familiar and linguistically identified images of dishonor in Israelite culture, the common prostitute and the promiscuous daughter or wife” (Bird, “‘To Play the Harlot,’” 236). Both are situations where a woman has taken her choice of sex partner into her own hands; neither are situations that point to wrongdoing of a man.

81 Yair Zakovitch argues, “The verb simply means that she dared to leave her husband, a phenomenon which was frequently connected with immoral behavior” (“The Woman’s Rights,” 39). Bal suggests an interesting (but implausible) alternative: that the metaphorical adultery *consisted of* the marriage in a patrilocal context, since Tizkoret was abandoning her father’s household to live with her husband (*Death and Dissymmetry*, 88).

82 Bemby, “The Levite’s Concubine,” 532.

83 Cf. 1-זנה and 2-זנה, Koehler and Baumgartner, vol. 1, p. 275. However, note that the Akkadian *zenû* is more likely etymologically connected to זנה, contra their claim.

been cognizant of sexual innuendo.⁸⁴ The double entendre suggests to the reader, “yes, she was angry at him . . . but maybe she wasn’t perfect either.”⁸⁵ (I have suggested this double entendre with my own translation: “the anger of his *pilegesh* was aroused at him.”)

Regardless of whether the sexual meaning of זָנָה was original or added later, this tight clustering of three sexually evocative terms at the very beginning of the text ultimately serves the same function as Alex’s improbably omnipresent cleavage: it encourages the reader to objectify the woman from the start, making us complicit in the same process enacted by the men within the text. Without seeing any concrete evidence of her behavior, we already think of her as an erotic object, rather than a human subject; we are already willing to believe that “the concubine is sacrificed to her own passion.”⁸⁶

(iii) *Winning Her Back*

A final parallel in the objectification of Alex and Tizkoret is their early narrative of departure and return, resulting in reemphasized ownership. Both narratives begin with the woman estranged from her man for reasons that are vague. Following her departure from his sphere of control, he has to petition for her return. Yet, despite some reluctance on her part, he manages to regain her without any real promises to treat her differently in the future.

In *Green Lantern*, we see this when Kyle shows up at Alex’s house, late at night, very soon after gaining his superpowers. She protests that they broke up because of his “irresponsibility” and her “doing all the work,”⁸⁷ but he insists on coming in and showing off his new superhero identity. Afterward, Kyle sweet-talks Alex until she agrees to resume their relationship. When she consents to take him back, he then pushes his luck and asks to spend the night; Alex agrees while looking directly at the reader, as if to seek empathy for her patience with overeager men.

Similarly, Judges 19 begins with an estrangement, based on (as we have seen) an ambiguous double entendre for Tizkoret’s behavior. Yet whatever the cause of her departure, the Levite retrieves her by appearing at her father’s house and “speaking to her heart” (v. 3). As with Alex, the agreement happens with some reluctance—albeit expressed through Tizkoret’s father’s repeated appeals not to leave (vv. 4–9), rather than by the woman herself. And as with Alex, the man ultimately regains sole access to the woman he had lost.

Moreover, the MT’s version makes it clear that Tizkoret herself had a role in resuming the relationship. The latter half of v. 3 differs between the MT and the LXX:

84 Indeed, Bemby mentions Jezebel as a fellow victim of “sexual slander” (Bemby, “The Levite’s Concubine,” 533–36).

85 Hamley’s recent analysis of the text seems to support this conclusion, arguing for a deliberate ambiguity about what the *pilegesh* may or may not have done (Hamley, “What’s Wrong with ‘Playing the Harlot’?,” 60–62).

86 Lillian Klein, *The Triumph of Irony*, 173.

87 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #51, p. 5.

<p>וַתְּבִיֵּאֶהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ וַיִּרְאֶהוּ אָבִי הַנְּעֻרָה וַיִּשְׂמַח לִקְרָאתוֹ</p>	<p>And <i>she brought him</i> to her father’s house, and the young woman’s father saw him, and he rejoiced at meeting him.</p>
<p>καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἕως οἴκου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὁ πατήρ τῆς νεάνιδος καὶ παρήν εἰς ἀπάντησιν αὐτοῦ.</p>	<p>And <i>he went</i> as far as her father’s house, and the maiden’s father saw him, and he was present to meet him.</p>

The Septuagint’s version is more straightforward, avoiding questions about why Tizkoret would first leave the Levite and then welcome him,⁸⁸ but it (and the translations that follow it, like the NRSV) loses a crucial story element. Whatever the circumstances of her departure, the Hebrew text makes it clear that Tizkoret—like Alex—welcomed back her suitor of her own volition.⁸⁹

At first glance, this subplot of repossession may seem extraneous to the main narrative, but it actually establishes a crucial element of willing submission. As Adams notes,

One of the mythologies of a rapist culture is that women not only ask for rape, they also enjoy it. . . . Similarly, advertisements and popular culture tell us that animals like Charlie the Tuna and Al Capp’s Shmoo wish to be eaten. The implication is that women and animals **willingly participate in the process that renders them absent.**⁹⁰

Despite a period of estrangement based on their man’s flaws, Alex and Tizkoret return to their relationships with full knowledge of the situation, permitting the reader to transform them into absent referents without a lingering sense of guilt.

(d) Dismemberment

Adams calls the second step of her destructive cycle “fragmentation”⁹¹ or “dismemberment.” While an objectified woman is still a woman, a pile of body

88 Indeed, Nelson rejects it precisely because the MT is “the more difficult text,” arguing that “the Greek translator apparently saw a premature reconciliation on her part as inappropriate” (Nelson, *Judges*, 299).

89 That said, it is not entirely clear how much agency she truly had. Johan Coetzee describes the situation as follows:

By taking the Levite into her father’s house on his arrival (19:3), the conduct of the woman not only mirrors hospitality peculiar to that society, but implicitly the Levite again forced himself into the woman’s own space where she was experiencing the safety of her father’s house. It could have been either his speaking to her heart (persuasive speaking) or his enforcing speech that opened his way into her father’s house.

(“The ‘Outcry’ of the Dissected Woman,” 55)

90 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 82–83, my emphasis.

91 Adams’ concept of fragmentation is distinct from the psychotherapeutic use of the word which Janelle Stanley recently explored in this text (“Judges 19: Text of Trauma”). Stanley’s fragmentation

parts is not; a dangling chicken corpse evokes more sympathy than styrofoam-packaged boneless breasts. *Green Lantern* and Judges 19 both make this process brutally literal.

(i) Monochrome Body Parts, Technicolor Men

When Kyle discovers Alex's body, we see the kitchen through his eyes: the refrigerator door swings partly open, revealing two dismembered⁹² human calves, wearing high-heeled shoes.⁹³ We can infer that the remainder of the body is there too, behind the door, but the scene is remarkably bloodless—a supermarket, not a slaughterhouse. This matches Adams' note about how the stage of fragmentation usually takes place behind closed doors: "The action of fragmentation, the killing, and the dividing is elided. . . . We don't want to know about fragmentation because that is the process through which the live referent disappears."⁹⁴ As a result of this bloodlessness, the reader's focus shifts from Alex's violent fate to Kyle's reaction to the scene. The color palette of this page reflects that shift: Alex's body, like the rest of the kitchen, is in monochrome shades of blue; the spotlight of full color is reserved for Kyle's anguished body and face as he processes his emotional reaction.

But dismemberment is not limited to literal severed limbs; it can also occur through metaphor, including visual metaphor. The first frames of her confrontation with the murderous Major Force show Alex's body in action as she meets him and begins to run from him. She reaches the kitchen and pulls a knife from the drawer; we can see a fragment of her terrified face reflected in the blade, a foreshadowing of the knife's ultimate purpose.

(ii) Unhanding Tizkoret

The same pairing of literal and literary dismemberment appears in Judges 19. Tizkoret's moment of metaphorical dismemberment is her rape, when the previously objectified woman loses all coherence and agency. As noted earlier,

is the self-dismemberment of memories and sensations in order to cope with one's experience of overwhelming trauma, while Adams focuses on how humans dismember *other* beings in order to reduce them to impersonal, functional parts. The interconnections of internal and interpersonal fragmentation are well beyond the bounds of this study; to avoid confusion, I primarily refer to "dismemberment."

92 The comic's author, Ron Marz, later claimed that the image originally showed her intact body, but they had to change it to draw the refrigerator door mostly closed, thanks to Comics Code objections. Any perception of dismemberment was only in readers' "imagination." Having spent substantial time examining the image in question, I find it very difficult to imagine how Alex's body could occupy the illustrated position without either dismemberment or non-Euclidean geometries (Marz, "Ron Marz Responds").

93 Two pages prior, when Alex was fighting off her murderer, she was casually dressed in athletic socks. Thus, the high-heeled shoes are either an editorial oversight or a disturbing suggestion: that Major Force dressed up Alex's dismembered corpse to make it "sexier."

94 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 76.

dismemberment is usually carried out behind closed doors, and the text likewise glosses over the actual act:

[T]he rape itself, at least, is not narrated: the text limits its report of the woman's victimization at the hands of all these men to just one half-verse. . . . The narrative, that is, forecloses on any information that might shed a sure light on the woman's thoughts, feelings and/or physical reactions.⁹⁵

Instead, we slide forward into its aftermath.⁹⁶

The Bible contains many examples of physical body parts used metaphorically, and several such instances litter Judges 19 like dismembered limbs. We see thighs (vv. 1, 18), hearts (vv. 3, 5, 6, 22), and feet (v. 21). Most importantly, we see Tizkoret's hands in v. 27. I have already discussed the breathless revelations in this moment—"Look! The woman! His *pilegesh!*"—but just as in *Green Lantern*, the text's focus does not linger long on her whole body. Instead, we "zoom in" onto a single body part, Tizkoret's hands on the doorstep (עַל־הַסֶּף). Hands have weighty associations in biblical Hebrew, symbolizing personal power and a number of connected concepts,⁹⁷ and these hands have been given significance by various scholars; for instance, Mieke Bal argues that Tizkoret's

hand on the threshold, points in accusation to her murderer. . . . Her last act, as an already destroyed subject, is to claim her place in the house, to accuse the inhabitants of the house of their repudiation of her.⁹⁸

Along a similar vein, Parker observes that in the Bible, hands have "metaphysical and metonymic connotations of 'power,'" and therefore that her hands' position represents a "final act of self-determination."⁹⁹

In contrast, Klein reaches the exact opposite conclusion:

The entire figure of the woman is concentrated in her hands, stretched toward the door. The image of mute helplessness, even before she is surmised to be dead, is in dramatic contrast to the singular independence shown by the woman in leaving her husband.¹⁰⁰

95 Karla Bohmbach, "Conventions/Contraventions," 86.

96 This elision parallels the story of Jephthah's daughter, earlier in Judges 11; despite details like the dialogue between Jephthah and his unnamed daughter, his slaughter of her is euphemistically described with "he did what he had vowed to her" (וַיַּעַשׂ לָהּ אֲתֵּיגְדֶרְוּ אֲשֶׁר נָדַר) in v.39.

97 Cf. Ralph Alexander, 7. For a fuller discussion of the roles that hands play in the Hebrew Bible, cf. Silvia Schroer and Thomas Staubli, *Body Symbolism in the Bible*, 150–80, and John Shackelford, *Biblical Body Language*, 84–95.

98 Mieke Bal, "Dealing/with/Women," 330.

99 Julie Faith Parker, "Re-membering the Dismembered," 177.

100 Klein, *The Triumph of Irony*, 171.

This view that Tizkoret’s hands are primarily a pathetic detail to elicit sympathy from the reader is a popular and long-standing one; indeed, the nineteenth-century commentator Josephine Butler honed in on them as a central image of the text:

Her hands are upon the threshold—dead hands flung forward in mute and terrible appeal to the God above, who, looking down from heaven, sees not that prostrate form alone, but on the one side the powers of hell, on the other, in their safe dwelling-place, the selfish sleepers to whom the pale cold hands appeal in vain.¹⁰¹

But whether they were originally powerful or powerless, Tizkoret’s hands are a synecdoche for her self. They reduce a living woman to a single body part, and that body part is lying on the threshold of the house, unable to enter.

Finally, the metaphorical becomes literal, and Tizkoret is carved into pieces by her husband in a terse four-part sequence: “He entered (בוא) his house. He took (לקח) the cleaver. He seized (חזק) his *pilegesh*. He chopped her up, down to her bones” (v. 29). Some scholars linger on the gruesome possibility that Tizkoret may have been alive until that point,¹⁰² but the text is unconcerned with the question; by that point, she is a non-person, on par with the house and the cleaver.

Rather, the verse repeats a verb sequence¹⁰³ that reflects the Levite’s initial powerlessness at the start of the text. He had to enter (בוא) his father-in-law’s house to regain the woman he had taken (לקח); rather than letting him take her immediately, the father “seized” him (חזק), prevailing over him to linger in Bethlehem.¹⁰⁴

Mirrored verbs in Judges 19:29

וַתְּבִיֵּאֶהּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ And he entered her father’s house. (v. 3b)	וַיָּבֹא אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ And he entered his house,
וַיִּקַּח-לוֹ אִשָּׁה פִּלְגֶשׁ And he took a certain <i>pilegesh</i> (v. 1b)	וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלֹת and he took the cleaver,
וַיַּחֲזִק-בּוֹ חֹתְנוֹ אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה And his father-in-law, the young woman’s father, “seized” him. (v. 4a)	וַיַּחֲזִק בְּפִילְגְּשׁוֹ and he seized his <i>pilegesh</i> .

101 Josephine Butler, *The Duty of Women*, 5–6.
 102 Tribble was one of the first to note that the MT “is silent, allowing the interpretation that this abused woman is yet alive” (*Texts of Terror*, 79). Nelson concurs: “The observant reader notes that the narrator does not actually report that she is dead at this point, which should lead to a good deal of discomfort when v. 29 is reached” (*Judges*, 309). Ilse Müllner goes even further: “in the Masoretic text, the Levite is depicted as an accomplice to the murder of his wife” (“Lethal Differences,” 133).
 103 MacDonald notes the repetition of חזק as a verb, signifying a mirrored change of fortune from the beginning of the story, but does not note the repetition of the other two verbs (MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone*, 131).
 104 The final verb נח is unparalleled earlier in the tale, but it is one of the strongest linguistic links to 1 Samuel 11, when Saul chops oxen into pieces and sends them throughout Israel. As with the place-names in this text, I find it plausible that the connection is a deliberate commentary on Saulide traditions. If so, the connection is still ominous, for in the Saul story, he dismembered a literal animal.

Instead of his father-in-law's house, we are in his house. Instead of being "seized" (i.e., pressured) by Tizkoret's father, he can seize Tizkoret. This time around, the Levite is in total control of all his possessions, *pilegesh* included, and her fragmentation into a non-person is complete. As Bal notes, "it is as if the man is trying, in overdoing the violence already done to her, retrospectively to affirm *his* mastery, as against the mastery of the rapists, over her."¹⁰⁵

To repeat the quote from Adams, "fragmentation . . . is the process through which the live referent disappears," and Tizkoret's literal dismemberment aids in her metaphorical fragmentation: "Gone is the bruised and battered woman's body that might produce guilt or shame from the man who betrayed the woman he should have protected. The act of dismemberment functions to cover the Levite's crimes."¹⁰⁶

(e) Consumption

But dismemberment is not the end for these women; after meat is butchered, it must be consumed. Neither Judges 19 nor the *Green Lantern* story contains literal cannibalism, but both are rife with language of food and consumption, and both culminate in the metaphorical consumption of their women.

(i) "I'm Hungry"

After Major Force strangles Alex, he looms for a moment over her limp corpse. "I'm hungry," he says, a line with ambiguous and layered connotations: Does he intend to satisfy a sexual hunger, to consume her body literally, or to seek other food? The theme of food continues from there. Earlier, a bathrobe-clad Alex had promised Kyle, "I'll have a *surprise* waiting when you come back"¹⁰⁷—clearly an erotic enticement. But when he arrives, he finds a note saying "surprise for you in the fridge"; the reference "surprise" shifts from Alex to an implied cold dinner as its referent, and we can imagine Kyle's disappointment. Of course, there is indeed a "surprise in the fridge"—Alex's body—and so the referent shifts again, back to Alex, but this time in the context of food. It is no coincidence that Kyle discovers Alex's body in a refrigerator, not a garbage can or a laundry hamper; indeed, when Major Force taunts him later, he suggests that the alternative would have been a microwave.¹⁰⁸ In turn, Kyle labels the criminal a "butcher,"¹⁰⁹ with more than metaphorical accuracy.

Thus, with the multivalent term "surprise" and the location of the refrigerator, the text flirts openly with the idea that Alex is, in some sense, a consumable food. Yet Adams' model refers to more than literal consumption; most men who

105 Bal, *Death & Dissymmetry*, 126.

106 Parker, "Re-membering the Dismembered," 180.

107 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #54, p. 8.

108 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #60, p. 15.

109 *Green Lantern* vol. 3, #55, p. 7.

“consume women” are not actually cannibals. Instead, she refers to “the consumption of the referent so that through metaphor it lost all meaning except by its reference to something else.”¹¹⁰ So what does it mean to consume a woman metaphorically? To answer that, we can peek behind the scenes of *Green Lantern*. Ron Marz, the author of the Alex DeWitt plotline, later defended himself to the *Women in Refrigerators* website by stating bluntly that the plot was Alex’s only reason to exist: “Alex was a character destined to die from the moment she was first introduced.” He “wanted her to be liked,” but only inasmuch as it would help readers “empathize with Kyle’s loss” and feel righteous anger at the villain.¹¹¹

The fact that a woman’s gruesome death is described as “Kyle’s loss” epitomizes how Alex has, in Adams’ words, “lost all meaning except by reference to something else.” The reader’s image of Alex has been shaped by the theme of food and the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, resulting in a blended metaphorical model that is consumable, that is, intended to be subsumed and utilized for the nutriment of another being. All food inherently has a teleology of consumption, and Alex’s *telos* was fulfilled by fleshing out Kyle.

(ii) A Tale of Three Meals (Plus One)

This tangle of literal and metaphorical consumption appears in Judges 19 as well. Three ritualized “meals” form the narrative loci of the tale, and each meal becomes the site for struggles of male domination, with Tizkoret’s mute body consumed as the *pièce de résistance*.

The first scene takes place in Bethlehem, the “house of bread,”¹¹² where an extended feast becomes the site of a power play between the Levite and his father-in-law. The Levite had the simple goal of retrieving his *pilegesh*, but his father-in-law “overpowered him,” to translate חזק over-literally, and the two eat and drink for three days. On the fourth day, the Levite makes his countermove, evident in the changing verb tenses of verse five: *they* wake early (implying that he has already achieved nighttime access to Tizkoret), but *he* stands up to his father-in-law (literally and metaphorically) to depart.¹¹³

Judges 19:5a

<p>וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הָרְבִיעִי וַיִּשְׁכְּמוּ בַבֹּקֶר וַיִּקָּם לָלֶכֶת</p>	<p>Then it was the fourth morning, and <i>they</i> woke in the morning, and <i>he</i> arose to depart.</p>
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110 Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 92.

111 Marz, “Ron Marz Responds.”

112 This etymology is probably a false one, as לחם likely referred to either conflict or the deity Lahmu (see, e.g., Robert Boling, *Joshua*, 391), but the meaning of bread is obvious enough in Hebrew that the authors of *Ruth* emphasized the irony that “the fertile ‘House of Bread’ is struck by famine” (Kirsten Nielsen, *Ruth*, 41).

113 These changing tenses are seen by some, incorrectly, as a result of redactional confusion. Cf. Moore, *Judges*, 410–11.

But once again the father overrules him, and once again they spend their day eating and drinking, and the scenario repeats the following day. There are parallels between this passage and other scenes of biblical hospitality, such as Abraham's welcome in Genesis 18 and Laban's hosting in Genesis 24, but five whole days of food and drink takes hospitality to the point of absurdity.¹¹⁴ The length of this stay, both in absolute time and in textual narrative, has found few satisfactory explanations—save that of Andrew Ng, who brings a Gothic literary analysis to the text in a rarely referenced article:

What I find curious in these verses is the overemphasis of the father's hospitality, especially manifested through alimentary representations. Within vv. 4 to 8, the verb "eat" appears four times while "drink" appears three times (even in v. 9, eating and drinking are implied consequences if the Levite had allowed himself to be prevailed upon to stay one more night); "enjoy" is twice mentioned (vv. 6, 9). I want to suggest that this dietary display has a metonymic implication which is related to the "textual cannibalism" of the repressed woman. That is, this episode functions as a figurative compendium to the way in which the woman will be subsequently "devoured" later in/by the text (the rape in Gibeah). The "eating" motif in this episode, I argue, serves as a powerful leitwort that foreshadows the meal-covenant that will serve to consolidate homosocial hospitality, and which entails the sacrifice of women.¹¹⁵

In other words, the eating, drinking, and enjoyment are not tangential to the main plot; rather, they foreshadow and reflect the metaphorical consumption that will occur.

When the Levite finally asserts his will and departs, Tizkoret in tow, they travel to Gibeah, where they find themselves eating yet another meal that becomes yet another power struggle. Once again, the meal is cut short for a power negotiation in which Tizkoret is a bartering chip. Once again, Tizkoret finds herself wrested from "safe" domestic feasting into a precarious situation. In both cases, the text leaves it unsaid whether she is even a guest at the feast, and unlike Genesis 18 with its fatted calf, no animals are killed to serve as the meal's centerpiece. One may imagine a mirror of Isaac's innocently ironic question: "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?" (Gen 22:7). The wine and the bread are there, but where is the flesh for the main course? Back in 1988, Bal alludes to this metaphor, albeit with sacrificial connotations:

The sacrificial meaning of this durative event is antithetic to the prescriptions of the burnt offering. The interdiction against consuming the body of the victim is transgressed to excess. The collective rape is a collective sacrificial

114 Kirsten Gardner has suggested that they are intended to allude to the *marzeah* feast known from West Semitic studies, but does not offer a detailed question of why the *marzeah* would be relevant, other than that "the feast bodes ill within the context of Judg 19" ("Hidden in Plain Sight," 58).

115 Andrew Ng, "Revisiting Judges 19," 207.

“meal,” a fellowship meal of male bonding, wherein men, in solidarity with each other, share the consumption of the “other,” the victim who does not belong to the group that the meal has the function to constitute.¹¹⁶

Before the story moves to its third feast, we pause for an interlude of literal butchery. Although I have already discussed this scene as an instance of fragmentation, its specifically culinary nature deserves attention.

Judges 19:30b

<p>וַיָּבֹא אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַמַּאֲכָלֶת וַיַּחֲזֹק בְּפִי-לְגָשׁוֹ וַיִּנְתְּחָהּ לְעֲצָמֶיהָ לְשָׁנָיִם עֶשְׂרִי גִתְחִים</p>	<p>He came to his house, took the <i>ma'akelet</i>, seized the <i>pilegesh</i>, and chopped her down to her bones, into 12 chunks.</p>
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The overtones of butchery have been observed previously. Moore notes, “the words employed are the proper terms for cutting up the carcass [*sic*] of an animal,”¹¹⁷ while Nelson states that “the Levite treats the woman’s body as an object or an animal carcass. . . . Some interpreters see this phrase as a hint of sacrifice, but this language indicates a procedure of butchering into appropriate ‘cuts’ to be distributed.”¹¹⁸

A closer look at the language of this verse supports their conclusions. The knife used by the Levite is the rare word *מַאֲכָלֶת*—literally, a “food-tool.” The word appears twice elsewhere in the Bible: once, as noted by many commentators, in Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac, and once as a utensil of consumption (not sacrifice) in Proverbs 30:14.¹¹⁹ Likewise, the root *נחח* is associated with meat-chopping, but the context can be sacrificial or culinary; cf. Ezekiel 24:4,6 for the latter.¹²⁰ Thus far, the woman could be either a meal or a sacrifice—and indeed, many commentators, including Bal above, have argued for the latter.¹²¹

116 Bal, *Death & Dissymmetry*, 123.

117 Moore, *Judges*, 420.

118 Nelson, *Judges*, 309.

119 As MacDonald notes, “the word for ‘knife’ (*ma'keleth*) suggests food (*akal*) (cf. Prov. 30.14). Are the Israelite tribes being sent a dismembered sacrifice or a joint of meat?” (*Not Bread Alone*, 131).

120 Lauren Monroe observes that “the verb *נחח*, used to describe the Levite’s cutting his concubine into pieces, is otherwise attested only in the context of preparation of an animal as an *עולה* (e.g., Exod 29:17–18; Lev 1:6, 12; 8:20; 1 Kgs 18:33), with the one notable exception of Saul’s battle muster in 1 Sam 11:7” (“Disembodied Women,” 45). While this is technically true, she does not address the root’s appearance in noun form (*נחח*), which occurs in many of those same passages (e.g., Ex 29:17, which commands *לְנַתְחָהּ לְנַתְחָהּ*—“you shall cut [it] into its cuts”), but also in the culinary metaphor of Ezek 24. Since the Bible devotes vastly more space to sacrificial laws than to cookery, the preponderance of evidence is unsurprising, and I am not persuaded by Monroe’s argument that the text is deliberately evoking ritual human sacrifice.

121 For a summary of this position, cf. Monroe, “Disembodied Women,” who argues that “the sacrificial nuance is deliberate” (46). As counterargument, I turn to Marcel Detienne and Jean Pierre Vernant’s book *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, which wrestles with the precise subject of differentiating butchery from sacrifice. Vernant summarizes, “Sacrifice is presented as a meal in which meat is eaten, but this consumption of fleshly food obeys a whole series of restrictions and constraints. First, it is limited to some animal species and excludes others. Second, the killing,

But contextual clarity appears with the phrase לְעֶצְמֶיהָ: he chops down to her bones. Most translations euphemistically render לְעֶצְמֶיהָ as “limb to limb” or similar. Yet such a translation is not based on an abundance of comparative evidence; *לְעֶצְמִים only occurs here in the Bible, regardless of suffix.¹²² Conversely, there are many instances where עֶצֶם with the ים-plural refers to bones, and the term was translated as such in the Septuagint.¹²³ In short, contrary to Koehler-Baumgartner, the evidence does not support a semantic distinction between ים- and ת- endings of the plural, and “chopped down to her bones” makes more sense than “chopped down to her limbs.”

But regardless of its translation, this phrase never appears in any sacrificial contexts; quite the opposite, the Pentateuch’s legal mentions of bones are uniformly negative. For instance, the Passover sacrifice’s bones must not be broken (Ex 12:46), and the touch of a human bone makes someone unclean (Num 19:16). In other words, if this were a sacrifice, her bones would not be the emphasis. On the other hand, chopped bones were perfectly normal in cooking. (Bones are generally deemphasized in modern American cooking, but they are a source of substantial flavor and protein, and are considered an integral part of many meals in non-American cultures even today.) This is evident in passages like Micah 3:2–3 and the extended metaphorical prophecy of Ezekiel 24.

Ezekiel 24:3b—5, 10

שֹׁפֵת הַסִּיר שֹׁפֵת וְגַם-יִצֵק בּוֹ מַיִם:	Put the cooking-pot on, put it on, and also pour in water.
אָסַף נְתֻחֶיהָ אֵלֶיהָ כָּל-נֶתַח טוֹב יָרֵךְ וְכַתֵּף מִבְּחָר עֶצְמִים מְלֵא	Gather the pieces into it, every good piece, the thigh[s] and shoulder[s]; fill it with the choicest bones.
מִבְּחָר הַצֹּאן לְקוֹס וְגַם דוֹר הָעֶצְמִים תַּחְתֶּיהָ	Take the choicest of the flock, and pile up bones under it.
רַתַּח רְתֻחֶיהָ גַּם-בְּשֻׁלוֹ עֶצְמֶיהָ בְּתוֹכָהּ	Boil its broth, and simmer its bones in it. . . .
הִרְבֵּה הָעֵצִים הַדֹּלֵק הָאֵשׁ	Pile on the wood and kindle the fire;
הִתֵּם הַבָּשָׂר וְהִרְקַח וְהִרְקַח הַמְּרֻקָּחָהּ	Cook the meat through, and season with the spices;
וְהָעֶצְמוֹת יִתְרוּ:	let the bones roast. ¹²⁴

butchering, carving, preparation, and consumption of the meat follow precise rules. Finally, there is a religious intentionality to the meal” (*Cuisine of Sacrifice*, 24). None of these three sacrificial factors is at play in Judges 19.

122 HALOT claims that the ים-plural form of bones (like this) means “limbs,” not bones, but notes that “the general difference remains uncertain” (Koehler and Baumgartner, vol. 2, p. 869).

123 A non-exhaustive list of examples includes מִבְּחָר עֶצְמִים מְלֵא (Ezek 24:4, which the NRSV renders “fill it with choice bones,” translated ὀστῶν in the LXX); לְהוֹצִיא עֶצְמִים מִן-הַבַּיִת (Amos 6:10 “to bring the bones from the house,” translated ὀστῶ in the LXX); נִפְזְרוּ עֶצְמֵינוּ לְפִי שְׂאוּל (Ps 141:7, “our bones are scattered before Sheol,” translated ὀστῶ in the LXX); and וְשִׁבְרִים אֶת לֵל עֲצָמוֹ (“and they shattered his bones,” 4Q372 f1:15).

124 “Roast” (חָרַר)—or perhaps “brown” or, in most translations, “burn.” Roasting or browning makes sense in a culinary context, as many recipes (e.g., Indonesian Rendang Beef) use a “reverse

Butcher-knife, meat-chopping, bones: the Levite is preparing a meal, not merely a sacrifice.¹²⁵ All that the banquet lacks are guests—and they appear at the start of Judges 20, an enormous assembly of Israelites gathered to consume Tizkoret’s corpse metaphorically. *Codex Vaticanus* hints directly at the metaphor in play when the Levite explains himself:

Judges 20:6b, BHS and *Vaticanus*

כִּי עָשׂוּ זָמָה וַיַּבְבְּלָהּ בְּיַשְׁרָאֵל	For they did infamy and outrageous behavior in Israel.
ὅτι ἐποίησαν ζέμα καὶ ἀπόπτωμα ἐν Ἰσραήλ	For they did <i>fermentation/boiling</i> ¹²⁶ and misfortune in Israel.

As Niditch notes, this culinary translation may have occurred “because the Greek word sounds like Hebrew *zimmâ* and is a good metaphor for unbridled wickedness,”¹²⁷ but I would add that its choice may reflect an awareness of the culinary themes in the broader passage. Something is cooking at this great assembly—metaphorically if not literally.

Here we return to Adams’ definition of metaphorical consumption as that which causes something to have “lost all meaning except by its reference to something else.” A similar purpose infuses the Levite’s self-defense at the third “feast.” In Judges 20:5, the Levite retells his experience in Gibeah to the assembled tribes of Israel—with a few alterations. “**Me**, they intended to kill—and my *pilegesh* they raped, so that she died.” The Hebrew fronts “me” to emphasize his focus: the threat to the Levite was so serious that someone else died.¹²⁸ Tizkoret’s sole purpose in his narrative is to illustrate the depth and depravity of the Levite’s peril. As Adams says elsewhere, “the consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself.”¹²⁹ This final feast represents the annihilation of Tizkoret: she nourishes the guests with the fuel of outrage, then disappears, never again mentioned in the narrative.¹³⁰ Consumption is complete.

braising” technique in which the meat is simmered in cooking liquid until cooked through, and then the heat is increased to evaporate the liquid and let the pieces brown (i.e., undergo a combination of caramelization and the Maillard reaction) for deep flavor.

125 The line between “sacrifice” and “meal” is admittedly blurry, as sacrifices would often conclude by eating the sacrificed meat (most famously the Passover sacrifice, e.g., Num 9:11—but note the next verse, which forbids breaking the sacrifice’s bones). Regardless, my point is not that the passage is impossible to read sacrificially, but that a theological focus on sacrifice obscures its culinary elements.

126 Cf. Henry Liddell et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, for this translation.

127 Niditch, *Judges*, 200.

128 As Ackerman notes, “Any culpability the Levite himself has in sending the woman out the door goes unmentioned, for in the mind-set that defines the patriarchal family unit, no culpability is there. . . . The Benjaminites deserve punishment not for what was done to the woman, but for the acts they undertook against the rights of the man” (Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer*, 239).

129 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 73.

130 Cf. Keefe’s “Rapes of Women” for an examination of how individual biblical rapes are “fuel” for broader conflicts, both here and in other passages.

One final word on the three meals: as Robert Alter and other folklorists have noted, repetitions of action sequences, like Balaam's attempts to command his donkey, occur "most commonly and most clearly in the folktale form of three consecutive repetitions, or three plus one, with some intensification or increment from one occurrence to the next, usually concluding in either a climax or a reversal."¹³¹ This raises the question: Is the third "feast" the final one, or is there a "plus one" to provide the narrative climax? While the possibility extends beyond the bounds of this work's focus, I believe it plausible that the wife-negotiation of Judges 21 represents a fourth and final feast.¹³² Once again, a group of men gather and talk, negotiating the bodies of women—but this time, the main course consists of hundreds of women, rather than the single *pilegesh*. Niditch hints at this very metaphor: "The women are viewed as captured commodities; they are exchange items that achieve unity between those who participate in the exchange, as are the pieces of an animal carcass that create community at a sacrificial feast."¹³³ "Plus one," indeed.

(f) **The Invisible Woman**

"The process of viewing another as consumable, as something, is usually invisible to us," Adams writes. "Its invisibility occurs because it corresponds to the view of the dominant culture. The process is also invisible to us because the end product of the process—the object of consumption—is available everywhere."¹³⁴ Despite all the feminist discussions of Judges 19 in print already, its cycle of consumption has remained largely invisible, simply because it is so familiar. Judges 19 portrays the timeless cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption through which both women and animals are transformed from living beings into absent referents into nothingness, a cycle in which the distinction between women and meat can become semiotically blurred.

We thus return to the central question raised in this chapter's introduction: Does this text, in some way, *harm* women, in addition to *depicting* harm to women? That is, does the retelling of this story reinforce attitudes toward women that result in real violence and abuse? Many scholars—largely male—have argued the opposite. For instance, Brad Embry recently insisted:

At certain, key places in the narrative of the Hebrew Bible, only a female figure works to drive the narrative forward, and, as a result, females are essential to the formation and development of the narrative. A rape-murdered male would not work in Judges 19. Far from making a case for the relegation of

131 Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 120.

132 Robin Baker does not include this story as an example, but *Hollow Men, Strange Women* contains substantial discussion of how the 3+1 model is a common feature in Judges in particular (Baker, *Hollow Men*, 86–93).

133 Niditch, *Judges*, 194.

134 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 15.

women to an inferior status, the narrative dimensions of the story suggest that a high valuation is placed on the female role.¹³⁵

Likewise, Elizabeth Tracy cites several ways in which Tizkoret is “powerful,” for example, calling her “a potential judge in Israel” and “the catalyst for potential redemption.”¹³⁶ Helen Paynter’s *Telling Terror in Judges 19* offers a “reparative reading” of the text that argues that it “brings us into anamnestic solidarity with the dead woman.”¹³⁷ More generally, most scholars are eager to give the text an agenda (conscious or unconscious) toward women. Either they are sympathetic and vulnerable victims, or they are dangerously independent figures in need of punishment, or they are victimized precisely for their independence.

But the devastatingly simple fact is that this story is not about Tizkoret.¹³⁸ Butler puts this bluntly:

Thus chap. 19 is not an independent narrative in the present context. Nor is its point that described by Ackerman: “men’s mastery over the women who are under their control” (*Warrior, Dancer*, 238). It is only the exposition for the ensuing chapters, introducing a one-sided picture of a Levite and the shameful action of one part of the tribe of Benjamin.¹³⁹

In Butler’s summary of the chapter’s significance, the raped *pilegesh* is not even worth a mention. Tizkoret is anonymous, objectified, and ultimately forgotten by the text—she is collateral damage, not a character. Likewise, Alex DeWitt was ultimately just a plot twist in a comic book whose very title was *Green Lantern*.

Yet despite the “insignificance” of these invisible women, the nature and depiction of their deaths still sends a powerful message. Both of them rely on the tenacious and cross-cultural metaphor of women as food. The perniciousness of this process is recognized by Ken Stone in another context (Nathan’s parable to David in 2 Samuel 12):

Although God, Nathan, and even David himself all view the actions in this story negatively, a basic comparability between the woman as sexual object

135 Brad Embry, “Narrative Loss,” 266. A similar argument is made by Keefe, who argues that “This female body is situated as a sacred center in Israel (Landy) that can nourish life and generate the bonds of community. Its violation is a violation of life, and images of brokenness through sexual violence serve most potently as figures of brokenness in the continuity of life and community” (Keefe, “Rapes of Women,” 94).

136 Tracy, “The Power of a Powerless Woman,” 74.

137 Helen Paynter, *Telling Terror*, 65.

138 The question of what the story *is* about remains beyond the bounds of this monograph. Edenburg’s recent and exhaustive analysis (*Dismembering the Whole: Composition and Purpose of Judges 19–21*, 2016) argues that its primary compositional purpose is anti-Benjaminite rhetoric from a post-exilic origin, and her points are well-considered. But whether the consensus of scholarship moves in her direction, returns to the anti-Saulide hypothesis, or postulates some different explanation, the *pilegesh* remains equally consumed by the text’s ultimate purpose.

139 Butler, *Judges*, 416.

and the daughterly lamb as edible object is what allows Nathan's parable and oracle to make sense.¹⁴⁰

This "basic comparability"—their compatibility for a conceptual metaphor—is both necessary for and amplified by the text. By untangling and illuminating the metaphor, we can not only identify the elusive element that has troubled so many feminist interpreters of Judges 19, but we can also equip the reader to identify the metaphor as it continues to resonate in our world.

140 Stone, "Judges 3 and the Queer Hermeneutics of Carnophallogocentrism," 272.

4 Forbidden Fruit

Food and/as Consumption in 2 Samuel 13

(a) Nibbling at the Text

(i) *Sufjan Stevens via Paul Ricoeur*

*In the morning when you finally go
And the nurse runs in with her head hung low
And the cardinal hits the window*
—Sufjan Stevens, “Casimir Pulaski Day”

In this chapter, I bring in Paul Ricoeur’s work as a lens for the text under examination. To illustrate his theory on a smaller scale, though, I begin by analyzing a single image: the cardinal from “Casimir Pulaski Day,” a mellow indie-pop song. In the above stanza from the 2005 album *Illinois*, the singer/narrator recounts the death of a young woman (“you”) from leukemia. The first line revolves around a simple conceptual metaphor: DEATH IS DEPARTURE. The second line continues with the literal narrative of a nurse responding to the death. The third line, however, is curious. At least four readings are possible. First, by a *literal* reading, a bird has collided with the hospital window. The detail becomes linked in the narrator’s mind with the memory of her death. Second, reading this line as *dead metaphor*, numerous sources report the superstition that a bird at the window predicts death in the house.¹ The proverb thus becomes a metaphor for her death. Third, read as a *living metaphor*, the cardinal represents either the woman or the narrator; hitting the window represents the abrupt impact of her death. Finally, in an *associative* reading, cardinals are red, and red signifies blood (and therefore illness and death). The image of a red blot against the window associates the moment with blood and death.

No one of these interpretations is obviously correct or incorrect in the song’s context. More importantly, they are not mutually exclusive. For instance, the song could be alluding to a proverb about birds, while specifically choosing a cardinal for its red color; the event could have “really” happened within the song’s narrative, but also been imbued with metaphorical meaning. Because the song otherwise narrates events

1 Various books of superstitions cite this (e.g., The Diagram Group, *The Little Giant Encyclopedia of Superstitions*, 72), and a 1907 survey of popular superstitions listed it as the most common general bird-related superstition (Fletcher Dressler, *Superstition and Education*, 27).

literally, it encourages a literal interpretation; but because the event is unexpected (one does not normally link birds with a hospital) and the symbolic associations of red birds run deep, it encourages a metaphorical interpretation. So is this line a metaphor, why is it so effective, and how does all this connect to the Hebrew Bible?

To understand this situation better, I turn to the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur, whose work on metaphor may allow us to address this melange of literal and metaphorical implications. In *The Rule of Metaphor*, Ricoeur analyzes theories of metaphor stretching back to Aristotle, weaving them in with his own insights. (Unfortunately, the book was published five years before Lakoff and Johnson's introduction of conceptual metaphor theory, so it does not address that strand of thought.) As recently as this decade, Pettersson called it "perhaps the most fruitful approach for analyzing extended metaphors in relation to narrative."² As we move to a biblical text rich with moments that both are and are not metaphorical, Ricoeur's framework will give us a fresh way of understanding the grim events of 2 Samuel 13.

A few of his concepts will be summarized here. Two of Ricoeur's central concepts are *muthos* and *mimêsis*. *Muthos*, "plot," refers to the order-making power of the plot of stories, which link events into a coherent order and message. Ricoeur explains that "the fundamental trait of *muthos* is its character of order, of organization, of arranging or grouping."³ Conversely, *mimêsis*, "imitation," refers to the creation of something that replicates and refers to reality. In good literature, then, the text's *muthos* (the "story" unfolding in it) supports its *mimêsis* (the "truth" of it). Both functions are "ennobling"—that is, they take a piece of literature from a mere recounting of events, and they turn it into something more resonant and important. Ricoeur describes this ennobling quality as follows:

Thus, *muthos* is not just a rearrangement of human action into a more coherent form, but a structuring that elevates this action; so *mimêsis* preserves and represents that which is human, not just in its essential features, but in a way that makes it greater and nobler. There is thus a double tension proper to *mimêsis*: on the one hand, the imitation is at once a portrayal of human reality *and* an original creation; on the other, it is faithful to things as they are *and* it depicts them as higher and greater than they are.⁴

Another central concept is "seeing as." Ricoeur describes "seeing as," a concept he borrows from *Gestalt* theory, thus: "half thought, half experience, 'seeing as' is the intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together. . . . 'Seeing as' is an experience and an act at one and the same time." He continues soon after,

Thus, "seeing as" quite precisely plays the role of the schema that unites the *empty* concept and the *blind* impression;⁵ thanks to its character as half

2 Bo Pettersson, "Literary Criticism Writes Back," 96.

3 Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 36.

4 Ibid, 40, author's emphasis.

5 Here and below, I use Ricoeur's language of "blindness," despite recognizing its ableist implications; actual blindness does not in fact equate to ignorance.

thought and half experience, it joins the light of sense with the fullness of the image.⁶

In other words, metaphor—that is, the experience/act of “seeing as”—initiates a new process in its reader/interpreter, something much richer than the simple substitution of one concept for another. It unites “empty concept” (i.e., the metaphor’s tenor, an abstract idea) with “blind impression” (i.e., the metaphor’s vehicle, a simple image).

Uniting these concepts, Ricoeur concludes that “Metaphoricity is a trait not only of *lexis* [wordplay] but of *muthos* itself; and, as in the case of models, this metaphoricity consists in describing a less known domain—human reality—in the light of relationships within a fictitious but better known domain—the tragic tale. . . . Tragedy teaches us to ‘see’ human life ‘as’ that which the *muthos* displays.”⁷

We thus see that the implications of Ricoeur’s theory reach far beyond simple linguistic metaphors; metaphoricity is present intrinsically throughout fiction. In a “tragic tale,” the *muthos* becomes a model for us that demonstrates the deeper reality of life: “life is like *this*.”

Now I return to the line by Stevens. Through its multitude of possible meanings—proverbs, color associations, metaphor, and so on—the line evokes a “metaphoric gestalt” that encourages its listener to engage in the process of “seeing as.”⁸ A cardinal hitting a window is *seen as* a girl’s untimely death, in all its vividness and abruptness. It elevates a simple image of a bird into a complex emotional state (successful in its *mimêsis*) through its positioning in *muthos*. Indeed, the line stands in tension with the stanza’s first line, which describes the death as “when you finally go”—a humdrum metaphor for death that robs it of its emotional force. When “the cardinal hits the window,” death becomes at once nobler and more cruel. The line therefore illustrates Ricoeur’s belief that metaphor is an agent of *mimêsis*:

We are forced to ask whether the secret of metaphor, as a displacement of meaning at the level of words, does not rest in the elevation of meaning at the level of *muthos*. And if this proposal is acceptable, then metaphor would not only be a deviation in relation to ordinary usage, but also, by means of this deviation, the privileged instrument in that upward motion of meaning promoted by *mimêsis*.⁹

6 Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 213, author’s emphasis.

7 Ibid, 244–45.

8 Another excellent example of this ambiguous metaphoricity is another poem about birds by another writer named Stevens: Wallace Stevens’ famous “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird” (from *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, 1954). Unlike the simpler metaphors in many of Stevens’ other poems, the 13 stanzas do not feature blackbirds as obvious metaphors for anything specific; nonetheless, they create a wintry, unsettled mood in which the blackbirds are *seen as* harbingers of indifferent austerity.

9 Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 41.

Thus, as we move forward to examine 2 Samuel 13:1–23, the “rape of Tamar,” I will pay special attention to how the passage promotes “seeing as.” In what way does metaphor—and specifically the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD—create an “upward motion of meaning”? What reality does its *muthos* point toward and its *mimêsis* entail? The answers to these questions will require some investigation, but I argue that their ultimate product is to create a piece of literature that, like the classic tragedies that Ricoeur cites, operates on multiple levels with brilliant efficacy.

(ii) *An Overview of the Text*

The rape of Tamar¹⁰ has often been analyzed in tandem with Judges 19.¹¹ On their surface, the two texts appear to have many commonalities; both depict horrifying acts of sexual violence against women, both use this crime as the kindling for a widening circle of violence in the chapters that follow, both label the crime an “outrage” (נִבְלָה), and both even echo the same language of ultimately ineffective resistance: “no, my brother(s)!”¹² Yet the differences between them are also substantial. Tamar has a name and a voice, and she uses the latter eloquently to protest her attack. While the circumstances of her story are associated with food, just like Judges 19, her own hands are depicted preparing that food in detail. In short, Tamar’s story builds her up as a fleshed-out and agentic character in a way that Tizkoret’s never does.

This distinction also holds when we compare Tamar to a textually closer parallel: Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11–12. Both stories center on illicit sexual acts in David’s household—yet here, too, Tamar distinguishes herself. In the prophetic parable of Nathan in 2 Sam 12:1ff, Nathan compares David to a wealthy man who, instead of feasting on a lamb from his own flock, takes the beloved only lamb of a poor man. The narrative presence of WOMAN IS FOOD here is obvious; Bathsheba is allegorically presented as actual food, a lamb slaughtered for a feast. Crucially, though, the crime here is not committed against the slaughtered lamb, but against the poor man who owned her; when David obliviously protests the crime, he insists that the rich

10 For general discussion of this passage, cf. the major modern scholarly commentaries: Graeme Auld (*I and II Samuel*), Antony Campbell (*2 Samuel*), P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (*2 Samuel*), and Henry Smith (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel*). See also Greger Andersson, *Untameable Texts*, 246–51; Mary Bader, *Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible*; Shimeon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 239–82; Charles Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 17–42; Fokkelien van Dijk-Hemmes, “Tamar and the Limits of Patriarchy,” 135–56; Jan Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry in the Books of Samuel*, vol. 1, 99–114; Ilse Müllner, *Gewalt im Hause Davids*; George Ridout, “The Rape of Tamar,” 75–84; Ken Stone, *Sex, Honor, and Power*, 106–19; Phyllis Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 37–63; Frank Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 101–32. See also Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 1–13 for an overview of earlier historical analysis of 2 Samuel 13 and the broader narratives that contain it.

11 For example, Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*; Yael Shemesh, “Rape Stories and Gender Construction,” 309–33; Keefe, “Rapes of Women,” 79–97; and Leah Schulte, *The Absence of God in Biblical Rape Narratives*.

12 אֶל-אָחִי in Judg 19:23; אֶל-אָחִי in 2 Sam 13:12. These two instances are the only place in the Bible where the phrase occurs.

man “must restore (יִשְׁלַם) the lamb fourfold” (v. 6a). In other words, the rich man must make things right by providing *other* lambs to the poor man, his victim.

Here we see the same theme discussed in the previous chapter, where men are the “true victims” of crimes against women. Indeed, 2 Sam 13 seems to begin the same way when it positions Absalom as affected by Amnon’s crime. As Conroy notes, Absalom “overshadows the scene from the very start,”¹³ despite his total absence from the rape, and the chapter concludes (v. 23ff) with his vengeance for the crime.¹⁴ Nonetheless, he is *not* the primary victim, a fact which the text indicates in multiple ways. For one, in v. 19, Tamar demonstrates her grief publicly by, among other things, putting ashes on her head. The symbolic act is a familiar expression of anguish and mourning (cf. Ezek 27:30, Jonah 3:6, Job 2:8, Esth 4:1, Dan 9:3, etc.)—but this represents the only place in the Bible where a woman enacts it. In addition, Tamar’s name appears repeatedly in accusations against Amnon, making her a non-absent referent. Absalom is angry at Amnon “because he raped Tamar, his sister” (2 Sam 13:22), a phrasing reiterated by Jonadab in v. 32.¹⁵ Third, as this chapter will discuss, the text parallels Tamar cooking the *levivot* with Amnon raping Tamar—both sequences of action performed on an object. Yet the text interrupts the rape sequence twice with lengthy verbal protests by Tamar, preventing her from being reduced to something as inanimate as dough. These interruptions in the expected narrative emphasize Tamar’s status as an agent in her own right, one who can protest the violence done against her. Finally, Tamar herself focuses the discussion on her suffering in v. 16, when she chastises Amnon for sending her away, calling it an evil act worse than “the other thing you did *to me*” (אֶהְרֹת אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתָ עִמִּי).¹⁶ With this phrase, she centers herself as the victim of Amnon’s crime.

Perhaps 2 Samuel 13 attempts what Judges 19 does not: it seeks to persuade the reader that sexual violence is abhorrent by encouraging the reader to empathize with its victims. Yet the situation is more complicated than that. The text does go through the process of consumption that we saw in Chapter 3: Tamar is objectified as a beautiful *betulah*, then consumed as “fuel” for the narrative of fraternal murder that follows. Ultimately, the text is presenting a *muthos* in which women are treated as food—while framing it as *mimêsis*, not of true reality, but of the reality of Amnon’s lustful mind. We see the story through Amnon’s eyes, eyes that watch lecherously as Tamar takes each action; in those eyes, her innocent

13 Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 26.

14 Bar-Efrat also notes that “it is remarkable that he—rather than one of the principal characters, Amnon or Tamar—is given a prominent position at the beginning of the first verse” (Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 241).

15 In comparison, Nathan does not mention Bathsheba’s name when he accuses David—only her husband Uriah’s (2 Sam 12:9–10). Nor is Tizkoret emphasized, let alone named, when her husband recounts her rape and death (Judges 20:4–7). Note also the difference between the focalizations that name Tamar (Absalom in v.22, Jonadab in v.32) and Amnon’s brutal words in v.17: שְׁלַח-נָא אֶת-זֹאת מֵעַלִּי הַחוּצָה וְנִלְכַּד הַדֶּלֶת אַחֲרַיָּהּ (“Please send out this one, away from my presence, and lock the door after her.”) The presence or absence of her name from characters’ speech is telling.

16 Cf. Amy Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters*, 109.

manipulation of dough is “seen as” Amnon’s manipulation of her body. Only in the record of Tamar’s protests do we see the counternarrative to his perceived sequence of events.

Despite the way that the text sets up Tamar as the victim of Amnon’s crime, and despite the way that it presents and thereby critiques Amnon’s lustful objectification, it would be anachronistic and inaccurate to call 2 Sam 13 a “feminist” text. Rather, it is a complex and layered text, one that acknowledges the humanity of a female character, yet ultimately still treats that character as a secondary and brief participant in the sagas of kings and princes. Like the cardinal hitting the window in Stevens’ song, Tamar evokes an array of metaphoric and associative images, encouraging us to pause and empathize—before we move on with the broader song.

(b) “Lusty Latkes”? Interrogating the לֶבְבוֹת

(i) *What’s in a Name?*

I now shift from the broad and theoretical to the concrete and philological. The food that Tamar prepares is central to this text, and we will return to it in later sections. Yet the nature of that food is ambiguous, varying both within the text and among commentators. Within the text, the food is called “לֶחֶם” (v. 5), “בִּרְיָה” (vv. 5,7,10), and “לֶבְבוֹת” (vv. 6,8,10). The first two terms can be translated generically as “food”; לֶחֶם is a common word for food (or specifically bread), and בִּרְיָה, though it only appears in this passage, comes from the root ברה, which has connotations of feeding, sustaining, and bringing to health.¹⁷ לֶבְבוֹת, which also only appears here, has more obscure connotations, which I will soon discuss at length.

First, though, it is worth noting who uses each term. The cooking-and-feeding narrative occurs four times in 2 Samuel 13: once as a suggestion from Jonadab to Amnon, once as a request from Amnon to David, once as a command from David to Tamar, and once as narrated action between Tamar and Amnon. Bar-Efrat has an excellent analysis of the differences between these narratives; he observes that Jonadab is the most skillful, “camouflaging” Amnon’s intentions in flowery clauses and obfuscating requests. In contrast, Amnon’s request is an unsubtle reflection of his desires, while David’s command is a “naïve” oversimplification that ignores Amnon’s true goal.¹⁸ But despite his subtle observation of details, Bar-Efrat does not address the varying terms for the food, even though it is the only object that appears in all three requests, other than Amnon and Tamar themselves.¹⁹ The following chart summarizes the three terms:

17 Cf. Psalm 69:21, 2 Sam 12:17, 2 Sam 3:35, 1 Sam 2:29. I here reject the fascinating but unsubstantiated claim of Adrien Bledstein that “*habbiryâ* is not merely a designation for food, but . . . a healing ritual performed by a woman” (Bledstein, “Was Habbiryâ a Healing Ritual,” 15).

18 Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 252–54.

19 Conroy does note the different terms for food during the requests, calling בִּרְיָה the “more neutral” alternative, but he does not extend this observation to the narrative that follows (Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 29).

Verse	Term	Speaker	Addressee
5	לֶחֶם	Jonadab	Amnon
5	בְּרִיָּה	Jonadab	Amnon
6	לִבְבוֹת	Amnon	David
7	בְּרִיָּה	David	Tamar
8	לִבְבוֹת	Narrator	–
10	בְּרִיָּה	Amnon	Tamar
10	לִבְבוֹת	Narrator	–

A few patterns are visible here. First, “בְּרִיָּה” is the only term used when speaking to Tamar. One may speculate that David and Amnon are responding to common associations between women and nurturing behavior, attempting to appeal to Tamar’s “tender side” by encouraging her to provide sustenance for the ill Amnon. (Jonadab also uses the term, but as Bar-Efrat establishes, his request is the most carefully crafted, and he may have a similar goal in mind.)

Second and more importantly, only two people use the term “לִבְבוֹת”: Amnon, when speaking to David, and the narrator. This has a few implications. First, לִבְבוֹת is not a clear, universal name for sickbed food; neither Jonadab nor David uses the term. Second, the term has important connotations to Amnon, since the two לִבְבוֹת and their associated verb לבב are literally the only part of his request that does not repeat its content from Jonadab’s suggestion. Amnon is not merely condensing Jonadab’s words; he is altering them.

Jonadab’s suggestion (v. 5b, overlap bold)	Amnon’s request (v. 6b, overlap bold)
<p>תָּבֹא נָא תָמָר אֲחֹתִי וּתְבַרְנֵי לֶחֶם וְעִשְׂתָּהּ לְעֵינַי אֶת־הַבְּרִיָּה לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶה וְאֶכְלֵתִי מִיָּדָה</p> <p>Please let my sister Tamar come and nourish me with food. Let her make the sustenance in my sight, so that I see it. Let me eat from her hand.</p>	<p>תְּבֹא־נָא תָמָר אֲחֹתִי וְתִלְבֵּב לְעֵינַי שְׁתֵּי לִבְבוֹת וְאֶבְרָה מִיָּדָה</p> <p>Please let my sister Tamar come and <i>lbb</i> two <i>levivot</i> in my sight, so I can sustain myself from her hand.</p>

Third, Amnon does not wish to emphasize the term’s connotations to Tamar, since he changes his reference to בְּרִיָּה when he speaks to her. Finally, and perhaps most crucially, the narrator also uses this term twice; indeed, it is the only term used by the narrator for the food. Tribble notes this when, after observing that “Amnon switches to a special term (*lbbt*) suggesting an erotic pun,”²⁰ she marks the term’s reappearance: “the narrator views the occasion through the eyes of Amnon to designate the bread as special food (*lbbt*), the desire of his heart, rather than as the standard nourishment that Jonadab and David have specified.”²¹

20 Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 58 n. 16. Later discussion in this section will reveal why the word is an “erotic pun,” though Tribble herself does not go into further detail here.

21 Ibid, 59 n. 20.

This observation suggests that the narrative, at least at this point, is focalized through Amnon’s point of view—a situation of Free Indirect Discourse.²² Free Indirect Discourse is a literary technique where an apparently third-person narrative actually reflects a character’s perspective. Put more technically, Joanna Gavins explains that “readers of Free Indirect Discourse tend to sense that the voice of the narrator of the text has been joined by, merged with, or replaced by that of another enactor in the text-world,” and that “the presence of the thoughts and opinions of a text-world enactor can usually be detected through certain lexical choices which may be indicative of a particular enactor’s personality.”²³ In this case, the neutral omniscient narrator of the story has merged with Amnon’s own lascivious viewpoint—a merge that will become vital later in my analysis.

But is it fair to identify לִבְבוֹת with lasciviousness? The rest of this section will address that question. After all, in modern Hebrew, the שְׁתֵי לִבְבוֹת of 2 Sam 13 have a straightforward meaning: two latkes. A לִבְיָהּ is a potato pancake, and to לִבֵּב is to fry the pancakes. Unfortunately, that meaning was probably derived from this passage, so it offers little help in understanding the food’s original connotations. Nor do לִבְבוֹת appear elsewhere in the Bible for comparison, or in the known corpora of other Semitic languages. Nevertheless, we can glean some clues as to their meaning from a few sources, including their context here and the meanings of the root לִבֵּב in Hebrew and other languages. I now examine these clues in turn, in order to see what לִבְבוֹת mean—and what they might have connoted.

(ii) Narrative Context

The noun לִבְבָהּ* appears three times in 2 Samuel 13, always plural; the verb לִבֵּב appears another two times. These appearances are listed here:

(13:6) וַתִּלְבֵּב לְעֵינַי שְׁתֵּי לִבְבוֹת	Then let her <i>lbb</i> two <i>levivot</i> before my eyes.
וַתִּקַּח אֶת-הַבֶּצֶק וַתְּלוֹשׁ וַתִּלְבֵּב לְעֵינָיו (13:8) וַתִּבְשֵׁל אֶת-הַלִּבְבוֹת	Then she took dough, kneaded, <i>lbb</i> -ed before his eyes, and boiled the <i>levivot</i> .
(13:10) וַתִּקַּח תָּמָר אֶת-הַלִּבְבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָהּ	Then Tamar took the <i>levivot</i> which she had made.

22 Although he does not use this term, Bar-Efrat observes this trait when he notes, “The narrator is omniscient, but does not tell everything. . . . The unlimited knowledge is expressed particularly in the large number of inside views: ‘and Amnon, David’s son, loved her’ (v. 1), ‘And Amnon was so tormented’ (v. 2), ‘and it seemed impossible to Amnon’ (v. 2), ‘But he would not’ (vv. 14,16), ‘Then Amnon hated her with very great hatred; for greater was the hatred with which he hated her than the love with which he had loved her’ (v. 15), ‘he was very angry’ (v. 21), ‘for Absalom hated Amnon’ (v. 22)” (*Narrative Art*, 275–76). What Bar-Efrat does not point out is that all of these “inside views,” save the final two, give us insight into *Amnon* alone. We do not see the internal thoughts of Tamar, or David, or Jonadab. Thus, rather than simply calling those observations evidence for an omniscient narrator, we should label them evidence for Free Indirect Discourse on Amnon’s part. (The final two examples, which show us Absalom’s internal state, indicate that the focalization has shifted to Absalom at that point of the narrative, where it will remain until Absalom kills Amnon.)

23 Joanna Gavins, *Text World Theory*, 128.

A few observations can be derived from these verses.

First, *לֶבֶב* is a specific stage of food preparation, coming between kneading and boiling. Compared to a normal yeasted dumpling, two major steps are missing from Tamar's "recipe": allowing the dough to rise, and shaping the dough into its final shape. Thus, we can probably translate *לֶבֶב* as either "raise" or "shape." "Raise" is an intriguing contender, as it evokes the Akkadian sexual incantations called ŠÀ.ZI.GA ("rising of the heart"); more about these incantations later. But "shape" is more plausible, for a couple of reasons. First, this is an active verb—something that Tamar can do "before Amnon's eyes," as reiterated in vv. 6 and 8. Raising the dough is an important step in bread-making, but it is a stage of waiting, not doing visible activity.²⁴ Even more importantly, *לֶבֶב* is an activity specific to making *levivot*; we do not see it in other depictions of bread-making (e.g., Gen 18:6, 1 Sam 28:24, Hos 7:4). Leaving dough to rise is universal for leavened bread, in order for the yeast to reproduce and aerate the gluten lattice of the dough. In contrast, the shape of individual types of bread would be unique. Therefore, I translate *לֶבֶב* as "to shape dough into *levivot*."

Some commentaries take this direction even further and define it as "to mould dough into heart shapes."²⁵ I am uncertain what shape they mean by this. The heart as an organ is a vaguely conical lump, hardly a distinctive shape for bread. On the other hand, the modern conception of "heart-shaped" is a stylized symbol that came to popularity long after the composition of Samuel; its first clear manifestations are medieval.²⁶ Therefore, whatever shape the *levivot* were, it would not resemble what modern readers would call a heart, and their name probably did not derive from that shape.²⁷

One trait that we do know about the bread is that it was boiled. Despite attempts like the NRSV that translate *בָּשַׁל* as "bake," the word means "boil" elsewhere.²⁸ For instance, in Ex 16:23, the Israelites are instructed to "bake whatever you bake and boil whatever you boil," a merism to encompass all different types of cooking. The verb encompasses boiling meat in water (Ex 12:9) or milk (Ex 23:19), boiling

24 A counterargument here might claim that, in the mind of lascivious Amnon, the stage of waiting is precisely the point. In other words, by requesting that Tamar wait for the dough to rise in front of him, he is ensuring a long period of access to her, access during which he could both view her and speak with her.

25 See, e.g., Auld, *I and II Samuel*, 474: "let her heart-shape before my eyes two heart-cakes."

26 Martin Kemp, *Christ to Coke: How Image becomes Icon*, 88ff.

27 The CAD does list a handful of "objects shaped like a *libbu*" (L.167), including NINDA *lib-bu*, which it translates as "bread in the shape of a heart" (A1.244), but none of its examples make it clear that the *shape* is the "heart" referent; they are simply objects named "heart bread," "heart drinking vessel," etc. Given the rich and polysemic associations of the heart, shape is only one of many ways in which they could be "heart-like." The only exception (thus proving the rule) is a medical reference to intestines "*kīma šikin libbi*," "like the appearance of a heart."

28 Cf. Kurtis Peters for a detailed discussion that concludes that one "ought to read *bšl* as referring to liquid cooking" ("Language of Food and Cooking in the Hebrew Bible," 488). The only exception is 2 Chr 35:13, where the Passover sacrifice is "boiled in fire." However, Jacob Myers notes that this unique phrasing is "a conflation of Exod 12:8 f., which requires roasting, and Deut 16:7, which requires boiling" (Myers, *II Chronicles*, 211).

manna in a pot (Num 11:8), boiling stew (2 Kgs 4:38), and even boiling a child (2 Kgs 6:29, Lam 4:10). Nowhere other than 2 Sam 13 does it refer to bread dough, and nowhere does it clearly refer to dry baking or frying.

This interpretation is verified in later Jewish commentaries. Kimḥi's commentary on 2 Sam 13:6 explains that when the Targum translates לבב as חלט, what it means by חלט is "הבצק במים רותחין מאד": "the dough is in vigorously boiling water." (In other words, the dough is scalded in rapidly boiling water before it simmers to completion.) Meanwhile, Maimonides mentions לביבות a couple of times in his *Mishneh Torah*, where he clearly defines them as flour cooked in water²⁹ and as a grain product mixed with "other ingredients" (דְּבָרִים אֲחֵרִים) and boiled in water.³⁰

Moreover, as Cynthia Shafer-Elliott analyzes in detail, the final phase of preparation involves "pouring out" the *levivot*, presumably to drain them from their liquid. She therefore summarizes the cooking process:

Tamar took flour and kneaded it into little dumplings that she boiled in a cooking pot (probably a hybrid pot or one similar to it) over the top opening of Amnon's household indoor *tannur/tabun*. Once cooked, she drained the dumplings in a colander or perforated bowl and served them to Amnon.³¹

I find Shafer-Elliott's analysis largely convincing, though I will return later to her definition of מְשֵׁרָה as "colander."

While we do not have other biblical examples of boiled bread, steamed or boiled yeast dumplings are popular the world over. From Chinese *mantou* to Zulu *ujeqe* to German *Hefeklösse*, these bread rolls are a hearty dish, yet light and fluffy from their yeasted dough. One cookbook writes that "*Hefeklösse mit Zimmetsoße* (yeast dumplings with cinnamon sauce) were considered a meal in itself. When the cooks took the time to prepare dumplings with cinnamon sauce, the usual meat course was not served."³² As a simple, delicate treat, dumplings would be ideal food for an invalid; even today, in America, chicken and dumplings are a classic food to serve to someone sick.

These dumplings have an additional qualifier: Amnon specifically requests *two* of them (שְׁתֵּי לִבְבוֹת). Many translations diminish the specificity of this request by translating it as "a couple of *levivot*" (NRSV, NJPS, even King James). This is a notable decision, for among the 769 places where "two" (שְׁנַיִם) appears in the Bible, the NRSV and NJPS only translate it as "a couple of" in a single other instance, 1 Kgs 17:12.³³ Everywhere else, שְׁנַיִם is simply rendered as "two." The

29 אין מבשלין חטים במים כגון ריפות ולא קמה כגון לביבות (*Mishneh Torah*, Leavened and Unleavened Bread, ch. 5).

30 קמה של אהד מחמשת המינין שבשלו בקודרה בין לבדו בין שערבו עם דברים אחרים כגון לביבות (*Mishneh Torah*, Blessings, ch. 3).

31 Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah*, 172.

32 Emilie Hoppe, *Seasons of Plenty: Amana Communal Cooking*, 137.

33 In this sole instance of 1 Kgs 17:12, שְׁנַיִם may mean "a couple, a few": a woman is gathering "a couple of sticks," שְׁנַיִם עֵצִים, to make a fire. In this case, "couple" may be appropriate, because

difference between “two” and “a couple of” is a matter of specificity; if the translations had said “two cakes,” a reader might wonder, “why exactly two?,” a question that previous scholars have not addressed.³⁴

The answer is right beneath our noses—if we imagine the dumplings as they were originally made. Using a basic recipe for boiled bread dumplings, I made a batch of *levivot*. As sweetener, I used date paste, the primary sweetener for ancient Near Eastern recipes³⁵; as flour, I used whole wheat flour, since truly white flour is a recent technological innovation.³⁶ Two *levivot*, made with these darker ingredients, turned out to be highly evocative of the two breasts of a brown-skinned woman. Nor would they be the only example of breast-shaped delicacies; in Sicily, white-glazed cherry-topped sweets are called *minni di virgini* (“virgin’s breasts”), eaten to honor Saint Agatha, a martyr whose breasts were cut off.³⁷ On its own, this resemblance might be coincidental; not all pairs of round objects are breasts, any more than all rods are phalluses. But the connotations of this pair of dumplings become clearer when we examine their linguistic parallels elsewhere.³⁸

(iii) Linguistic Parallels

The relevant clues to the associations of *levivot* can be divided into four categories: alliterative parallels, Hebrew connotations of “heart” (לב/לֵב), Hebrew appearances of the root לבב, and other Semitic parallels.

exactly two sticks would not make a very successful fire. On the other hand, exactly two sticks are used in the stereotypical method of *starting* a fire, by rubbing them together. Regardless, this possible exception stands against 768 other instances where שְׁנַיִם means “exactly two.”

34 This is despite the fact that the chapter has ample linguistic links to Song of Songs (cf. Section 4.c), and the only two instances of the word “two” in the book refer to a specific pair of objects—the woman’s breasts (Song 4:5, 7:2).

35 Cathy Kaufman, *Cooking in Ancient Civilizations*, 3.

36 Ibid, xli.

37 Cf. Cristina Mazzoni, *The Women in God’s Kitchen*, 81ff. See also June di Schino, “The Waning of Sexually Allusive Monastic Confectionery in Southern Italy,” who connects the breast-cakes to votive offerings and ancient fertility rites.

38 Another potentially relevant example is a type of Assyrian cake, *kamān zīzi*. *Kamānu* was a cake that could have either secular or cultic associations; they are probably the כִּמְאָנִים that Jeremiah condemns baking in Jer 7:18 and 44:19. As for the *zīzu*, it indicates either a type of onion or (as Stephanie Dalley argues) is identical to *zīzū*, breasts, cognate to Hebrew זִי (Esther’s Revenge at Susa, 151). Dalley (Ibid) also claims that the Assyrian text “implies that they symbolized or looked like a heart,” but unfortunately does not cite the details that lead to that conclusion. In one ritual text, *kamān zīzi* are listed next to “heart-bread” and “wrist-bread,” implying that they too may refer to a body part (SAA 20, 27, line 9). Most intriguingly of all, the fullest context for a *kamān zīzi* is the Assyrian ritual K.164.35, where the cake is offered, along with other ritual foods and objects, as part of a healing ritual for a prince that features the symbolic death of his sister! (Cf. Wolfram von Soden, “Aus einem Ersatzopferitual,” and Jo Ann Scurlock, “K 164 (BA 2, P. 635)” for a defense of this interpretation of the evocative text, though Simo Parpola [*Assyrian Royal Rituals*] calls it a “Burial of a Queen.”) While I hesitate to conclude that the biblical text alludes specifically to an Assyrian ritual that is known from only one copy, the parallels between the ritual and 2 Sam 13 are certainly worth investigating more fully.

(1) Alliterative Parallels

The first set of parallels have no etymological connection to the root לבב or the noun לב/לִבָּב. However, alliteration is a common technique in the Hebrew Bible to unite concepts and point out connections,³⁹ and 2 Samuel 13 is no exception. Within Amnon's quarters, the consonants ל and ב only appear beside each other in two contexts: לב/לבב, which we will discuss shortly, and נבל. The latter root appears in two forms in vv. 12–13, where Tamar first calls Amnon's acts a נְבִלָה (“outrage”), then calls him a נָבֵל (“fool, godless person”). These terms have two major connotations. While נְבִלָה can be used for any flagrant sin, it most often connotes sexual sin (e.g., Deut 22:21, Jer 29:23),⁴⁰ and it figures centrally in the rape of Dinah (Gen 34:7) and the rape and murder of Tizkoret (a full four times: Judg 19:23, 19:24, 20:6, and 20:10). Thus, calling the act נְבִלָה places it among the most infamous rapes of the Bible. Second, both words appear earlier in Samuel, when Abigail condemns her husband Nabal: נָבֵל שְׁמוֹ וְנְבִלָה עִמּוֹ (colloquially, “‘Fool’ is his name, and folly his game,” 1 Sam 25:25). Tamar thus associates Amnon with one of David's personal enemies, implying that he too will win the king's ire.⁴¹

The text thus alliteratively associates the *levivot* with sexual sin and folly. On their own, these associations would not be enough to define the term, but they contribute to connotations of sexual transgressiveness.

(2) The Biblical Heart

The most obvious association for the *levivot* is the heart (לֵב/לִבָּב), and most commentators connect the two terms.⁴² Broadly speaking, the over 800 references to the heart in the Hebrew Bible fall into four categories: literal, metaphorical, metonymic, and psychological. Literally, of course, the heart is the organ that pumps blood through the body (e.g., 2 Sam 18:14, 2 Kgs 9:24). Metaphorically, it can also mean the center or core of something, for example, the “heart” of the sea (Ps 46:3) or sky (Deut 4:11).

More importantly, for our purposes, לב/לִבָּב can refer metonymically to the entire chest, that is, the area of the body that surrounds the heart. In Nahum 2:8, the women of Nineveh flee, “moaning like the sound of doves, beating their breasts [lit. ‘hearts’]” (מְנַהֲגוֹת כְּקוֹל יוֹנִים מְתַפַּפְת עַל-לִבָּבֵיהֶן). Likewise, in Ex 28:30, the Urim and Thummim are placed in Aaron's breastplate, “so they will be upon his breast

39 Cf. Gary Rendsburg's recent essays on alliteration in the Hebrew Bible (“Alliteration in the Exodus Narrative” and “Alliteration in the Book of Genesis,” and the early study by Oliver Rankin, “Alliteration in Hebrew Poetry,” 285–91. For other examples of alliteration in 2 Samuel via “juxtaposition of roots that are distinct but phonetically related,” cf. Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 121.

40 Cf. McCarter, Jr., *II Samuel*, 322–23, for discussion of this term.

41 A more distant but possible allusion here is to Job's wife in Job 2:10, who speaks like “one of the foolish women” (אִשֵּׁת הַנְּבִילוֹת) by encouraging Job to “curse God and die” (2:9). In this case, it is clear that “foolishness” is more than mere poor decisions, but involves the active choice to blaspheme.

42 Virtually every modern commentary makes this connection; for example, Smith wrote in 1899 that Amnon requests “two *heart-shaped* cakes” (Smith, *Samuel*, 328, author's emphasis).

[lit. ‘heart’] when going before YHWH” (וְהָיָה עַל-לֵב אֲהָרֹן בְּבֹאוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה). In both cases, “heart” is a metonym for the chest area. Based on this meaning, we might tentatively translate “*levivot*” as “bosom-cakes,” that is, a metonym for breast-shaped cakes. As a euphemistic metonym, though, this association is necessarily somewhat speculative.

More thoroughly established are the broad psychological associations of the heart. In contrast to its modern associations, the Israelite heart was not specifically connected with feelings of love and romance. However, it was the seat of emotion, intellect, and willpower more broadly. Alec Basson summarizes that “ancient Hebrew anthropology did associate emotions such as joy, courage, anger, grief, fear and distress with the heart,”⁴³ in addition to it being “the seat of understanding, thought, and planning.”⁴⁴ Andrew Bowling acknowledges this broad range when he notes that “it is the most frequently used term for man’s immaterial personality functions as well as the most inclusive term for them since, in the Bible, virtually every immaterial function of man is attributed to the ‘heart.’”⁴⁵ This range may include romantic love; for instance, in Judg 16:15, Delilah protests to Samson, “How can you say ‘I love you,’ when I do not have your heart?” (אֵיךְ תֹאמַר אֶהְבֵּתִיךָ וְלִבִּי אֵין אֵתִי). Nevertheless, it would be misrepresenting to say that “heart-cakes” imply love. A safer assumption would be that they imply internal emotion, thought, or passion of some kind.

Finally, in addition to these general biblical associations of the heart, the organ (both literal and metaphorical) specifically plays a significant role in the succession narrative within which Tamar’s rape is embedded. At the end of her story (2 Sam 13:20), Absalom counsels her “not to take this matter to heart” (אַל-תִּשִׂיתִי אֶת-לִבִּי לְדָבָר הַזֶּה). Yet in the royal conflict to come, the text speaks of emotions swaying the heart of the king (2 Sam 13:33, 14:1), while Absalom “steals the hearts” of the Israelites (2 Sam 15:6), and David speaks to the hearts of his servants (2 Sam 19:7). Meanwhile, Amnon dies when his heart becomes “merry with wine” (i.e., drunk, 2 Sam 13:28), and Absalom dies by a spear through his heart (2 Sam 18:14).⁴⁶ These instances may be coincidence or a deliberate *leitwort*—but in either case, they emphasize the connection between the heart and times of great passion and war.

(3) *Elsewhere in the Bible* לבב

The discussion so far has centered on לֵב/לִב, the masculine term for heart. However, the לִבְבוֹת are grammatically feminine—and indeed, feminine words morphologically connected to the root לבב appear twice in the Bible (vocalized as לִבָּהּ* and

43 Alec Basson, “Metaphorical Explorations of the Heart,” 310.

44 Othmar Keel, *Song of Songs*, 162.

45 Andrew Bowling, “בִּבְל,” 1071.

46 My thanks to Cynthia Chapman for noting these repeated instances of the term.

*לִבָּה), as does another instance of the verb לִבַּב. These instances reveal a more clear picture of the term’s associations in 2 Samuel 13.

The first *לִבָּה is in Ex 3:2: “a messenger of YHWH appeared to [Moses] from a *labbah* of fire within the bush” (וַיֵּרָא מִלְאָךְ יְהוָה אֵלָיו בְּלִבְתַּאֲשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסִּנְיָה). From context, most scholars assume that לִבָּה refers to a flame, perhaps derived from the root להב (“to burn”) rather than לִבַּב. We could thus translate it as a “kindling” of flame—and it would not be the only place where fire is linked to excess emotion in the Bible.

Zacharias Kotzé surveys anger and lust in metaphor, and he notes that “a prominent source domain [for anger] which is found in almost all languages studied to date is heat.”⁴⁷ Citing Lakoff’s claim that “the source domains used to conceptualise lust overlap remarkably with the source domains of metaphors for anger,”⁴⁸ Kotzé turns to the Hebrew Bible to see if the claim holds in biblical Hebrew. Curiously, although he admits that “lust for the forbidden woman is depicted in imagery commonly used to conceptualise anger” and “the source domain of fire . . . is also commonly used for anger,”⁴⁹ he only provides one example for fire as lust: Prov 6:27–28, in which illicit lust is rhetorically compared to images of heat. Moreover, Kotzé claims that “nowhere [else] in the Hebrew Bible is fire used as a metaphor for sexual passion.” Nevertheless, Song 8:6b does precisely that.

<p>Prov 6:27–28 הֲנִחַתָּה אִישׁ אֵשׁ בְּחִיקוֹ וּבִגְדָיו לֹא תִשְׂרַפְנָה: אִם-יֵהַלֵךְ אִישׁ עַל-הַהֲטָחִים וְרַגְלָיו לֹא תִכְוִינָה</p>	<p>Can a man pile burning coals on his chest and not burn his clothes? Or can a man walk on coals and not scorch his feet?</p>
<p>Song 8:6 שִׁמְנִי כַחוֹתָם עַל-לִבִּי כַחוֹתָם עַל-זְרוֹעִי כִּי־עֲזָה כַמּוֹת אֵהְיָה קִשָּׁה כַשְׂאוֹל קִנְאָה רַשְׁפִּיָּה רִשְׁפִּי אֵשׁ שְׁלֵה־בַתִּיהָ</p>	<p>Set me like a seal upon your heart, like a seal upon your arm. Love indeed is powerful as death, and jealousy as enduring as Sheol. Its ravages are fiery ravages, a cosmic blaze.</p>

This metaphor is also at work in the Bible’s second *לִבָּה, in Ezek 16:30, part of an extended metaphor depicting Jerusalem as a harlot:

<p>מָה אִמְלָה לְבַתִּי נָאִם אֲדַנִּי יְהוָה בְּעֲשׂוֹתָךְ אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה מִעֲשֵׂה אִשָּׁה־זוֹנָה שְׁלֵטָה</p>	<p>How fever-hot is your <i>libbah</i>, says Lord YHWH, that you would do all this—the acts of a wanton dominatrix!⁵⁰</p>
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47 Zacharias Kotzé, “Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things,” 243.

48 Ibid, 244.

49 Ibid, 247.

50 אִשָּׁה־זוֹנָה שְׁלֵטָה: literally “a dominating whore-woman.” Obviously, the modern associations of “dominatrix” do not all apply, but שְׁלֵטָה is a *hapax legomenon* derived from שלט, which elsewhere always

This is admittedly a difficult verse, particularly its first line, but major commentaries like Moshe Greenberg, Walther Eichrodt, and Walther Zimmerli all translate the verb *אמל* to refer to feverish heat—“how hot your ardor is,”⁵¹ “how fever-hot was your heart,”⁵² and “how feverish is your heart,”⁵³ respectively. In this they follow Friedrich Stummer, who cites both a parallel Arabic root and a medieval Karaite poet to support the translation of “fever-hot.”⁵⁴ While Eichrodt and Zimmerli ignore the fact that *לבה* is feminine, Greenberg views it as deliberate, perhaps even a neologism by the author: “*libba* seems to fuse *labba* ‘flame’ (Exod 3:2) and *leb* ‘heart,’ and hence is better rendered ‘ardor.’”⁵⁵

In sum, this verse seems to be drawing on Kotzé’s three-part metaphorical cluster: ANGER IS LUST IS HEAT. Wanton Jerusalem is aflame with desire, and her *libbah* is the source or locus of that desire. Moreover, while the interpretation of this verse may still be debated, the only appearance of *לבב* as a verb, in Song 4:9, has an undisputed context and general meaning. I therefore turn to it for a firmer foundation for the word’s implications.

לְבַבְתִּי אֶחָתִי כֶלֶה לְבַבְתִּי בְּאַחַד [בְּאַחַת] מְעִינִיד בְּאַחַד עֵנַק מְצוּרֵינִיד	You have <i>lbb</i> -ed me, my sister-bride; you have <i>lbb</i> -ed me with a single gaze, with a single strand of your carcanet.
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Like most of Song of Songs, chapter 4 is erotic love poetry; without knowing anything about the word, one might fill in “enchanted,” “seduced,” or “captured” as possible meanings for *לבב*. Given the verb’s resemblance to the noun “heart,” most translations render it as doing something to the heart or mind: “you have ravished my heart” (NRSV, Hermeneia), “you have captured my heart” (NJPS, OTL), “you ravish my mind” (AYB).

However, a more accurate meaning can be inferred by comparing the verse with the following two verses (Song 4:10–11). Duane Garrett and Paul House note that “all three strophes have the same logic: two lines describe the intoxicating power of her lovemaking, and a third line describes something delightful that she is wearing.”⁵⁶ The parallels between the three strophes are clear:

לְבַבְתִּי אֶחָתִי כֶלֶה לְבַבְתִּי בְּאַחַד [בְּאַחַת] מְעִינִיד בְּאַחַד עֵנַק מְצוּרֵינִיד	You have <i>lbb</i> -ed me, my sister-bride; you have <i>lbb</i> -ed me with a single gaze, with a single strand of your carcanet.
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has masculine connotations of power, rulership, and domination; it is etymologically related to the title of “sultan.” Thus, this is a whore who deliberately takes on a masculine role of domination—which is the straightforward etymological meaning of “dominatrix.”

51 Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 271.

52 Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 200.

53 Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel Chapters 1–24*, 322.

54 Friedrich Stummer, “אמלה” (Ez XVI 30A),” 34ff.

55 Other scholars, including Koehler and Baumgartner, connect the term to the Akkadian term “*libbātu*,” “anger, rage,” but that meaning is less appropriate for the sexual context of the passage.

56 Duane Garrett and Paul House, *Song of Songs/Lamentations*, 187.

מה־יָפוּ דְדִיךְ אֲחֹתִי כְלָה מה־טֹבוּ דְדִיךְ מִיַּיִן וְרִיחַ שְׁמֹנֶיךָ מִכָּל־בְּשָׂמִים	How lovely are your breasts, ⁵⁷ my sister-bride; how much sweeter than wine are your breasts, and the scent of your oils than any spice.
נֶפֶת תִּטְפֶּנָּה שְׁפֹתֶיךָ כְּלָה דְּבַשׁ וְחֶלֶב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֶךָ וְרִיחַ שְׁלֹמֹתֶיךָ כְּרִיחַ לְבָנוֹן	Syrup drips from your lips, O bride; honey and milk are under your tongue, and the scent of your clothing is like the scent of Lebanon.

All three strophes have an AAB form: a line that establishes sexual attraction (and ends in “bride,” כְּלָה), a line that repeats and amplifies the sentiment, and a line that draws in an adornment to “garnish” the observation. The physical senses are richly at play; scent, taste, and touch are evoked through comparisons to food and drink. In short, this trio of tricola unequivocally refers to sexual pleasure and physical interaction. Based on this context, לבב refers to the kindling of arousal—and indeed, “kindle” or “enflame” may be the appropriate term, given the fire connotations discussed above.⁵⁸

57 The Hebrew which I translated as “your breasts” is דְדִיךְ, often rendered as “your love.” With repointing, however, it becomes דְדִיךְ, “your breasts” (compare Prov 5:19), and indeed, numerous ancient translations (including LXX and the Peshitta) understood it that way. (I am aware of the obvious parallel between this passage and Song 1:2 and 4, where דְדִיךְ is traditionally read as the man’s “love”; without too much tangential discursion, I will note that I would repoint that passage to refer to the woman’s breasts as well.) However, even if “love” is meant instead of a specific body part, this is no abstract affection. Texts like Ezek 16:8 and Prov 7:18 make it clear that physical, sexual lovemaking is the connotation of this term. Thus, if not “your breasts,” דְדִיךְ should be translated as “your lovemaking,” at best, not “your love.”

58 The idea of kindling has the further advantage of explaining Job 11:12, the only place in the Bible outside Song 4 and 2 Samuel 13 where the verb לבב appears. While most commentaries note the connection between Song and 2 Samuel, few draw in the Job passage—understandably so, as it is both linguistically enigmatic and apparently unrelated to sexuality. Nevertheless, it deserves inclusion in the survey. The verse is an alliterative proverb: וְאִישׁ נְבוֹב יִלְבֵּב וְעִיר פָּרָא אֶדָּם יִנְלֵד. Although the meaning of the latter half is debated (perhaps “a wild donkey will be born a domesticated donkey”?, cf. Marvin Pope, *Job*, 85 for this interpretation), the gist of the first half is that a “hollow person” will be *lbb*-ed. “Hollow person” is usually translated as “fool,” but “hollow” (נְבוֹב) has unclear metaphorical implications; its appearances elsewhere in the Bible are all quite literal. Moreover, the preceding verses speak of God’s judgment on the “worthless” (אִשָּׁא, Job 11:11), not the ignorant. A couple of possibilities arise:

1. The colloquial English proverb of “lighting a fire under someone” may be at work here: the “hollow person” is devoid of action, and cannot be induced to react, any more than a wild donkey can be induced to act tame. Thus, acknowledging the second half as dubious, the proverb would be translated, “If a wastrel can be kindled to act, then a wild donkey can be born a domesticated donkey.”
2. Scott Noegel suggests that a “hollow man” may refer to an impotent man—“a ‘hollow pipe,’ as it were (à la the vulgar English idiom ‘shooting blanks’)” (Noegel, “Maleness, Memory,” 81). In that case, the same meaning as in Song of Songs can be applied to לבב: “if an impotent man can become aroused, then a wild donkey can be born a domesticated donkey.” This interpretation has the virtue of simplicity, since it explains the two instances of לבב with the same definition, but it relies on a speculative and otherwise unattested metaphor for impotence.

In either case, though, an entirely new meaning for לבב is unnecessary. The proverb in either English translation is hardly as mellifluous as in its original Hebrew, but it makes coherent sense.

We thus exhaust our biblical instances of לב-לbb-rooted words by noting that every instance, setting aside 2 Samuel 13, can be explained as an influx of either literal heat or metaphorical heat (anger/lust/passion). However, our set of data is admittedly small. For that reason, many scholars of 2 Samuel 13 have turned to other Semitic parallels for the root לב/לbb.

(4) לב/לbb in Semitic Parallels

The word *lb* for “heart” is a universal, primary one in Semitic languages, so common that reviewing examples would not be particularly useful. As in Hebrew, the Semitic heart is often a metaphor for the internal mind, desires, or will, but it does not have its specific modern connotations of tender romance. Compare, for instance, the passage in the Epic of Ba’al where Anat’s “heart filled with joy” during battle,⁵⁹ a Ugaritic letter where the king warned his mother that she would “break [his] heart,”⁶⁰ and the countless Akkadian examples in CAD L.169–172.

That said, several scholars have argued for another, related set of euphemistic connotations for the “heart.” In particular, some (most prominently Marvin Pope) have connected the verb לב to a set of Mesopotamian incantations titled ŠĀ.ZI.GA (*nīš libbi*): “rising of the heart.”⁶¹ Traditionally, “heart” here has been understood as a straightforward euphemism for the male member. For instance, Biggs cites lines like “(if a man) desires the ‘woman of his heart’ and looks at the woman, but his ‘heart’ does not rise for him”⁶² as evidence that “ŠĀ.ZI.GA is not, then, simply the term for a man’s interest in sexual relations or his wish for sexual intercourse, but for the ability to get and maintain an erection sufficient for sexual intercourse.”⁶³

Nor is this euphemism limited to those incantations, although they have been the focus of the most attention. Noegel notes that “Akkadian texts describe impotence as a *libbu* (‘heart’) that is *lā išari* (‘not straight’).”⁶⁴ He also cites an Egyptian text that uses *ib*/“heart” as a euphemism for “penis,”⁶⁵ and a rabbinic text that describes impotence as “weakness of the heart” (חולשא דליבא).⁶⁶ Likewise, Julia Assante reads ŠĀ/“heart” as a euphemism in Sumerian sexual texts: “The last line alone ‘May they place his heart with my heart for me’ is rife with word plays. Since ‘heart’ (šā) can also mean ‘interior,’ or ‘penis,’ the subtext of the line is, ‘May they place his penis in my interior for me.’”⁶⁷

59 *ymlu lbh bšmht*, KTU 1.3.ii.26.

60 *ttbrn lby*, “you will break my heart,” KTU 2.72.16.

61 Cf. Marvin Pope, *Song of Songs*, 479ff. The standard edition of these texts is Robert Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA: Ancient Mesopotamia Potency Incantations*.

62 Biggs, *ŠĀ.ZI.GA*, 2.

63 *Ibid.*, 3.

64 Noegel, “Maleness, Memory,” 82. Unfortunately, Noegel does not cite the texts that contain this description.

65 *Ibid.*, 82 n. 77.

66 *Ibid.*, 83 n. 79.

67 Julia Assante, “Sex, Magic, and the Liminal Body,” 41. Text source: Yitschak Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, 248. One is reminded of Song 5:4, where the man inserts his “hand” into the woman’s “hole” (דודי שלח ידו מן-ההר).

The truth, however, may be somewhat more complex. In a recent dissertation, Marius Hoppe redefines the term: “ŠÀ.ZI.GA bezeichnet die sexuelle Appetenz von Männern und Frauen, deren Fehlen beim Mann zu einer Erektionsstörung führen kann.”⁶⁸ He bases this redefinition in large part on evidence from the Assur Medical Catalog, which includes incipits like the following:

[KA.INIM.MA ŠÀ.ZI.G]A ù MUNUS.GIN.NA.KÁM ŠÀ.ZI.GA.MUNUS.
A.KÁM

[incantations for arousing sexual desire] and (incantations) to make a woman come (and for) arousing a woman’s desire.⁶⁹

In her discussion on this line, Ulrike Steinert concludes:

The female version of the rubric ŠÀ.ZI.GA.MUNUS.A.KÁM in AMC line 106 shows that the term ŠÀ.ZI.GA does not refer to male sexual performance (erection) in the limited sense, but more broadly to arousing sexual desire in men and women. The translation better fitting the Sumerian expression šà-zi-ga “raising/lifting the heart” is thus “arousal (of desire)” rather than “potency.”⁷⁰

This redefinition can be successfully inserted into most (though not all) of the examples above. The major exception is the Sumerian text cited by Assante, which makes little sense unless “heart” is a euphemism for “sex organ.”

Dumuzid-Inana T, 44–47⁷¹

44 šu-ni šu-mu-ta dè-mà ¹ -da-ma-ma-ne	May they put his hand in my hand for me!
45 šà-ba- [*] ni šà-ab-mu-ta dè-mà-da-ma-ma-ne	May they put his heart next to [or “in”] my heart for me!
46 šu s[aḡ]-šè ma-al-la-na ù- [*] kū-bi zé-ba an-ga	With his putting (his) hand under (my) h[ead], the sleep is delighted too.
47 šà šà-ba tab-ba-na hi-li-bi ku ₇ -ku ₇ -da an-ga <sa-ḡar-ra-àm>	With his pressing (his) heart to (my) heart, the pleasure is very sweet too.

All that said, if the closest example of this euphemism is in Sumerian, then the argument that the author of 2 Samuel had it in mind is increasingly unsustainable. A broader meaning of “arousal” for heart in Mesopotamian sources is a safer conclusion. With that, we turn to the next Akkadian parallel sometimes cited for לֵבָב.

68 “ŠÀ.ZI.GA refers to the sexual appetite of men and women, whose absence can cause erectile dysfunction in men.” Marius Hoppe, “Texte zur Behandlung von Impotenz,” 11.

69 Ulrike Steinert, “The Assur Medical Catalogue (AMC),” 217.

70 Ibid, 266.

71 Score and translation taken from Sefati, *Love Songs in Sumerian Literature*, 248–51. See also Kramer, “Cuneiform Studies and the History of Literature: The Sumerian Sacred Marriage Texts,” 496, whose translation of these lines is largely similar: “He will put his hand by my hand, / He will put his heart by my heart, / His putting of hand to hand—its sleep(?) is so refreshing, / His pressing of heart to heart—its pleasure is so sweet.”

The verb *labābu* is, of course, the simple Akkadian equivalent of Hebrew לָבַב. It has the meaning “to rage, to ravage” and is the root of the common noun *libbātu*, “anger.” (Notably, given my previous observations, the Š-stem verb *šulbubu* refers to the ravages of fever.)⁷² In an influential article, Nahum Waldman argued that this verb was the cognate to לָבַב in Song 4:9. He notes that לָבַב in its meaning of “incite anger” is attested in a midrash,⁷³ and suggests that “a semantic development has taken place in the Hebrew from a sense of ‘rage’ or ‘be aroused to fury’ to one of ‘be aroused sexually.’”⁷⁴ While he admits that the Akkadian verb does not evince that development, he points to other linguistic instances that do, including the Greek ὀργή (“passion, wrath”) or ὀργάω (“swell with lust, be excited”) and the Hebrew root עָזַז, connected to both anger and sexual love.⁷⁵ Waldman does not mention it, but that root’s Akkadian cognate, *ezēzu*, has similarly mixed associations, as Benjamin Foster notes: “‘Arousal’ [*uzzu*] may refer to onset of sexual desire or anger.”⁷⁶ As a whole, Waldman’s argument is intriguing, and it brings in an impressive array of etymological evidence, though it would be considerably stronger with any attestations where Akkadian *labābu* was used in a sexual context.

The final Akkadian parallel is one that has not, to my knowledge, been noted by any biblical commentators: the words *libbu* and *liblibbu*. *Liblibbu* most commonly means “descendant, offspring,” but it probably originally derived from the more specific meaning of “offshoot of a date palm.” While date palms can be propagated by seedling, the combination of genetic variability and the 50% chance of a male (i.e., non-fruit-bearing) plant make this method undesirable.⁷⁷ Conversely, “Offshoots develop from axillary buds on the trunk near the soil surface during the date palm’s juvenile stage. Offshoots, after 3 to 5 years of attachment to the parental palm, produce roots and can be removed and planted.”⁷⁸ Indeed, these offshoots must be removed in order to prevent an entire cluster of palm trees from growing up around the mother palm; “eventually in place of one straight hole there will be a number of bent and jostling shoots.”⁷⁹ The only major study on date palms in Akkadian sources makes it clear that these offshoots are referred to as *libbu*⁸⁰ or *libbi libbi* (*liblibbi*).⁸¹ They were apparently a common economic product whose leaves were used for weaving products like rope. (Contrary to its literal English translation, the term likely did not refer to our “heart of palm” food product.⁸²)

72 Cf. CAD L.7, which translates KAR 321 r. 6. (*išātu tu-šal-bi-bu-šu tuṭīb šīrīšu*) as “(the one that) fever has ravaged, his flesh you soothed.” William Propp cites this instance when he connects *lababu* to the לָבַב of Ex 3:2. (*Exodus 1–18*, 199).

73 Nahum Waldman, “A Note on Canticles 4.9,” 216.

74 *Ibid.*, 215.

75 *Ibid.*

76 Benjamin Foster, *Before the Muses*, 186.

77 ChihCheng Chao and Robert Krueger, “The Date Palm.”

78 *Ibid.*

79 Valentine Dowson, *Dates and Date Cultivation of the ‘Iraq’*, 37.

80 Benno Landsberger, “The Date Palm,” 22ff.

81 *Ibid.*, 46f.; see also 29.

82 *Ibid.*, 13ff.

Although this meaning is unattested in Hebrew, we do not have an alternate name for palm tree offshoots, and we do know that palm cultivation took place widely in ancient Israel,⁸³ so it is reasonable to suppose that the term also had this meaning in Israelite date cultivation. Moreover, לְרֵלֵב and לְרֵלֵב appear in Marcus Jastrow’s dictionary of Aramaic, with the definition “to bloom, sprout”⁸⁴—further evidence for its postulated presence. Of course, 2 Samuel 13 is not an agricultural text, but its central female character is Tamar, תָּמָר, which means “date-palm.” Thus, the link to the date-palm’s reproductive cycle is, at the least, suggestive. One is reminded of Song 7:8–9a:

זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר ושידיך לאשכולות: אמרתי אעלה בתמר אחזקה בסנסניו ויהיו-נא שידיך כאשכולות הגפן וריח אפך כתפוחים	Your stature resembles a date-palm, and your breasts are its clusters. I have said, ‘Let me mount the date-palm, let me grasp its flower-stalks!’ I would that your breasts were clusters of grapes, and the scent of your nipple ⁸⁵ like apricots.
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In this passage, which comes immediately after a *wāsf* about the woman’s beautiful body, the fruit-clusters (אֲשָׁכוֹל) and flower-stalks (סַנְסַנְיָה) of a palm tree become metaphors for the woman’s breasts. It requires little imagination to suppose that the offshoots of the palm could have a similar connotation—particularly when the lady in question is literally named a palm tree.

(iv) *Bringing Together the Evidence*

Like the cardinal in my opening discussion, the *levivot* are clearly a complex blend of allusions and connotations. The many possibilities we have discussed include boiled yeasted dumplings that may have visually resembled a pair of breasts; an alliterative allusion to folly (specifically sexual misconduct); the heart and the emotional forces that it conveyed; the verb לָבַב, connoting sexual arousal and heat, and its possible Akkadian cognate *labābu*; Akkadian and Sumerian texts that use “heart” as a euphemism for sexual desire or genitals; and the Akkadian term for date-palm shoots that bud from the main trunk.

Clearly, these allusions are varied and cannot be united into a single “true” meaning. Rather than argue for one of them, then, I return to the idea of the “metaphoric gestalt”: the range of meanings and connotations that an object can entail, instead of signifying a simple one-for-one correspondence with a single idea. The *levivot* connoted emotions, passions, folly, arousal, heat, and a woman’s breasts—specifically,

83 For details, cf. Irene Jacob and Walter Jacob, “Flora,” 807.

84 Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature*, 689. Jastrow links these definitions to לָבַב, לָבַי, “to blaze,” but the connection between blossoming and blazing is tenuous.

85 “Nipple” is my translation of אָף, elsewhere translated as “nose.” It appears most famously in the description of the “gracious gods” in KTU 1.23.34 (*ynqm b āp zd ātrt*: “those who suckle at the nipple of the breast of Asherah”) but also in Akkadian medical texts (CAD A2.187) Cf. Pope, *Song*, 637 for a discussion of this possibility here.

the offshoots of a *Tamar*. Many or most⁸⁶ of these associations, we can surmise, were known by the author and therefore projected onto Amnon's mind when he used the term, whether in direct dialogue or in his thoughts (as reflected in the narrator's vocabulary). The word *levivot* is foreshadowing and embodied metaphor; its allusiveness explains why David omits it from his order to Tamar. Whether David was unaware or uninterested in the *levivot*'s connotations, he chose to use a more neutral term when he spoke to her.⁸⁷ And as the next section will demonstrate, the *levivot* are not our only clue to the sexualized point of view that dominates Amnon's thoughts.

(c) My Sister, My Bride: Intertextual Links with Song of Songs 4

We have already alluded to the fact that the narrative in 2 Samuel 13:1–18⁸⁸ depicts Amnon's point of view, whether through direct glimpses into his thoughts (“it seemed like a fantasy to Amnon to do anything to her” [v. 2b]) or through Free Indirect Discourse (“Tamar took the *levivot* that she had made” [v. 10b]). This fact puts an important twist on a key observation by Graeme Auld: the presence of a “literary link” between this story and Song of Songs 4.⁸⁹ Song 4 begins with a *wasf* describing the woman through the man's eyes, then shifts to broader love poetry spoken by the man (only in the final verse does it switch to the woman's perspective); in the process, it contains numerous linguistic commonalities to 2 Samuel 13. To Auld, the link between the two texts has unclear implications; he asks “Who knew this Song?” and proceeds to speculate about the implications if the alluded-to love poetry were known by Jonadab, David, or even Tamar.⁹⁰ But the mystery is hardly that opaque. 2 Samuel 13:1–18 and Song 4:1–15 both are told from the perspective of an amorous man, lustfully beholding a beautiful woman. If there is a deliberate allusion to Song of Songs, then it is intrinsically linked with Amnon's point of view.

As I demonstrate in this section, Auld is correct about observing literary links between the two passages.⁹¹ Moreover, since it seems extremely unlikely that a love song would allude positively to a scene of rape, the direction of intertextuality appears to be from Song of Songs to 2 Samuel.⁹² Yet such a link also seems

86 There is one exception: the alliterative link between *levivot* and the root לבל. The latter appears only in Tamar's dialogue, not in Amnon's thoughts or dialogue. This is no coincidence; the folly of Amnon's actions is evident only to Tamar, not Amnon himself, so this particular connection is invisible to him.

87 As a parallel, if this took place in the modern world, Amnon might have asked Tamar to deliver him a lollipop—a treat with sexual connotations that range from Lil Wayne to Nabokov. David, for his part, might have asked her to take him “candy.” Bringing Amnon a lollipop would not represent disobedience to David (contra Pamela Reis's interpretation in “Cupidity and Stupidity,” 47), but rather a fulfillment of his request; meanwhile Amnon would view it as vindication of his own narrative. Notably, Amnon requests “a pair of *levivot*” (v.6), but Tamar simply makes him “*levivot*” (vv.8,10), indicating that she did not fulfill that particular aspect of his lustful vision.

88 Verses 17–19 are ambiguous in their narrative viewpoint. Here, I assume that Amnon's narration ceases when Tamar leaves his sight.

89 Auld, *1–2 Samuel*, 480.

90 Ibid, 479. See below for a more detailed analysis of the troubling implications of this speculation.

91 Through the next section, I refer to these connections neutrally as “linguistic links,” rather than using the loaded term “allusions.” I will return to the idea of allusion in the section that follows it.

92 This does not, of course, imply that Song of Songs existed as a complete and stable text available to the author of this passage in 2 Samuel. Such historical-critical speculation would stray far from

initially unlikely: Why would an author populate a scene of unequivocal rape with allusions to a scene of consensual desire? The answer has to do with the narrator's immersion in Amnon's point of view. In Amnon's eyes, love lyrics are appropriate to his feelings for Tamar—especially love lyrics that emphasize the metaphor of the woman as delicious food. He seeks to feast upon her, just like the narrator of Song 4, and the textual links between the two passages give us an insight into the fantasies that characterize his state of mind.

(i) Linguistic Links

In this section, I summarize the linguistic links that Auld notes between the two passages, add more of my own, and then explore their implications for 2 Samuel 13.

Links mentioned by Auld

Term	In 2 Samuel 13	In Song 4
“Hearten” (לבב, piel)	“Let her shape two <i>levivot</i> in my sight.” (וּתְלַבֵּב לְעֵינַי שְׁתֵּי לִבְבוֹת) (6) “She shaped in his sight.” (וּתְלַבֵּב לְעֵינָיו) (8)	“You have aroused me, my sister- bride.” (לִבְבְּתִנִּי אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (9) “You have aroused me with a single gaze.” (לִבְבְּתִנִּי בְּאַחַד) [בְּאַחַת] מְעִינִיךְ (9)
“Lock” (נעל, qal)	“Lock the door after her.” (וַיִּנְעַל הַדֶּלֶת אַחֲרֶיהָ) (17) “He locked the door after her.” (וַיִּנְעַל הַדֶּלֶת אַחֲרֶיהָ) (18)	“A locked garden is my sister- bride—a locked fountain.” (גֶּן נְעוּל אָחֹתִי כְלָה גַל נְעוּל) (12)
“Sister” (אחות)	Absalom's sister (אחות) (1) Amnon's sister (תָּמָר אָחֹתוֹ) (2) Absalom's sister (אֶת־תָּמָר אָחוֹת אֲבִישָׁלֹם) (אָחִי) (4) Amnon's sister (תָּמָר אָחֹתִי) (5) Amnon's sister (תָּמָר אָחֹתִי) (6) Amnon's sister (אָחֹתִי) (11) Absalom's sister (אָחֹתִי) (20) Absalom's sister (תָּמָר אָחֹתוֹ) (22)	“You have aroused me, my sister- bride.” (לִבְבְּתִנִּי אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (9) “How beautiful are your breasts, my sister-bride.” (מֵה־יָפוּ דְדִידְךָ אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (10) “A locked garden is my sister- bride.” (גֶּן נְעוּל אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (12)
“Eyes” (עינים)	“It seemed like a fantasy to Amnon to do anything to her.” (וַיִּפְלֵא בְּעֵינָיו אֲמִנּוֹן לַעֲשׂוֹת לָהּ מְאוּמָה) (2) “Let her make the nourishment in my sight.” (וַעֲשֵׂתָהּ לְעֵינַי אֶת־הַבְּרִיָּה) (5) “Let her <i>LBB</i> two <i>levivot</i> in my sight.” (וּתְלַבֵּב לְעֵינַי שְׁתֵּי לִבְבוֹת) (6) “She <i>LBB</i> ed in his sight.” (וּתְלַבֵּב לְעֵינָיו) (8)	“Your eyes are doves behind your veil.” (עֵינֶיךָ יוֹנִים מִבְּעַד לְצַמְתְּךָ) (1) “You have aroused me with a single gaze.” (לִבְבְּתִנִּי בְּאַחַד) [בְּאַחַת] מְעִינִיךְ (9)

the focus of this work. My argument is simply that, in some form, the poem that became the core of Song 4 was familiar to the author of this passage.

Term	In 2 Samuel 13	In Song 4
“Beautiful” (יָפָה)	“Absalom, David’s son, had a beautiful sister.” (וּלְאַבְשָׁלוֹם בֶּן־דָּוִד אָחוֹת יָפָה) (1)	“How beautiful you are, my darling; how beautiful you are.” (הֲנֵנְךָ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי הֲנֵנְךָ יָפָה) (1) “All of you is beautiful, my darling.” (כָּלְךָ יָפָה רַעֲיָתִי) (7) “How beautiful are your breasts, my sister-bride.” (מַה־יִפּוֹ דְדִידְךָ אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (10) “Your channel [?] is a paradise of pomegranates.” (שְׁלֶחֶתְךָ פְּרָדֶס רְמוֹנִים) (13)
“Send” (שְׁלַח)	“David sent home to Tamar.” (וַיִּשְׁלַח דָּוִד אֶל־תָּמָר הַבִּיָּתָה) (7) “To send me away” (לְשַׁלְּחֵנִי) (16) “Please send <i>this</i> away from my presence.” (שְׁלַח־חַוְצָה אֶת־זֹאת מִעָלַי הַחֹצְהָ) (17)	“Your channel [?] is a paradise of pomegranates.” (שְׁלֶחֶתְךָ פְּרָדֶס רְמוֹנִים) (13)
“Love” (יָדָד)	“He named him Yedidah” (וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ) (12:25)	“How beautiful are your breasts, my sister-bride.” (מַה־יִפּוֹ דְדִידְךָ אָחֹתִי כְלָה) (10) “Let my beloved come to his garden.” (יָבֵא דוֹדִי לְגַנּוֹ) (16)

Additional links not mentioned by Auld

“Two” (שְׁנַיִם)	“Let her <i>LBB</i> two <i>levivot</i> in my sight.” (וְהִלָּבַב לְעֵינַי שְׁתֵּי לִבָּבוֹת) (6)	“Your two breasts are like two fawns.” (שְׁנֵי שְׁדֶיךָ כַּשְׁנֵי עֲפָרַיִם) (5)
“Come” (בּוֹא) and “Eat” (אָכַל)	Tamar took the <i>levivot</i> which she had made, and she brought [them] to Amnon her brother in the room. She served them to eat, and he seized her, and he said to her, “Come, sleep with me, my sister.” וַתִּקַּח תָּמָר אֶת־הַלִּבָּבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָה וַתָּבֵא לְאַמְנוֹן אָחִיהָ הַחֹדְרָה: וַתַּגִּישׁ אֵלָיו לְאָכַל וַיַּחַק־רָבָה וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בּוֹאִי שִׁכְבִּי עִמִּי אָחוֹתִי (vv. 10–11)	“Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its bounty of fruits.” (יָבֵא דוֹדִי לְגַנּוֹ וַיֹּאכַל פְּרִי מְגַדִּי) (16)
“Sick, faint” (חָלָה)	“Amnon ached until he made himself sick over his sister Tamar.” (וַיִּצָּר לְאַמְנוֹן לְהַתְחַלּוֹת) (2) “Lie down on your bed and make yourself [seem] sick.” (שָׁכַב עַל־) (5) (מִשְׁכָּבְךָ וְהִתְחַלַּלְתָּ) (5)	“I am dizzy with love.” (חֹלַת אֶהְבֶּה אֲנִי) (2:5 and 5:8)

These various linguistic links can be summarized in three categories: central, peripheral, and tangential. The central links, rare words seen in these passages and few others, establish an intertextual connection between the two. The peripheral links involve more common words that, while they would not serve as proof of a

connection on their own, still have significance for our reading of 2 Samuel 13. The tangential links are mentioned here for the sake of completeness, but they represent more coincidental overlap between the passages.

First, the central links consist of the verbs לָבַב and נָעַל. As discussed at length above, לָבַב as a verb only occurs in three places in the Bible: these two passages and Job 11:12. Similarly, נָעַל as a verb only occurs in a handful of places: Ezek 16:10 and 2 Chr 28:15, where it means “to put a sandal on someone”; Judg 3:23–24, where Ehud locks in Eglon’s corpse⁹³; and these two passages. Song 4 and 2 Sam 13 are the only places where both of these rare words appear in the same location. Moreover, all the instances of these words occur in the subsection 2 Samuel 13:1–18—the part of the story that is focalized through Amnon’s perspective.

Several other words, admittedly more common, continue the links between the passages. “Sister” (אָחֹת) is of course hardly rare, but it plays a prominent role in both passages. Indeed, now is the time to take a brief aside and address one “elephant in the room”: the question of whether Amnon’s crime would have been considered forbidden incest in addition to rape. Virtually every scholarly discussion of the passage weighs in on this question,⁹⁴ and I side with the majority opinion: that the passage never presents their kinship as an impediment to a relationship, because it was not considered an impediment.⁹⁵ (Thus, Tamar’s plea that her father would allow their marriage [v. 13] was not inherently implausible.) Given this stance, the passage’s constant reiteration of “sister” may at first seem strange; if the author was not emphasizing their forbidden kinship, why mention it so often? The answer comes from Song 4, where “sister” is a name born of intimacy, signaling emotional closeness: the term “may represent a striving toward completeness

93 Indeed, in an unpublished paper, I have argued for an intertextual connection between Eglon’s death and Tamar’s rape, based in part on this rare verb.

94 Most recently, Johanna Stiebert summarizes the various positions and concludes that “Amnon’s deed is a breach of honour but not a serious crime. . . . [Amnon] is ignominious, but his rape is neither incestuous nor illegal—an indication of rape culture” (“Brother, Sister, Rape,” 43). Smith (*Samuel*, 329), Conroy (*Absalom Absalom!* 17–18), and Fokkelman (*Narrative Art*, 103) similarly do not see incest as a consideration, and Anderson agrees “that a marriage between Amnon and her was legally possible” (Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 172). Morrison argues that “in the narrator’s mind incest is not part of Amnon’s crime” (Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 169). William Propp, after a lengthy analysis of the relations and punishments at stake, leans away from arguing for incest, though he cautions that “we cannot be sure” (“Kinship in 2 Samuel 13,” 53).

Contra these scholars, Amy Kalmanofsky argues that the theme of incest is pervasive in the story, which “warns of the perils of incest” (Kalmanofsky, *Dangerous Sisters*, 114). McCarter equivocates but ultimately says that the “most defensible” option is that the sibling marriage would have been prohibited, but that Tamar believes David would overrule custom to allow it (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 324).

95 One intriguing explanation for the tension with levitical laws comes from Calum Carmichael, who argues that those laws were written *specifically in response* to stories like this that portray incest as acceptable. Carmichael mostly focuses on the incest incidents among the patriarchs, but he discusses Amnon and Tamar as an example of why incest might have been prohibited: to ensure that “family life is as sexually unimpassioned as possible. If it is not, violence of the kind that Absalom has inflicted on Amnon is the likely outcome” (*Sex and Religion in the Bible*, 139).

or wholeness, whose realization the man can only imagine in his mirror-image from the opposite sex.”⁹⁶ By calling Tamar “sister,” Amnon builds a fantasy in which she is his intimate partner. Notably, the term appears in almost every verse at the beginning of the story, but it vanishes between verse 11 (when Amnon first seizes Tamar) and verse 20 (when the narrative has shifted to Absalom’s perspective). In other words, Tamar is Amnon’s sister up until she refuses him—but as his advances transform into rape and then to rejection, the term of emotional intimacy is wholly absent.

Another common term shared by the two passages is “eyes.” Auld mentions this as a possible link, but he does not note that their contexts are inverted. That is, both times that eyes are mentioned in Song 4, they are the woman’s eyes: first as a metaphorically described facial feature, then as the source of an arousing gaze. In contrast, all four sets of eyes in 2 Samuel 13 are Amnon’s eyes, first fantasizing about Tamar and then watching her as she prepares the food. This inversion is no accident. The man of Song 4 focuses on the features of his beloved; even in the rare instances where he describes his own intended actions, they are redolent with evocative imagery of his lover, rather than focusing on himself:

Song 4:6

<p>עד שִׁיִּפּוּחַ הַיּוֹם וְנָסוּ הַצִּלְלִים אֶלְדָּה לִי אֶל-הַר הַמְּזוּר וְאֶל-גְּבַעַת הַלְּבוֹנָה</p>	<p>Until the day breathes and the shadows wane, I shall go to the mountain of myrrh and the hill of incense.</p>
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But Amnon’s focus is on his own scheming, not on Tamar’s body. We know that she is beautiful (יָפָה), but we know nothing else: no details of her physical form, no personality traits. Instead of a *wasf*, Amnon creates a virtual panopticon, where his eyes record Tamar’s actions—and as Michel Foucault has noted about Bentham’s original panopticon, “the major effect of the Panopticon [is] to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power.”⁹⁷ Twice, Amnon declares his intent to watch Tamar (vv. 5,6); once, he watches her carrying out his demands (v. 8). His gaze upon her thus “induces a state of conscious and permanent visibility” where she is subject to his power,⁹⁸ one that is heightened when he expels the attendants from the room, essentially giving her nowhere to hide from his panopticon gaze. (This concept also relates to two other feminist concepts: the objectifying gaze of Carol Adams, discussed previously, and the “male gaze” proposed in film theory by Laura Mulvey, who notes that women have the “place of bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”⁹⁹ In grammatical terms, women are object, not subject.)

96 Exum, *Song of Songs*, 172.

97 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 201.

98 His power, and the power of the reader. To quote Trible, “In obeying David, Tamar has become the object of sight. Amnon, the narrator, and the readers behold her. Voyeurism prevails” (Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 43).

99 Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” 58.

This same disparity appears in the repetition of “beautiful” (יָפָה), another common word shared by the two passages. In Song of Songs 4, the term appears a full four times, always describing the woman (vv. 1, 7, 10), which makes it one of the most common words in the chapter—excluding particles, only “bride” (כַּלְיָה) appears more.¹⁰⁰ So when Amnon imagines his half-sister as beautiful, he places her in the role of the Shulammitte. However, in Song 4, every declaration of the woman’s beauty is followed by a detail or amplification: the lovely shape of her eyes (v. 1), her lack of blemish (v. 7), her superiority to wine or spices (v. 10). For Amnon, she is beautiful, and that is sufficient; nothing else about Tamar matters.

So far, all these verbal links were mentioned by Auld; I would add a few of my own. First, as mentioned previously, Amnon asks for specifically **two** *levivot*; this may be a link to the two breasts of the woman in Song 4:5. Second, Song 4 finishes with a single verse spoken by the woman, in which she invites her lover to “come (בוא) to his garden and eat (אכל) its bounty of fruits” (v. 16). The same pairing of “come” and “eat” occurs in 2 Sam 13:10–11: “She served [the *levivot*] to eat (אכל), and he seized her, and he said to her, ‘Come (בוא), sleep with me, my sister.’ ” Amnon may even see his request as echoing the woman’s invitation: from his perspective, she is serving him food to eat, after all, and thus joining him in the erotic “script.” Finally, moving slightly beyond the bounds of Song 4, a particular phrase appears in both Song 2:5 and 5:8: the woman declaring, “I am dizzy/sick with love (חולת אהבה אֲנִי).” That same verb חלה appears in 2 Samuel 13, both to describe Amnon’s actual lovesickness (v. 2) and to describe the illness he feigns (vv. 5, 6). Once again, a term unites a passage from Song of Songs and Amnon’s imagined experience; once again, a term that had been used to describe the woman is used to describe him, centering his experience solely on his own desires.

In order to round out the discussion, I will address two additional words that Auld views as literary links: the verb שלח and the root ידד. In both cases, I believe that the link is unlikely to be intentional. While שלח is a common verb in 2 Sam 13, its only appearance in Song 4 is in the highly obscure term “שְׁלַחֲתֶיךָ” (perhaps “your irrigational channels,” a sexual metaphor?),¹⁰¹ which has little to do with the “sending” meanings in 2 Sam 13. Conversely, ידד is a significant word in Song 4, but Auld connects it to the name יְדִידָה, an epithet for Solomon that appears in 2 Sam 12:25—a passage wholly outside the Amnon/Absalom narrative. In my view, these “links” are mere coincidence.

Nonetheless, between the two rare links and the numerous secondary links, a connection between these two passages is highly plausible.

100 Here I group together the adjective יָפָה and the verb יָפָה. “Bride” appears five times in the chapter (“garden” [גַּן] and “Lebanon” [לְבָנוֹן] also appear four times). Given how Tamar pleads for Amnon to marry her, the comparative absence of the word “bride” in 2 Samuel 13 feels like a deliberately open wound.

101 See Pope, *Song of Songs*, 490–91, for discussion of this difficult term.

(ii) Allusions and Illusions

Having established this “connection,” we are ready to move from the neutral term of “linguistic links” to the stronger term “allusion.” The question of what comprises an allusion, and how to detect them, is one that has received non-trivial examination in biblical studies.¹⁰² Jeffery Leonard’s criteria for allusion, which Marc Brettler has called “the basic starting point of any discussion about allusion,”¹⁰³ outline eight “principles” to evaluate claims of allusion between passages¹⁰⁴; these principles were already implicitly reflected in the preceding discussion, which emphasized features like rarer vocabulary and clusters of multiple terms. But as Leonard acknowledges, “Equally difficult, if not more so, is the matter of determining the direction of these allusions,”¹⁰⁵ in cases where the texts cannot be definitively dated relative to each other. That is unfortunately the case here, as neither the Succession Narrative nor Song of Songs can be decisively dated. Neither text overtly cites the other, and neither is a pastiche with many other instances of inner-biblical borrowing. Instead, the plausibility of various possibilities must be weighed against each other. Perhaps (1) the author of 2 Sam 13 knew and alluded to Song 4, or (2) the author of Song 4 knew and alluded to 2 Sam 13. Or perhaps (3) both authors knew and alluded to a third, unknown source—or (4) both authors drew from the same set of stock genre vocabulary.

In my view, option 2 is highly unlikely; why would an affectionate love song deliberately evoke a brutal rape? As for option 3, it relies on an argument *ex silentio*, and thus cannot be proven or disproven. Option 4 initially seems quite distinct from option 1; indeed, they are on opposite sides of Benjamin Sommer’s “two types of textual similarity: cases in which one writer relies on another and cases in which two writers use similar language coincidentally.”¹⁰⁶ But my ultimate point is not dependent on whether the text deliberately refers to Song 4 or simply evokes a familiar aura of sexual desire. In the discussion that follows,

102 For a recent overview, cf. the many excellent essays in *Subtle Citation, Allusion, and Translation*, ed. Ziony Zevit. Earlier important work includes that of Marc Brettler (“Psalm 136 as an Interpretive Text”), David Carr (“Method in Determination of Direction of Dependence”), Devorah Dimant (“Use and Interpretation of Mikra in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha”), Michael Fishbane (*Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*), Benjamin Sommer (*A Prophet Reads Scripture*), and Jeffrey Stackert (*Rewriting the Torah*).

103 Marc Brettler, “Identifying Torah Sources in the Historical Psalms,” 78.

104 To quote Jeffery Leonard (“Identifying Inner-Biblical Allusions,” 246): “(1) Shared language is the single most important factor in establishing a textual connection. (2) Shared language is more important than nonshared language. (3) Shared language that is rare or distinctive suggests a stronger connection than does language that is widely used. (4) Shared phrases suggest a stronger connection than do individual shared terms. (5) The accumulation of shared language suggests a stronger connection than does a single shared term or phrase. (6) Shared language in similar contexts suggests a stronger connection than does shared language alone. (7) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared ideology to establish a connection. (8) Shared language need not be accompanied by shared form to establish a connection.”

105 *Ibid.*, 257.

106 Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture*, 32.

I assume direct familiarity, for the sake of brevity—but the core of the argument remains the same if the text refers generically to romantic seduction, rather than specifically to Song 4.

Moving forward, if we conclude that the author of 2 Sam 13 was familiar with some form of Song 4 (or, perhaps, with a set of vocabulary associated with erotic desire), and that he evokes it deliberately through both rare words and a cluster of more common terms, then the natural question arises: why include these allusions? Intertextual connections are easy to observe, but a plausible explanation must account for why it was important for one author to allude to another.

One somewhat vague explanation, which I reject, is Auld's. Since his observations inspired this discussion, I cite his argument in full:

It is not easy to suppose that writer and readers of the story of Amnon and Tamar were ignorant of these lines of the Song, or possibly of the traditional love poetry on which the classic Song drew. Who knew this Song? If the prince's friend and counselor knows it, then his advice is all the more erotically fraught. If King David knows the Song (despite the fact that Solomon and even his own tower feature in it!), then his response to Amnon's request is at best reckless, at worst complicit. And if our author knows the Song, then at least this part of Samuel may be from quite late in the biblical period. And what about Tamar? Is it only men who make up the audience when love-poetry is recited? Does she know the Song? How close to a dangerous wind does she know she is sailing when she visits her half brother to "bring him heart"? When she tells Amnon to wait and to ask David for her properly, is she desperately playing for time in order to get away? Or does she know full well that the king who has sent her on such a loaded mission will not withhold her from her half brother (v. 13)? And, if so, where does it all go wrong?

This paragraph is troubling for both what it includes and what it omits. Auld's suggestion that Tamar might have known the Song, and therefore was "sailing close to a dangerous wind," is one part of his broader accusation that "Tamar appears as foolish as the fool who rapes her."¹⁰⁷ A similar argument is at the core of Pamela Reis's "Cupidity and Stupidity." But such "victim-blaming" is unsupported by the text, which unequivocally portrays Tamar as an unwilling sufferer of Amnon's actions.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, in a detailed review and refutation of Reis's article, Susanne

¹⁰⁷ Auld, *I & II Samuel*, 484.

¹⁰⁸ Reis claims that "The tell-tale heart-cakes, Tamar's willingness to be alone with a man, and her failure to call out all refute a rape verdict" (Reis, "Cupidity and Stupidity," 59). Yet all three pieces of evidence are problematic: Tamar's baked goods are *levivot* according to the narrator, not in her words; her willingness to be alone with a sick brother hardly implies promiscuity; and she did call out with urgent cries, albeit cries directed at her brother rather than at his servants (whom she may have reasonably assumed were loyal to him). Moreover, even if all three claims were true, they do not override the fact that Tamar vocally and repeatedly refused her brother's advances and is never

Scholz points out that “Her claim that Tamar is a willing participant in the sexual encounter reinforces standard prejudices about acquaintance rape, and so her reading unintentionally confirms that 2 Samuel 13 is a story about acquaintance rape.”¹⁰⁹ Thus, for reasons both textual and ideological, I strongly resist Auld’s attempt to mark Tamar as complicit in her own rape.¹¹⁰

As for what his explanation omits, Auld goes through possible suspects—Jonadab, David, the author, Tamar—without even mentioning the most obvious possibility: Amnon. Song 4, with the exception of the final verse, comes from the perspective of the male lover. The key term *levivot* appears only in Amnon’s speech and the narrative. If a character is attempting to reenact the scene of Song 4, then Amnon is the natural and even obvious suspect. In conclusion, while Auld’s observations are an incisive clue to the connection between the texts, his interpretation does not provide a satisfying explanation for the intertextual link.

Another explanation I reject is that the author of the passage seeks to justify Amnon’s deeds, or at least lessen their vileness. In this view, the scene could be a tragic romance gone wrong: as in the Song, an amorous man approaches his partner, but this time she has been “leading him on” and refuses to offer the sexual delights she promised. Here, the problem would be Tamar’s beguiling sexuality and reckless brazenness, not Amnon’s natural response to it. Admittedly, this stance is plausible from a feminist lens; too often, popular culture portrays women as irresistible temptresses whom men cannot be blamed for coveting.¹¹¹ Yet this explanation does not do justice to the honest desperation of Tamar’s pleas, nor to the way that “love” turns to hate as soon as Amnon achieves his desire. The swift reversal indicates that this is no story of erotic love in reality; the desire between the lovers in Song of Songs is unquenchable, where Amnon’s desire is fickle. In short, his deeds cannot be justified in a dispassionate analysis.

shown consenting to them. When a woman’s only recorded speech is a series of harsh refusals, it is deeply troubling to conclude that her true intent was acceptance.

109 Scholz, *Sacred Witness*, 41. Scholz’s general point is good, even as her models of consent may be criticized as anachronistic, for example, in Schulte, *The Absence of God in Biblical Rape Narratives*, 16.

110 Of course, this whole discussion inherently treats Tamar as a historical person who made real choices, instead of a narrated character, and it introduces anachronistic terms like “acquaintance rape.” The real question is not whether Tamar was complicit, but (a) whether the author depicts the character of Tamar as complicit, and (b) whether we should judge women who make similar choices to be complicit—and these are two very distinct questions. The second question is beyond the bounds of this monograph, but the first is, I would argue, refuted by my discussion in a previous footnote.

111 Helen Benedict discusses myths around rape, arguing that “Because rape is believed to be sex, victims are believed to have enticed their assailants by their looks and sexuality” (*Virgin or Vamp*, 15). Moreover, after noting that popular media tends to depict rape victims as “virgins” (innocent victims) or “vamps” (seductive corruptors), she gives a list of eight factors that tend to make a woman classified as a vamp (*Ibid*, 19)—and Tamar fits every single one. She knew Amnon and shared his race, social class, and ethnic group; no weapon was used; she was young and pretty; and she ventured outside her own home. Based on these factors, then, we would expect Tamar to be blamed by the narrative for her own rape, and the fact that she is not speaks to the power of her own words.

So why these allusions? Because they illustrate Amnon's own illusions. In the author's depiction of his lust-clouded mind, he is enacting a love story, not a rape. *None* of the word-links appear in Tamar's own speech; they are virtually all¹¹² confined to either Amnon's speech or the narrator. This narrator, while superficially objective, actually uses Free Indirect Discourse to demonstrate Amnon's own perspective on the situation—a perspective in which he is taking the literary role of passionate lover. He alludes to Song 4 as we might allude to modern love ballads, in an effort to present himself as the hero in a script of his own making.¹¹³ (Of course, like those modern allusions to love ballads, it is possible that ancient readers would have found his allusions ham-handed or even pitiable, adding an element of irony.) Yet the author also records the words of Tamar, an unfiltered contrast to Amnon's illusions; “the pleading of Tamar (vv. 12–13, 16) is a more effective judgment on Amnon's actions than any editorial remarks or moralizing could have been.”¹¹⁴ No matter how romantic his viewpoint, it cannot override the grim reality of rape.

(d) **Raw, Cooked, and Rotten: The Cycle of Consumption in 2 Samuel 13**

(i) *Overview: The Structure of Tamar's Rape*

In this final section of the chapter, I step back to look at the structure of the narrative as a whole. Scholars have variously explained the broader structure of 2 Samuel 13:1–22, that is, the portion of the chapter that contains Tamar's rape, its precipitating events, and its aftermath. For instance, Bar-Efrat first observed that broader story of Tamar's rape is structured as “scenes which are arranged as a chain, each of its constituent links containing two characters.”¹¹⁵ His “chain,” which Fokkelman also accepts, looks very tidy on paper; however, it stretches the definition of “scenes” to, for instance, make two separate scenes out of the brief exchange where Amnon asks his servant expel Tamar and the servant does so. Other scholars have constructed differing outlines (almost inevitably chiasmic) of the narrative.¹¹⁶

112 The only real exception is when Jonadab instructs Amnon to ask for Tamar to prepare the food “before his eyes”—and, interestingly enough, that phrase is missing in the Syriac and the Vulgate.

113 Indeed, the Song of Songs may not have been the limit of his allusions; as McCarter and others argue, citing Egyptian poetry about a young man sick with love, “the original audience of the story of Aminon and Tamar may have known the poetic malady of lovesickness in its Egyptian expression and recognized its symptoms here” (McCarter, *II Samuel*, 322). The Egyptian poetry also uses the intimate term “sister” for a lover. However, without clearer lexical links, direct familiarity is difficult to prove.

114 Anderson, *2 Samuel*, 177. See also Ryan Higgins, “He Would Not Hear Her Voice.”

115 Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 278.

116 For example, Craig Morrison, *2 Samuel*, 167; April Westbrook, ‘*And He Will Take Your Daughters . . .*’, 152; George Ridout, “The Rape of Tamar,” 75–84; and Tribble, *Texts of Terror*, 37–63. Conroy wisely notes that “the narrative movement would be hardened unduly if one were to insist on a geometrically regular disposition of the elements” (Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 20).

In this section, I hone in on the scene of the rape itself—that is, the scene beginning when Tamar enters Amnon’s house (v. 8) and ending when she leaves Amnon’s house (v. 19). The text notes her travel in and out with the verb הלך, making it a natural frame for the single but complex scene of violence.¹¹⁷ Within this frame, events are sequential and virtually uninterrupted, as opposed to the narrative leaps between scenes before and after. Moreover, once this scene is isolated from the broader “Tamar material,” it divides neatly into a broad narrative chiasm, as mapped below. This chiasm, however, has two major interruptions: the action sequence of bread-making, and the action sequence of rape. These two interruptions, set against the broader chiastic frame, stand out as the central moments of action in the narrative.

Many scholars have noted the remarkable step-by-step description of Tamar’s actions in vv. 8b-9a.¹¹⁸ Yet no one has given a satisfactory explanation of *why* this sequence is so detailed—why Tamar’s actions are focalized so thoroughly. Mark Gray comes closest to my stance when he argues that the “meticulous attention” creates a passage “replete with *double entendre* and sexual innuendo which help cultivate a fetid atmosphere redolent of peril for Tamar.”¹¹⁹ The innuendos he identifies include the mention of lying in bed, the sensual activity of kneading, the “‘boiling,’ ‘seething’ point of lustful frenzy,” and the fact that “the verbal form of the noun בצק can mean to ‘swell’ or ‘rise up.’”¹²⁰ I agree with his general conclusion (though some points, such as בצק, seem like a stretch), and I would take it one step further: Tamar’s actions are not merely generically erotic, and not merely appealing to the reader. Contrary to Conroy’s claim that the details are “irrelevant,” they are carefully and specifically meaningful.

In this section, I offer a new justification for the detailed cooking sequence—one that not only justifies its elaborate detail but also explains how the text positions Tamar within the WOMAN IS FOOD metaphor. In short, I argue that the cooking sequence is a foreshadowing of the brutal events that immediately follow it. Tamar’s treatment of the dough mirrors Amnon’s treatment of her. This narrative parallel has an immediate effect: it puts Tamar in the role of food, something to be

117 Jenny Smith emphasizes (perhaps overly?) the significance of this verb here: “The dramatic but poignant nature of Tamar’s entrance into the centre of the drama is demonstrated by the use of *telek* on the main event line. The way her entrance is marked shows that it is more important to the story than the king’s entrance in verse 6. The verb *halak* conveys more movement than the forms of *bo’* and the forms of *ra’ah* used earlier to describe David’s entry. We are therefore meant to picture Tamar as she moves from her house into Amnon’s” (“The Discourse Structure of the Rape of Tamar,” 32).

118 For instance, Ken Stone observes, “Tamar’s actions in preparing the cakes for Amnon are described in considerable detail. Indeed, the amount of detail used in this description is quite remarkable for a biblical narrative” (*Sex, Honor, and Power*, 112). Conroy also attempts an explanation, but does not satisfactorily address the specific choice of details: “At this point the narrator pauses again (cf. v. 4), giving a very detailed description of the baking operations which is irrelevant to the onward progress of the plot though it increases the reader’s imaginative entry into the world of the text; as a result, the reader’s expectancy heightens” (*Absalom Absalom!*, 21).

119 Mark Gray, “Amnon,” 44.

120 *Ibid.*, 45.

manipulated by Amnon for consumption. Just like Nathan’s parable in the previous chapter, when he metaphorically placed Bathsheba in the role of a slaughtered lamb, this sequence foregrounds an ambient cultural metaphor in order to manipulate the reader’s perception of events.

The following chart lays out the sequence of events in this scene—both the chiasmic frame and the two action sequences.

<p>A Tamar goes (תָּלַח) in to Amnon. (v. 8a)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Seizing and Pressuring</i>: She takes the dough and kneads. (v. 8ba) 2. <i>Passion</i>: She LBBs. (v. 8bβ) 3. <i>Boiling over</i>: She boils. (v. 8bδ) 4. <i>Removal</i>: She takes and pours out the liquid. (v. 9aa) 5. <i>Denial</i>: He refuses to eat. (v. 9aβ) <p>B Amnon sends everyone out (הוֹצִיאֵם), and they go out (יָצְאוּ). (v. 9b)</p> <p>C Amnon tells Tamar to bring (הָבִיָּה) the sustenance (הַבָּרֶךְ) into his chamber (הַחֲדָר). (v. 10a)</p> <p>C’ Tamar brings (וַתָּבֵא) the <i>levivot</i> (הַלֵּבְבוֹת) into Amnon’s chamber (הַחֲדָר). (vv. 10b-11a)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Seizing and Pressuring</i>: He seizes her and asks her for sex. (v. 11b) 1’. She responds negatively. (vv. 12–13) 2. <i>Passion</i>: He ignores her protests and rapes her. (v. 14) 3. <i>Boiling over</i>: His love transforms to passionate hate. (v. 15a) 4. <i>Removal</i>: He says, “Get out!” (v. 15b) 4’. She responds negatively. (v. 16a) 5. <i>Denial</i>: He refuses to listen to her. (v. 16b) <p>B’ Amnon tells the servant to send her out (שְׁלַחֵהָ), and the servant takes her out (צָיַן). (v. 17,18b)</p> <p>A’ Tamar dresses in mourning garb and goes out (תָּלַח), weeping. (v. 19)</p>
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A number of important observations emerge from this structure. First, the broader structure of the rape scene is framed by Tamar’s entrance and exit, both indicated by תָּלַח. Indeed, movement in and out forms the framework that structures the scene: the movement of Tamar into the house (A/A’), two expulsions from Amnon’s bedroom (B/B’), and the delivery of the *levivot* (C/C’). This structure of movement is interrupted by two sequences of physical interaction; the parallels and divergences between these two sequences deserve detailed analysis.

This is not an extremely strict chiasm, which may be why it has not been noted by previous scholars. (Indeed, whether it was intended as a literary chiasm is debatable.) However, laid out as a chiastic structure, the key elements of the text become prominent, and it is to these that I now turn.

A brief aside: the outline above contains *almost* all the elements of 2 Sam 13:8–19. However, v. 18a, the note about Tamar’s clothing, has been excluded. Following the major scholarship,¹²¹ I view this statement as an explanation added much later to the narrative, as it disrupts the literary flow awkwardly.

121 For example, Anderson (*2 Samuel*, 175), McCarter (*II Samuel*, 325), and Smith (*Samuel*, 330). Contra Conroy (*Absalom Absalom!*, 33) and Adrien Bledstein, who sees the garment as an indicator

(ii) Culinary and Carnal Manhandling

While the movements that form the narrative chiasm help to structure the story, the real meat of the scene (so to speak) is in two sequences of manhandling: when Tamar manhandles dough into bread, and when Amnon manhandles Tamar into sexual intercourse. Based on our broader observations, we may already see a parallel between the *levivot* and Tamar, both desirable objects for consumption. But by paralleling the two sequences of action, the narrative foregrounds the comparison between food and woman. At the same time, and in contrast to Tizkoret's tale, the narrative crucially distinguishes between the two sequences through the interruptions of Tamar's voice. She may be Amnon's food, but this food talks back.

(1) Seizing and Pressuring

In the first stage of bread production, Tamar takes the bread dough (an object "alive" with yeast) and kneads it. At this stage, its future is still undetermined; any yeasted bread would begin with similar preparations. The process of kneading is physical, requiring muscle strength and patience; through repeated kneading, dough becomes more pliant and stretchy. This step parallels Amnon's first acts once he and Tamar are alone: he seizes her, as she seized the bread, and pressures her to yield to him.

<p style="text-align: center;">וַתִּקַּח אֶת-הַבֶּצֶק וַתְּלוֹשׁ [וַתְּלֹשׁ] She took the dough and kneaded [it]. (8bα)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">וַיִּחְזַק-בָּהּ וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ בּוֹאִי שְׁכְבִי עִמִּי אָחוֹתִי He seized her and said to her, "Come, sleep with me, my sister." (11b)</p>
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Before moving to the next stage, though, verses 12–13 intercede: a lengthy and passionate plea from Tamar, begging Amnon to desist. This intercession is unparalleled in Tamar's bread preparations—understandably, given that its parallel would involve the bread dough protesting its future fate! I return to this interruption later.

(2) Sexual Passion

With the dough prepared, Tamar takes the crucial step of making it into *levivot* (perhaps shaping the dough into balls). The lengthy discussion of the root *לבב*, earlier in this chapter, now becomes vitally relevant. Tamar is manhandling the dough into the shape she desires—a shape and an act with strong connotations of fiery passion. Indeed, the text emphasizes that Amnon's eyes are upon her for this specific step, unlike all her other acts of food preparation. This action is thus the central step of her preparations, and it parallels the central moment of the rape.

of Tamar's priestly status, central to the narrative (Bledstein, "Tamar and the 'Coat of Many Colors'"), but does not address the awkward way that the information interrupts the narrative.

וַתִּלְבַּב לְעֵינָיו She shaped <i>levivot</i> before his eyes. (8bβ)	וְלֹא אָבָה לְשָׁמַע בְּקוֹלָהּ וַיַּחֲזִק מִמֶּנָּה וַיַּעֲנֶה וַיִּשְׁכַּב אִתָּהּ He would not listen to her voice, and he was stronger than her, so he raped ¹²² her and laid her. (14)
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(3) *Boiling Over*

Having shaped the *levivot*, all that remains for Tamar is cooking them. We have already observed that *levivot* are, unusually, boiled rather than baked. Boiling carries connotations both anthropological and metaphorical.

Anthropologically, Claude Lévi-Strauss has examined the techniques of cooking as part of his broader project on the significance of “the raw and the cooked.” He notes the basic divide between boiling and roasting as cooking techniques, and argues that “the boiled can most often be ascribed to what might be called an ‘endo-cuisine,’ prepared for domestic use, destined to a small closed group, while the roasted belongs to ‘exo-cuisine,’ that which one offers to guests.”¹²³ Moreover, because the boiled is associated with the domestic (as it requires the use of cooking pots, a bulky manufactured object), he notes “a subsidiary association of the roasted with men, the boiled with women.”¹²⁴ To be fair, Lévi-Strauss has meat in mind, not bread, but it is worth noting that even in modern American cuisine, boiled dumplings are considered home cooking (and thus women’s purview), not haute cuisine (and thus the product of male chefs).¹²⁵ If Lévi-Strauss is correct, then the cooking method of boiling marked the *levivot* as home cooking, women’s cooking. (A more Freudian analysis might seize upon his observation that boiling “evokes the concave”¹²⁶ to posit a link between the cooking-pot and the womb; however, this analysis will sidestep that speculation.) This observation stands in addition to the more general sense in which bread-making more broadly was “women’s work” in ancient Israelite culture.¹²⁷

The more important association of boiling turns to Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) rather than anthropological observation. After all, this is a literary passage, not a documentation of real food habits. In CMT, one common and well-explored metaphor is ANGER IS HEAT, along with its more specific version, ANGER IS

122 Again, cf. Gravett, “Reading ‘Rape,’” for a discussion of translating עָנָה this way.

123 Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle,” 42.

124 Ibid, 43.

125 For instance, Deborah Harris and Patti Giuffre note, “Because everyday cooking is associated with unpaid labor done by women, [male chefs’] emphasis on technical skills and artistry is another way of addressing feminization threat. Food writers and critics are important in the process of legitimizing chefs and separating high-status cuisine from home cooking, and, therefore, defining professional cooking as ‘men’s work’” (Deborah Harris and Patti Giuffre, *Taking the Heat*, 51).

126 Lévi-Strauss, “The Culinary Triangle,” 42.

127 For discussion of this, cf. Carol Meyers, who argues for “the virtual exclusivity of women as producers and distributors” of bread (“Material Remains and Social Relations,” 435); see also the work of Jennie Ebeling (*Women’s Lives in Biblical Times*) and Susan Ackerman (“Digging Up Deborah”) on the significance of this monopoly.

A HOT FLUID IN A CONTAINER. Numerous English metaphors realize this metaphor, such as “my blood was boiling,” as do cartoon images of steam coming out of a furious character’s head. As Lakoff and Kövecses have shown,¹²⁸ the metaphor is far from confined to English, occurring across the world in completely unrelated languages and cultures. Indeed, it ties closely to the physiological experience of anger, as Lakoff notes when he lists various epistemic correspondences between the “source” (HEAT OF FLUID IN CONTAINER) and the “target” (ANGER). His many correspondences include the following:

Source: The effect of intense fluid heat is container heat, internal pressure, and agitation.

Target: The effect of intense anger is body heat, internal pressure, and agitation.

Source: When the fluid is heated past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the container explodes.

Target: When anger increases past a certain limit, pressure increases to the point at which the person loses control.¹²⁹

The Hebrew Bible also links heat and anger, most notably around the common verb *חרה* (to burn, to be angry) and its associated noun *חרון* (burning, anger).¹³⁰ The idea of heated fluid is also present in passages like Ezek 20:8, where God threatens “to pour out my heat/wrath upon them” (*לִשְׂפֹךְ חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיהֶם*),¹³¹ and similar metaphors where this heat/wrath (*חמה*) is a liquid abound.¹³² Moreover, this metaphor is specifically paralleled with imagery of heat in Ezek 22:22 (where Israel is melted like silver, as evidence that God’s wrath has poured out), in Is 42:25 (where the pouring of wrath results in Israel “blazing” and “burning”), and in Lam 2:4 (where God pours his wrath “like fire”). I have also previously discussed (in Section 4.b.iii.3) the triad of metaphorical associations, present in both English and biblical Hebrew, between anger, lust, and heat. Given all these factors, then, boiling is a natural metaphor for the swell of emotion transforming “love” into hatred—especially since boiling is itself a transformative process that converts food from raw to cooked.

128 George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 380–415; Zoltán Kövecses, *Metaphor*, 140ff.

129 Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things*, 387.

130 For discussion, cf. Leon Wood, “*חרה*.”

131 The noun *חמה*, here translated “heat/wrath,” follows Koehler and Baumgartner, who give “heat” as their first definition and link it to *חמה*, “sun/warmth.” However, *חמה* can also mean “poison, venom,” so it is possible that the passage refers to a metaphorical outpouring of poison from God, rather than a heated liquid. TWOT expands upon the root under their entry for *חמה*, and it reiterates that heat is the primary meaning, with poison and venom secondary reflections of rising body heat. All that said, I have been unable to find a detailed discussion of whether the metaphor in this passage is “only” a dead metaphor meaning “anger,” or whether it evokes hot liquid or venomous poison.

132 For instance, YHWH has a “cup of wrath” that he shares in Is 51:17,22 and Jer 25:15, and he “pours out” (*שפך*) this wrath (*חמה*) in Is 42:24, Jer 6:11, 10:25, Ezek 7:8, 9:8, 20:8,13,21,33,34, 22:22, 30:15, 36:18, Ps 79:6, and Lam 2:4.

<p>וַתְּבַשֵּׁל אֶת־הַלֵּבְבוֹת She boiled the <i>levivot</i>. (8bδ)</p>	<p>וַיִּשְׂנְאֶה אֶמְנוֹן שְׂנְאָה גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד כִּי גְדוֹלָה הַשְׂנְאָה אֲשֶׁר שְׂנְאָה מֵאַהֲבָה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְבֶּה Amnon hated her with deep hatred; the hatred with which he hated her was deeper than the love with which he loved her. (15a)</p>
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(4) *Removal*

The penultimate step involves expulsion: the dough’s expulsion from its pan, and Tamar’s expulsion from the room. There is some debate over the meaning and object of the central verb יָצַק¹³³; most modern translations render it as “to set out [the *levivot*].” But the plain meaning of the verb in both Hebrew and Ugaritic is simple: to pour out a liquid, whether water, molten metal, or stew. Moreover, most ancient translations recognized that the verb’s emphasis was on expelling, not presenting; the Septuagint uses the verb “κατακενῶω” (“to empty out”), Targum Jonathan uses קִי in the aphel (again, “to empty out”), and the Vulgate uses “effundo” (“to pour out”). Only the Peshitta uses סַמַּר (*sym*, “to set out”).

Thus, the vast majority of linguistic parallels indicate that we should translate וַתִּצַק as “and she poured out”—a translation that might cause some concern in the absence of a liquid, but is utterly natural after boiling a dumpling. Shafer-Elliott develops this idea further by examining the מִשְׁרָה, a *hapax legomenon* normally translated as “baking tray.”¹³⁴ Relying on a meaning proposed by Strong’s Concordance, she translates it instead as a perforated dish, that is, a colander—an appealing possibility, if there were support for that etymology beyond Strong’s unsubstantiated claim.¹³⁵ Even if Shafer-Elliott is correct, though, it reinforces the image of Tamar as pouring out a liquid rather than setting out a solid.

More likely is a possibility that I have not seen elsewhere: that the *sin* should be repointed as a *shin*, making מִשְׁרָה a variant¹³⁶ on the word מִשְׁרָה (“liquid”). The latter word only appears once in the Bible (Num 6:3), but is well-attested extrabiblically; Jastrow defines it as “infusion; steeping.”¹³⁷ We now have both a verb referring to liquid and a noun meaning “liquid,” leading to a straightforward series of events: Tamar boiled the *levivot*, then took the liquid and poured it out, thereby turning out the *levivot*, as we might pour out a portion of chicken and dumplings.

Thus, the text’s picture is very different from Tamar setting out an array of baked goods; instead, we see her picking up the pot of simmering liquid and dumping

133 Cf. Esther Brownsmith, “Getting Steamy in Amnon’s Chamber,” 373–76, for a more philologically detailed discussion of this section’s main points.

134 This meaning has no etymological support, but it became common in later Hebrew and Aramaic (cf. McCarter, Jr., *2 Samuel*, 317). However, as with *levivot*, these later instances may have been influenced by the popular reading of 2 Samuel 13.

135 Shafer-Elliott, *Food in Ancient Judah*, 171.

136 There are several similar instances of feminine nouns varying between a ה— and a ת— ending, for example, גְּדֵרָה/גְּדֵרָת (“wall”). Cf. Gesenius, *Hebrew Grammar*, 94–95 for other examples.

137 Jastrow, *Dictionary of Targumim, Talmud and Midrashic Literature*, 858.

it out. Appropriately, then, this action parallels Amnon expelling Tamar from his room once she has been “cooked.”

ותקח את־המשֶׁרֶת ותצק לפניו She took the liquid and poured [it] out before him. (9aα)	ויאמר־לָהּ אַמְנוֹן קוּמִי לְכִי Amnon said to her, “Go on, get out!” (15b)
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Like stage 1 (“seizing and pressuring”), this stage is followed by an interruption in its second manifestation. Tamar protests that sending her away is “even more vile” (הַרְעָה הַגְּדוּלָה מֵאֲחֶרֶת) than what he already did. (This protest, which echoes the legislation of Ex 22:15, is further evidence that incest was not a prohibition on Tamar’s mind. At this stage, she has no reason to plead for marriage unless it is a legitimate possibility.) Once again, the “dough” is decrying its fate.

(5) Denial

The final stages of action are short and blunt. After Tamar put so much labor into preparing the *levivot* for Amnon, he refuses to eat them (וַיִּמָּאֵן לֶאֱכֹל)—an unexpected and infelicitous denial. The whole cooking sequence, it seems, was in vain; the food is there, but he will not eat. Its parallel is also an infelicitous denial: this time, the denial of Tamar’s pleas to make her an “honest woman” and marry her. Just as cooking naturally links with eating, so should sexual intercourse naturally link with marriage; but in both sequences, Amnon’s refusal twists the narrative away from its natural conclusion. Virginia Miller hints at the parallels between these actions when he observes,

The prolonged effort that Tamar puts into food preparation is wasted as Amnon refuses to eat (13:9). There is also an implication that Tamar’s conscientious efforts to benefit Amnon are also to be wasted, albeit in a far more serious sense.¹³⁸

Like a Russian nesting doll, each action sequence completes itself and reveals itself to be only a prelude to the “main story.” Tamar’s cooking leads to her time alone with Amnon; Amnon’s rape leads to Absalom’s anger and its deadly consequences for Amnon; Absalom’s murder of Amnon leads to a war that will threaten David’s kingdom.

וַיִּמָּאֵן לֶאֱכֹל He refused to eat. (9aβ)	וְלֹא אָבָה לִשְׁמַע לָהּ He would not listen to her. (16b)
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(6) Interruptions

Having surveyed the sequence of manipulation that occurs, first to the dough and then to Tamar, I return to the interruptions that take place in the second version of

138 Virginia Miller, *A King and a Fool*, 91.

that sequence: the two speeches of Tamar. These speeches are not trivial—indeed, Tamar speaks more words than Amnon in the story—and they have a rich significance. First, to a judicial eye, they establish Tamar’s legal innocence; as Deut 22:26–27 makes clear, a woman who verbally resists her attacker is not guilty of sexual sin. Unlike (for instance) Bathsheba, whose words during intercourse are not recorded in 2 Sam 12, Tamar is undeniably opposed to her violation.

Another aspect of their importance is as insight into Tamar as a rape survivor. Juliana Claassens observes:

Tamar, in the midst of a terrifying ordeal, resists the violence to which she has been subjected. In Tamar’s resistance, one sees the first steps on the road to recovery, i.e., an attempt to find words to narrate the traumatic occurrence and to engage in an act of interpretation that offers a moral judgment of the deed of sexual violation.¹³⁹

This aspect, though likely not intended by the original authors, has had a substantial impact on later readers; “the story of Tamar’s rape, as well as her resistance, has been used as an instrument of healing the wounds of sexual violence and strengthening women and men in the fight to eradicate rape in their respective communities.”¹⁴⁰

Finally, and most importantly, Tamar’s words serve a narrative function: they contrast with the Free Indirect Discourse reflecting Amnon’s thoughts, thereby rebutting Amnon’s presumptions. Conroy notes, “It is in Tamar’s words of vv. 12 and 16 that the narrator really conveys his judgment on what happened.”¹⁴¹ As van Dijk-Hemmes puts it, “The function of unmasking, which Tamar has in the story, enables the reader to see through the veiled language and actions of those who are in power.”¹⁴² The lustful fog of Amnon’s mind clears, and reality asserts itself for a few phrases. Fokkelman notes the shock of these moments:

Up to v. 10, the pattern of command/request + execution implies with respect to Amnon that all his commands are promptly carried out. Then comes the big shock. Tamar, who was still obedient in v. 10, radically interrupts this pattern twice.¹⁴³

Tamar’s disobedience, in short, is not merely an aspect of *muthos*, a verbal signpost that assures the audience of Amnon’s guilt. It also serves a mimetic function, such that Tamar’s horror becomes our own horror. Amnon may see himself as the protagonist of a love song, but we see him as the self-deluding villain of the scene.

139 Juliana Claassens, *Claiming Her Dignity*, 48.

140 Ibid, 61.

141 Conroy, *Absalom Absalom!*, 24.

142 Fokkelen van Dijk-Hemmes, “Tamar & The Limits of Patriarchy,” 145.

143 Fokkelman, *Narrative Art*, 113.

<p>וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֶל־אָחִי אֶל־תַּעֲנֵנִי כִּי לֹא־יַעֲשֶׂה כֵן בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־ תַּעֲשֶׂה אֶת־הַנְּבִלָה הַזֹּאת: וְאֲנִי אֲנִי אוֹלִיךְ אֶת־חַרְפְּתִי וְאֵת־ תְּהִיָּה כְּאֶחָד הַנְּבִלִים בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַתָּה דַּבֵּר־נָא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי לֹא יִמְנַעֲנִי מִמֶּךָ: She told him, “No, my brother! Don’t rape me! That isn’t how it’s done in Israel. Don’t do this outrage! What about me—where could I take my shame? And what about you—you would be like one of Israel’s fools. Now then, speak to the king, for he won’t withhold me from you.” (vv. 12–13)</p>	<p>וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֶל־אֹדֶת הָרָעָה הַגְּדוּלָה הַזֹּאת מֵאֲחֵרֶת אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתָ עִמִּי לְשַׁלְּחֵנִי She told him, “No! For this is even more vile than the other thing that you did to me— sending me off!” (v. 16a)</p>
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(iii) The Pivot: Fantasy versus Reality (C/C')

Thus far, my analysis has focused on Tamar’s food preparation and its parallels in Amnon’s actions. However, these two sequences are framed in a broader chiasmic structure, and its details also further the harrowing atmosphere. For instance, when we examine the center chiasm, C/C', we see both major similarities and a striking difference between Amnon’s words and his internal narration.

10a versus 10b

<p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֲמִנּוֹן אֶל־תָּמָר הִבִּיאי הַבֶּרֶךָ הַחֶדֶר</p>	<p>וַתִּקַּח תָּמָר אֶת־הַלֶּבָבוֹת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂתָה וַתָּבֵא לְאֲמִנּוֹן אֶחָיָה הַחֶדֶרָה</p>
<p>Amnon said to Tamar, “Bring the sustenance into the chamber.”</p>	<p>Tamar took the <i>levivot</i> that she had made, and she brought them to Amnon her brother, into the chamber.</p>

The verb (בוא in the hifil) is the same; the location (הַחֶדֶר) is the same, the character names are the same. However, the narrator uses Free Indirect Discourse (see above) to indicate that Amnon has three additional details on his mind: the food is *levivot*, they were handmade by Tamar, and Amnon is her brother. Each of these details is telling.

- The significance of *levivot* has been amply discussed in Section 4.b. Amnon has these connotations—passion, flame, sexuality—in mind; his thoughts are lustful.
- The *levivot* were handmade by Tamar. This observation is intertwined with two body parts: Amnon’s eyes (vv. 5,6,8) watching her actions, and her hands (vv. 5,6,10) feeding him. In other words, by focusing on the fact that these are “the *levivot* which [Tamar] had made,” Amnon emphasizes the personal connection between them, the growing (even suffocating) atmosphere of intimacy, and Tamar’s own participation in the process.¹⁴⁴

144 This recalls the discussion in the previous chapter (Section 3.c.iii) about the fantasized participation of women/meat in being “eaten.” As Adams observed, in the imagined reality of the consumer, the consumed “willingly participate in the process that renders them absent” (Adams, *Sexual Politics of Meat*, 82–83).

- As discussed previously, the sibling relationship here is not a mark of forbidden incest; to the contrary, as in Song of Songs, it serves as a marker of emotional intimacy. Siblings are bound together emotionally, as Amnon hopes to be with Tamar.

The text thus places two outlooks side by side: the plain reality of the scene's events, and the implications and innuendos that Amnon's mind is layering over those events. This contrast works perfectly as the pivot of the chiasm, leading immediately to the tragic consequences of Amnon's outlook: an encounter, perhaps intended at first as a brusque seduction, that quickly turns into rape. The scene he has envisioned—an erotic montage of love poem allusions—cannot hold up against Tamar's vocal protest. He attempts to use her as she used the bread dough, only to find his plans interrupted by her words.

(iv) *Mimêsis and Muthos in Tamar's Rape*

We thus see a masterful example of *mimêsis*, to return to Ricoeur: the depiction of a man who views a woman as metaphorical food. This is a complex variant on "seeing-as," for we see Tamar as food only when we view her through Amnon's eyes. As Mark Gray notes:

It is a world in which the lingering, lascivious sense of the erotic arises from an attentive reading of the text and not from a dirty mind: one of the purposes for the adoption of this particular prose style, I propose, is to indicate that the interior world inhabited by Amnon is very different from that of his father, David, even though both men are, in their way, creatures driven by lust. But whereas David's conquest of Bathsheba in 2 Sam. 11.4 is recounted in the tense, muscular formation 'He sent; he took; he lay', Amnon's obsessive fixation with Tamar is depicted in terms suggestive of pornographic, masturbatory lechery.¹⁴⁵

Moreover, if we return to Adams' three-stage process of parallel consumption, we can see each stage taking place. Amnon begins by objectifying Tamar, defining her as a desired but forbidden object by her attributes (beauty, virginity) and her relationships (sister to Absalom). Indeed, many commentators actually use the word "object(ification)" for this story, such as Fokkelman: "He ruthlessly degrades Tamar to an object of desire, a total dehumanization which leaves someone behind as a ruin (*šomema*)."¹⁴⁶ The objectification reaches a climax when Amnon refers to Tamar as "this one" (זֹאת); as Schulte notes, "Amnon sends 'this' object away."¹⁴⁷

Next, fragmentation/dismemberment occurs on two literal levels, as Wil Gafney insightfully notes: "Tamar rips open her royal dress just as her body was ripped

145 Gray, "Amnon," 46.

146 Fokkelman, *Narrative Art and Poetry*, 106.

147 Schulte, *The Absence of God*, 59.

open, using that sartorial wound to make visible her vaginal wounds and those of her soul.”¹⁴⁸ Other commentators have lingered on her torn garments and the fragmentation they imply.¹⁴⁹ Conroy calls Tamar’s torn dress an “instance of natural symbolism”¹⁵⁰; like her dress (and her hymen), Tamar is in pieces. Westbrook also notices the metaphoric significance of the torn robe:

Clearly, the tearing of the robe is not only an act of mourning; it is also an indicator of Tamar’s separation from David’s house. . . . Those possessing power have used that power to bring her to a place of complete objectification and displacement—both her identity and future are in serious jeopardy.¹⁵¹

Finally, Tamar is consumed. Yamada’s *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible* examines this story, along with the stories of Genesis 34 (Dinah) and Judges 19 (Tizkoret), and argues that all three follow a common schema: “movement from the original rape of one woman to further retributive violence between men to some form of social fragmentation.”¹⁵² (Here Yamada follows in the footsteps of Keefe, who used the three passages to argue that their “rape incites a narrative trajectory towards escalating violence between men.”¹⁵³) Despite the characterization and dialogue that sets Tamar apart from those other two women, all three of them disappear soon after their rapes, “digested” into motivation for broader, male conflicts. Esther Fuchs also notes this tendency:

The narrative focus shifts from sister to brother. The disappearance of the sister enables the brother to replace her as the primary victim of the injustice committed by the “bad” brother. The disappearance of the sister also makes for a “cleaner” transition to the brother(s)—the real hero(es) of both narratives. In order for the brother to effectively replace his sister as the wronged party, the latter must disappear as unobtrusively as possible.¹⁵⁴

There is a certain uncomfortable tension in recognizing this process of consumption, because it is enacted by the readers, not merely by Amnon. We as readers listen to Tamar’s pleas with sympathy, but we also allow her to disappear into the broader fraternal conflict between Amnon and Absalom. When Absalom commands her to silence herself (הִקְרִיִּשִׁי, v. 20), the narrative complies; we never again

148 Wil Gafney, *Womanist Midrash*, 230.

149 In addition to those listed here, note the broader literary connections suggested by Amy Kalmanofsky (*Dangerous Sisters*, 111: “By tearing her robe, Tamar symbolically enacts the damage done to the king’s house and forebodes the impending war with Absalom in which David’s house will be ripped in two.”) and Robert Alter (*The David Story*, 270: “Joseph’s [tunic], too, will be torn, by his brothers, after they strip him of it and toss him into the pit”).

150 Conroy, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 126.

151 Westbrook, “Tamar,” 153.

152 Yamada, *Configurations of Rape*, 26.

153 Keefe, “Rapes of Women,” 80.

154 Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics*, 217.

hear Tamar's voice. In seeing Tamar as an object of consumption, even if that "seeing as" comes from the perspective of an rapist, we can easily be tempted into taking the story as true *mimêsis*.

Visual evidence for this appears in the many paintings of Tamar's rape that portray her with an enticingly bare chest and implausibly pale skin, inviting the viewer to join Amnon in lusting after her. Alexandre Cabanel's painting "Tamar and Absalom" (1875) depicts Absalom as a dark-skinned, muscular-armed embodiment of the Orientalized man, while his sister is an alabaster-skinned maiden with her bosom uncovered to the waist. The painting's lighting draws our focus to Tamar's exposed body and her helpless posture, and lavish fabrics in the background emphasize the erotic atmosphere. While this painting may elicit sympathy for Tamar's sullied innocence, it also invites the viewer to empathize with her rapist by highlighting her desirability. She may be "forbidden fruit," but she is still, as the story's *muthos* implies, consumable.



Figure 4.1 Alexandre Cabanel, *Tamar and Absalom*, 1875; reproduced in wood carving by Charles Baude, 1878.¹⁵⁵

155 The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Picture Collection, The New York Public Library. "Tamar and Absalom." New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed September 29, 2023. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e4-1309-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

In concluding this chapter, I return to the quote by Ricoeur:

We are forced to ask whether the secret of metaphor, as a displacement of meaning at the level of words, does not rest in the elevation of meaning at the level of *muthos*. And if this proposal is acceptable, then metaphor would not only be a deviation in relation to ordinary usage, but also, by means of this deviation, the privileged instrument in that upward motion of meaning promoted by *mimêsis*.¹⁵⁶

The Rape of Tamar is an extraordinary passage that creates an “upward motion of meaning” at the “level of *muthos*.” In depicting the rape of an outspoken woman, it both foreshadows her treatment metaphorically, through its detailed description of her cookery, and uses its broader narrative to portray her as food for Amnon. In the process, it shows us the self-deceptive power of lust to cloud perception—along with the devastating impact of that power on its victims.

156 Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 41.

5 The Diner as Dinner

Jezebel and the Literalization of Metaphor

Our final female character is not traditionally counted among the victims of the Bible's "texts of terror," despite the violence done to her. Jezebel's characterization in the Bible comes from a handful of passages, but primarily from just two texts: the story of Naboth's vineyard, and the story of her death. These tales take place at two very different points—and, I will demonstrate, through inverted metaphorical lenses. In the first story, Jezebel's husband Ahab covets the land owned by a man named Naboth; Jezebel thus orchestrates the death of Naboth and the deliverance of the land into Ahab's hands. In the second story, Jezebel waits in her palace for the usurper Jehu, who has already killed her son. After an exchange of words, she is pushed from a window to fall to her death, after which her body is eaten by dogs.

Just like the previous two passages, the Jezebel story exemplifies the layered richness that can come from metaphoric blending. The relationship between Jezebel and food takes place on several levels. Literal food and feeding appears at several key points in the Jezebel story¹; in particular, Jezebel is a provider of actual food. Moreover, around her death, Jezebel undergoes the cycle of metaphoric consumption: she is objectified, fragmented, and ultimately annihilated. This narrative of Jezebel's death also makes an extended linguistic metaphor comparing her to food (a grapevine, which connects back to the Naboth story). And finally, Jezebel's body becomes literal food for dogs.

This chapter explores each of these intersections, including an illustrative comparison between Jezebel and the goddess Anat. In many ways, Jezebel represents a midpoint between "consumed women" (like Tamar and Tizkoret) and a goddess like Anat. Like the goddess, her actions inverted metaphorical expectations to depict her as a provider and consumer of food, but as a mortal woman, she received her ultimate comeuppance through the reinstated metaphor.

1 For a prior overview of the many connections between Jezebel and food, though it does not include some of my observations, cf. Deborah Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast*, and her article "From Queen to Cuisine," 55–71. See also "Essen und Trinken" in Dagmar Pruin, *Geschichten und Geschichte*, 38–42.

(a) Enter Jezebel**(i) *The Boundaries and Text History of the Jezebel Narrative***

Before beginning, a text-critical note must be made on “the Jezebel story,” its cohesiveness, and its origin. In general, the stories about Jezebel were once commonly considered to be early, pre-Deuteronomistic tales utilized by the Deuteronomist.² In 1988, however, Alexander Rofé wrote a persuasive historical–philological reexamination of the Naboth story. While he agreed that most of the Jehu narrative was “nearly contemporary with the events,”³ he noted a number of discrepancies in the Naboth story—both as compared to the general Naboth narrative as retold in 2 Kings 9, and against the context of the text’s purported pre-Deuteronomistic dating. To summarize, a number of the linguistic choices in 1 Kings 19:1–16 are anachronistic and often characteristic of much later Hebrew, pointing to “a late, post-exilic author who was trying hard to imitate good Classical Hebrew.”⁴ This aligns with the fact that the allusions to Naboth’s story in 2 Kings 9 do not match the original story: Naboth is cited with a field, not a vineyard; Ahab is portrayed as solely responsible; and 2 Kings 9 mentions the death of not only Naboth but his sons. Rofé concludes that the vineyard story was written much later, in the “5th or 4th century,”⁵ when two of the central political issues were the danger of foreign wives and oppression by nobles (הַרִים), as seen in Ezra-Nehemiah. The tale of Naboth’s vineyard thus casts its villains as an archetypical Foreign Wife, who enlists the local nobles (הַרִים) to do her dirty work.

Patrick Cronauer extended a similar argument in his 2005 book *The Stories about Naboth the Jezreelite*. (Indeed, his examination of scholarship on the Naboth story is so comprehensive that this chapter does not reduplicate it, but the reader is referred there for an extensive discussion of the historical-critical debate over the text.) Cronauer’s conclusion largely mirrors Rofé: “the account in 1 Kgs 21:1–16 was added to the Dtr evaluation of Ahab . . . some time during the Persian period from the late sixth to fourth century B.C.E.”⁶ He differs from Rofé primarily in arguing that there was no original vineyard story; rather, the entire vineyard story is an invention of the later author.⁷ Where Rofé does not deal with the story of Jezebel’s death, Cronauer extends his examination to that passage, and he attributes

2 For instance, Mordechai Cogan notes that the whole story of Naboth “can be classed with the other Elijah traditions” (*I Kings*, 484) and classifies the whole story of Jehu’s ascension, including the death of Jezebel, as the work of “a single narrator” (*2 Kings*, 117). Antony Campbell and Mark O’Brien consider them all the work of a “prophetic record,” written shortly after Jehu’s ascent to validate his kingship (*Unfolding the Deuteronomistic History*), which Marvin Sweeney largely accepts but modifies into a “Jehu Dynastic History” (*I & II Kings*, 28) which itself drew on an earlier Elijah narrative.

3 Alexander Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 96.

4 *Ibid.*, 100. Note the detailed counterarguments presented by Nadav Na’aman (“Naboth’s Vineyard and the Foundation of Jezreel,” 201–03); ultimately, however, I find Rofé more persuasive.

5 Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 101.

6 Patrick Cronauer, *The Stories about Naboth*, 185.

7 *Ibid.*

it to the same “anti-Jezebel redactor” as the vineyard tale.⁸ He does so based on a careful review of the philological details of the passage.⁹ According to Cronauer, virtually all biblical references to Jezebel are later insertions by this redactor; “perhaps the only truly Dtr text concerning Jezebel is the mention of her name and marriage to Ahab in 1 Kgs 16:31.”¹⁰

As a whole, Rofé and Cronauer’s evaluations are very persuasive. The original philological analysis of Rofé makes a crucial argument about the vineyard text’s dating, and Cronauer supports this general conclusion with an exhaustive review of the existing research. I differ from Cronauer only in one minor detail: his attribution of 2 Kings 9:30a and 34a to the original narrative. (In my view, the original story can continue from 9:29 to 10:1 in perfectly smooth harmony, resulting in a simpler redactional history.)

Thus, as this chapter examines the Jezebel stories, I assume that most of the narratives and comments about Jezebel, perhaps excepting 1 Kgs 16:31, were composed and added by the same redactor, an “Anti-Jezebel Redactor” (AJR).¹¹ I also assume that AJR’s passages were added quite late to the Deuteronomistic History—probably in the Persian period, based on philological and theological evidence. AJR seems to be primarily concerned with creating the character of Jezebel as the ultimate foreign wife, the “bad woman” who led her husband and the nation astray, in order to address contemporary debates about intermarriage. He was very familiar with much of what would become the biblical canon, including the Pentateuch, a version of the Deuteronomistic history, and many of the prophets, and he deliberately sought to match it in style. (Support for this assumption includes the fact that the tale of Naboth’s vineyard evinces a strong knowledge of biblical law¹² and the fact that the Deuteronomistic prophecy/fulfillment trope was used at several points to shape the Jezebel narrative.¹³)

It should be noted that most of these assumptions, though important to questions of text history and authorial motivation, are not crucial for my argument about the passage.¹⁴ My most important assumption is that *the various Jezebel*

8 Ibid, 197.

9 Ibid, 56–67.

10 Ibid, 182 n.19.

11 I am uncertain how to deal with 1 Kings 8:4 and 13, which claim that Jezebel killed YHWH’s prophets at some previous point. Cronauer does not address the text in any detail, and the mention of Jezebel is central to the verses, as opposed to a clear addition (as in 1 Kgs 18:19). My tentative suggestion is that these two references originally claimed that Ahab had killed the prophets, but that AJR simply changed the name. The emendation would heighten the surrounding original narrative: Ahab is asking for help from Obadiah, who (unknown to Ahab) had previously been working to thwart him. Such an emendation is admittedly speculative. Fortunately, these verses are not crucial to my argument.

12 Cf. Rofé, “The Vineyard of Naboth,” 101.

13 Cf. Cronauer, *The Stories About Naboth*, 178–79 for an argument that this is an imitation of Dtr style, rather than evidence for the Deuteronomist.

14 I remain very much aware that, in Richard Nelson’s words about the Deuteronomistic history, “Anything approaching certainty or even scholarly consensus appears to be virtually impossible for nearly any assertion one might make about the redactional history of biblical materials” (Nelson, “The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History,” 319).

stories were written by the same author, and therefore can be analyzed in light of one another—for instance, an element of one story could be responding to elements of another story. Even if the arguments of Rofé and Cronauer prove to be incorrect, and the whole narrative is dated much earlier, this assumption of shared authorship would still be plausible.

(ii) *Jezebel's Reception*

More so than the other two women in this monograph, it seems impossible to study Jezebel without dealing with her reception history. The term “Jezebel” itself has become a byword for women with dangerous sexuality—and especially, in American English, Black women.¹⁵ In particular, Tamura Lomax’s *Jezebel Unhinged* investigates “the linkage between biblical Jezebel, jezebel [*sic*] the racial trope, and black women,”¹⁶ tracing the ways that “Jezebel was effectively made over and reproduced across multiple texts in North America,”¹⁷ becoming “the epitomist catchall for contemporary black women’s and girls’ projected surplus of identities.”¹⁸

In response to Jezebel’s “bad girl” reputation, a host of feminist and womanist works have addressed her “image,” usually with the goal of redeeming or reclaiming her.¹⁹ However, this study is *not* an attempt to reclaim Jezebel, save in a very limited sense. Jezebel, as a real historical figure, is a cipher; even if we assume a kernel of truth to the biblical account (i.e., that Ahab had a Phoenician wife named Jezebel), the stories that characterize her were likely written so late that they simply reflect the gender views of their authors, not the real experience of a ninth-century elite woman. They are, in a sense, transformative fiction; they take preexisting details and use them to craft a story that reflects and promotes the authors’ interests. These details may have included the name of Ahab’s wife,²⁰ the rallying cry around Naboth’s blood,²¹ and the existence of a winery and grapevines in Jezreel.²² But as far as we know, the Jezebel that emerged in that masterful creation resembled the historical queen in little beyond name.

15 Cf. Lerato Mokoena, “Reclaiming Jezebel and Mrs Job,” Love Sechrest, “Antitypes, Stereotypes, and Antetypes,” especially 129–30, and Tina Pippin, “Jezebel Re-Vamped,” 196–206.

16 Tamura Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 21.

17 *Ibid.*, 42.

18 *Ibid.*, 44.

19 Two recent summaries of that feminist work are in Athalya Brenner-Idan, “On Scholarship and Related Animals,” 6–17, and Yael Shemesh, “בוחת ותחתם,” 49–111. Because they both do a solid job of summarizing the directions of Jezebel’s feminist reclamation, I do not repeat that work here.

20 Her name has indeed been found on a seal from her approximate time period, but it is impossible to prove whether the seal’s Jezebel was the wife of Ahab, let alone any further information about her. Cf. Nahman Avigad, “The Seal of Jezebel”; for a summary of more recent debate on its relevance, cf. BAR Staff, “Scholars Debate ‘Jezebel’ Seal.”

21 Cf. 2 Kings 9:26, where Naboth’s blood is an accusation, but there is no mention of a vineyard or a queen.

22 Cf. Norma Franklin, Jennie Ebeling, and Philippe Guillaume, “An Ancient Winery In Jezreel / יקב / יין קדום בִּירְעָאֵל,” pp. 9–18.

This study, then, is a study in how ancient men conceived of powerful women—not a study of a powerful woman. From a feminist perspective, this fact is somewhat troubling, as it once again centers the male experience. Yet it is only through understanding that male experience—and, specifically, the way that the pervasive metaphor of WOMAN IS FOOD shapes male conceptions of women—that we can differentiate between male narratives of women and real women today. In that small sense, this monograph supports Jezebel’s reclamation: not as a real figure, but as a model for how to unravel popular perceptions of powerful women to this day.²³

(b) Jezebel in Her Prime

(i) “*She Provides Prey to Her Household*”²⁴

Jezebel’s characterization in the Bible, as found in the AJR corpus, amounts to a handful of passages. In addition to a few brief references, we see her in two substantial texts: the story of Naboth, and the story of her death.²⁵ These tales take place at two very different points—and through inverted metaphorical lenses.

My analysis begins with a shorter reference. In 1 Kings 18:19, we hear of 850 prophets of Baal and Asherah who “eat at the table of Jezebel.”

<p>וְאֵת־נְבִיאֵי הַבַּעַל אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת וְחֲמִשִּׁים וְנְבִיאֵי הָאֲשֵׁרָה אַרְבַּע מֵאוֹת אֲכָלִי שֶׁלֶחַן אִיזְבֵּל</p>	<p>. . . and the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah who eat at the table of Jezebel.</p>
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Superficially, this simply indicates that Jezebel provided for their well-being; “they were the queen’s subsidized clergy.”²⁶ Yet every other reference to guests

23 A recent and poignant example of this phenomenon was the presidential candidacy of Hillary Clinton—like Jezebel, a woman who came into the spotlight through her husband, but made her own mark on politics and society. As a real woman, she had many characteristics, good and bad; yet discussion of her character was inevitably filtered through a gendered lens that obscured some features and highlighted others. For one example of this, cf. Dustin Harp, Jaime Loke, and Ingrid Bachmann, “Hillary Clinton’s Benghazi Hearing Coverage: Political Competence, Authenticity, and the Persistence of the Double Bind,” 193–210.

24 Quote is from Proverbs 31:15, my translation.

25 These stories are split between 1 and 2 Kings. Major critical commentaries include Walter Brueggemann (*1 and 2 Kings*), Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor (*II Kings*), Volkmar Fritz (*1 & 2 Kings*), John Gray (*I & II Kings*), Lester Grabbe (*1 & 2 Kings*), Gwilym Jones (*1 and 2 Kings*), Burke Long (*2 Kings*), Stephen McKenzie (*1 Kings 16–2 Kings 16*), James Montgomery and Henry Gehman (*Kings I and II*), Choon-Leong Seow (*The First and Second Books of Kings*), Marvin Sweeney (*I & II Kings*), and Ernst Würthwein (*Die Bücher der Könige*). The important Kings commentary by Martin Noth was, unfortunately, interrupted by his death before it reached the Jezebel passages; Winfried Thiel has begun the process of completing it. Notably, to my knowledge, every one of the aforementioned commentaries was written by a man. A vital addition is Dagmar Pruin’s *Geschichten und Geschichte*, which includes detailed analysis of all the Jezebel texts from a synchronic and diachronic lens.

26 Montgomery and Gehman, 300.

eating at a ruler's table connects them to kings, such as David or Solomon.²⁷ The reference to Jezebel here is thus highly unexpected—and indeed, Mordechai Cogan calls this “a late addition to the text.”²⁸ It takes the common Deuteronomistic idiom of eating at a king's table and twists it: in Ahab's Israel, the foreign queen has so much sway that she has usurped presiding over the royal table. While dining was probably a metonym for provisions broader than mere food,²⁹ it nonetheless focuses the reader's attention on the role of eating in royal favor. Thus, Jezebel is portrayed remarkably from an early point, as someone who unusually provides food for others—even usurping the role of her husband the king.

She continues this behavior in the story of Naboth. The tale begins with a contrast of food: specifically, Naboth's ancestral vineyard, compared to Ahab's proposed vegetable garden. As Appler explores at length, the vineyard is a classic metaphorical representation of Israel, whereas gardens are status symbols for kings.³⁰ In particular, a vegetable garden had associations as an Egyptian luxury, much better suited to a climate with ample water to grow its cucumbers and garlic.³¹ When Ahab's desire for such a garden is thwarted, he responds by refusing food petulantly: if he cannot grow vegetables in Naboth's plot, then he will not eat at all. In response, Jezebel chides him for not eating (1 Kgs 21:5), then demands that he get up and begin to eat; again, her role is to provide food. In her study, Shemesh notes that the structure of her demand, using the imperative verb *קום*, is a familiar form that usually appears when God is commanding a leader to arise and act.³² In other words, Jezebel is taking on the role of a deity with relation to Ahab.

Ironically, Jezebel solves Ahab's vegetable problem by declaring a fast—normally an indicator of tense times, perhaps implying an unnamed crisis that could be blamed on Naboth.³³ But as a public gathering with ritualized norms, it serves some of the social roles of a feast,³⁴ and indeed this “feast” has a “main course”: Naboth, unjustly accused of blasphemy, who is publicly killed to satisfy God's purported demands. Finally, Jezebel can provide the land to her husband, who goes to take possession—only to be held accountable by the prophet Elijah. Elijah pronounces doom for Ahab and his people, but he has a special curse for Jezebel: she herself will be eaten by dogs. And how does Ahab respond to these prophecies? By, once again, fasting. His wife has provided illicit food for him, so he gives up eating in hope of forgiveness.

27 The idiom appears in 1 Kgs 2:7, 1 Kgs 18:19, 2 Sam 9:7,10,11,13, and 2 Sam 19:29, plus a related form in 2 Kgs 25:29.

28 Cogan, *I Kings*, 439.

29 Cf. Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 61, and Cogan, *I Kings*, 174.

30 Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast*, 93–101.

31 Cf. Deut 11:10, Num 11:5. Seow notes that the change from auspicious vineyard to Egyptian garden is “ominous” (*The First and Second Books of Kings*, 155).

32 Shemesh, “וְהָחֵתֵם בַּחֲמֹרִי,” 125.

33 Cf. Cogan, *I Kings*, 479, Seow, *The First and Second Books of Kings*, 156.

34 In fact, MacDonald calls this fast “no more than a literary and ironic inversion of the feast,” due to its lack of parallels otherwise in the Hebrew Bible (MacDonald, *By Bread Alone*, 183).

In this story, we see Jezebel at the height of her power, procuring a blood-stained food source for her mate. But in the eyes of an audience used to equating women with consumed food, her behavior would seem exponentially unethical—not only was a man falsely executed for the sake of a vegetable plot, but the deed was done by a woman.³⁵ While there are appropriate venues for women to feed men in the Bible,³⁶ those venues do not involve the woman going out and killing prey in order to acquire the food. Women can be hostesses, but not huntresses. Indeed, the only kind of biblical woman who is a huntress is the dangerous adulteress, as discussed in Chapter 2: “A prostitute is worth a loaf of bread, but a man’s wife goes hunting (יִצַד) for precious life.” (Prov 6:26)

(ii) *The Thirst for Vengeance*

To understand the narrative backlash to Jezebel’s actions, we can step back for a moment to examine what constitutes a “satisfying narrative.” In his groundbreaking work *Comeuppance: Costly Signaling, Altruistic Punishment, and Other Biological Components of Fiction*, William Flesch puts forward a persuasive argument for the timeless human appeal of fiction. To him, it hinges on a concept called “altruistic punishment”: the desire to harm someone for their perceived violation of fairness, even at a cost to ourselves.³⁷ Altruistic punishment, he argues, is evolutionarily desirable, as the whole population benefits when some people are “punishers.” As a result, “we instinctively approve of what altruistic punishers do,” and they comprise a very large proportion of our fictional protagonists, including “almost any modern detective; and almost any modern superhero.”³⁸ The act (or anticipation) of altruistic punishment motivates our emotional responses to the narrative: “We ourselves can’t reward or punish the character we want to see rewarded or punished, but we can cheer on the altruistic character who does—and the storyteller who arranges these things as well.”³⁹

This process of “vindication and vindictiveness”—that is, the exoneration of prosocial actors and the punishment of antisocial actors—is, Flesch argues, central to fiction: “all narratives of vindication give pleasure, and . . . narrative is only narrative if it allows us to anticipate vindication.” He supports his point with a broad array of data, both psychological and literary, and his argument is persuasive. It has clear implications for the Jezebel narrative: through her duplicitous killing of Naboth,

35 Compare Judg 4:9, where Barak’s military victory is diminished because a woman helped achieve it.

36 For example, Abigail and David, or Wisdom’s feast in Proverbs 9.

37 One of the simplest forms of evidence for altruistic punishment is the “ultimatum game,” which has two players. One player receives a large sum of money and must propose how to split it with the second player. The second player, in turn, can choose to accept or veto the ultimatum (in which case the money goes away). Rationally, the second player should accept any split, even if they only receive a dollar, because that dollar is better than nothing. But in reality, second players will generally veto an ultimatum that seems “unfair” to them—thus forfeiting their share in order to punish the other player for the unfairness (Cf. William Flesch, *Comeuppance*, 31–35).

38 Flesch, *Comeuppance*, 52.

39 *Ibid*, 156.

Jezebel establishes herself as an antisocial character, one who cannot be trusted to act fairly; the reasonableness of Naboth's refusal only makes her behavior more vile. As a result, the reader craves a fitting vengeance upon the evil queen, and Jehu becomes our "altruistic punisher"—the hero who comes in to right the violation of fairness.

But what makes vengeance "fitting"? This question is largely unexamined by Flesch, but it pervades legal discussion. In the words of Arthur Lelyveld, a rabbi and social activist:

There is no denying the aesthetic satisfaction, the sense of poetic justice, that pleasures us when evil-doers get the comeuppance they deserve. The impulse to punish is primarily an impulse to even the score. . . . That satisfaction is heightened when it becomes possible to measure out punishment in exact proportion to the size and shape of the wrong that has been done . . . *mida k'neged mida*—measure for measure, *lex talionis*.⁴⁰

Thomas Tripp et al. approach this question in "Poetic Justice or Petty Jealousy? The Aesthetics of Revenge." Based on quantitative and qualitative analyses, they identify three factors that contribute to the "aesthetic value" of a workplace revenge incident: "altruism," "poetic justice," and "symmetry." The first factor connects back to Flesch's argument: an aesthetically satisfying revenge is "motivated by a concern for the general wellbeing of others."⁴¹ As for "poetic justice," they define it as when "the revenge dispensed justice the way 'one might wish it to be'"⁴²—in other words, uplifting righteous actors while punishing unfair actors. Finally, "symmetry" contains two dimensions: symmetry of consequences, that is, a similar scale of punishment and crime, and symmetry of method, where "the method used by the victim to get even with the harmdoer resembles the method by which the harmdoer hurt the victim."⁴³ Of these factors, all three contribute to the aesthetic appeal of an act of revenge, but symmetry was by far the most important.⁴⁴ (Symmetry is of course also the foundation of the ancient notion of *lex talionis*.) This study was specifically focused on workplace revenge, but its focus on aesthetics has important ramifications for what makes a "satisfying" literary revenge story.⁴⁵

40 Arthur Lelyveld, *Punishment*, 57.

41 Thomas Tripp et al., "Poetic Justice or Petty Jealousy?," 970.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid, 971.

44 Interestingly, Tripp et al. found in one of their studies that symmetry of consequences is more important than symmetry of method; they explain that this may be due to novelty, as "the avenger may have to demonstrate some originality and creativity" (Tripp et al., "Poetic Justice or Petty Jealousy?," 980).

45 Little literature exists on this aesthetic quality in biblical narrative, unfortunately. Mary Douglas notes briefly that "The principle of equivalent retaliation is quite blatant in the narrative books," arguing that Jezebel's fall from a height reflected her support for idolatrous high places. To Douglas, this trait is a theological statement: "The general principle is that God's universe runs on reciprocity" (*Leviticus as Literature*, 214). Sandra Jacobs also explores it as a legal principle in "Natural Law, Poetic Justice and the Talionic Formulation," connecting it to a sense of natural law. While this legal viewpoint is a useful one, and I do not rule out an undercurrent of *lex talionis* in Jezebel's fate, my own interests are in retaliatory justice as a literary aesthetic.

Thus, the story of Naboth sets up an injustice that needs avenging, and that vengeance should have three qualities. First, it should be altruistic; Jezebel must be punished for reasons that benefit the general good. Second, it should be “poetic”; Jezebel must deserve her punishment, and righteous actors should benefit from it. Finally and most importantly, it must be symmetric. Jezebel killed a man in order to obtain food illicitly; her punishment must match in both scale and method. As we will see, the AJR’s story of Jezebel’s death succeeds on all counts.

(c) **Airbrushing the Meal: Appearance, Objectification, and Jezebel’s Death**

We see this “aesthetically pleasing revenge” foreshadowed immediately after the Naboth incident in Elijah’s prophecy that “the dogs will eat Jezebel”: a punishment that both guarantees her death and identifies her as food.⁴⁶ And in 2 Kings 9, we see it come true. Once again, Adams’ three stages of consumption are relevant.

A subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents. The consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself.⁴⁷

In 2 Kings 9, each of these stages occurs to Jezebel in turn.

(i) *Jezebel’s Objectification*

Jezebel’s objectification actually begins even before she enters the scene. With her husband Ahab dead, her son Joram rules Israel, and the usurper Jehu meets him in Jezreel, only to engage in the time-honored tradition of insulting his opponent’s mother.

2 Kgs 9:22

מָה הַשְּׁלוֹם עַד־זְנוּנֵי אִיזְבֵּל אִמְךָ וְכַשְׂפֵּיהֶּ הַרְבִּיִּים	“What harmony could exist while the whoredoms and many witchcrafts of your mother Jezebel endure?”
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These accusations are almost a *non sequitur*, for despite the anti-Jezebel bias of the final text of Kings, we have no evidence of Jezebel engaging in either sexual infidelity or sorcerous behavior. Instead, this combination of terms functions to objectify her into a stereotype of dangerous femininity, using language easily recognizable from prophetic texts. I now examine the two accusations in turn.

46 Note the important difference here between Elijah’s predicted punishments of Ahab and Jezebel; where dogs will merely lick at Ahab’s blood (1 Kgs 21:19), they will consume Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:23).

47 Adams, *Sexual Politics*, 73.

Prostitution and infidelity, both signified by the Hebrew root זנה, are in the word's original sense a behavior practiced only by women.⁴⁸ But through metaphoric association, particularly in the Bible's legal and prophetic texts, the term זנה came to have a second common meaning: religious apostasy.⁴⁹ Therefore, the most simplistic explanation of this passage is that by accusing Jezebel of whoredom, Jehu has accused her of practicing the foreign religious practices of her Phoenician origins.⁵⁰ But such an explanation does not sufficiently appreciate the gendered associations of the term. The *only* places where the verb זנה refers to individual acts, as opposed to a generalized group's behavior, are instances with a real or metaphorical woman as the subject.⁵¹ In other words, prostitution may sometimes metaphorically mean apostasy, but it occurs only in a collective sense with this meaning; an individual male apostate never engages in זנה. Thus, to accuse an individual woman of prostitution/זנה would be understood as signifying more than simple religious infidelity.⁵² Jason Bembry's analysis of the word concurs: "when זנה is used of one particular woman and there is no mention of deities, it seems that the meaning is not metaphorical."⁵³

This trend continues with the other accusation. קְשָׁף is a fairly rare Hebrew word, but it corresponds to the ubiquitous Akkadian *kišpu*, or sorcery. Just as Akkadian incantations against witchcraft, such as Maqlû, primarily focused on female practitioners,⁵⁴ so do biblical instances of the term; all of its five appearances are practiced by a woman, real or metaphorical.⁵⁵ In fact, one prophetic text contains a striking parallel to Jehu's criticism. In Nahum 3:4, Jezebel's two

48 Bird, "To Play the Harlot," 224.

49 Cf. *Ibid.*

50 Most major commentaries take this stance, e.g. Raymond Hobbs (*2 Kings*, 116–17) and Cogan and Tadmor. The latter argue that "'harlotry' expresses the contempt in which Israel held pagan practice, seen as suffused with improper sex and magic" (*II Kings*, 110)—thus associating the sexuality with an unnamed religion rather than with a named woman.

51 זנה appears only five times in the Bible in the masculine singular Qal (excluding Ezek 23:43, where the Qere is plural). These instances are either essentially plural meanings with a group or nation as the subject (Deut 31:16, Ezek 6:9, Ps 73:27) or metaphors where the nation of Israel takes a masculine verb, despite being portrayed metaphorically as a woman (Hos 4:15, Hos 9:1).

52 Compare Bird: "The men are accused of cultic impropriety, the women of sexual impropriety" ("To Play the Harlot," 232).

53 Bembry, "The Levite's Concubine," 535.

54 Tzvi Abusch notes, "Although lists of witches include both male and female forms, the witch is usually depicted as a woman" (*The Witchcraft Series Maqlû*, 4). Marten Stol confirms that "ordinary people imagined the perpetrator to be a woman, and the Neo-Babylonian laws say that a woman is concerned with witchcraft" (*Women in the Ancient Near East*, 391). Finally, Yitschak Sefati and Jacob Klein claim that "In fact, the popular belief that sorcery is primarily a female preoccupation, may have been originated in Mesopotamia" ("Role of Women in Mesopotamian Witchcraft," 569).

55 Aside from 2 Kings 9, the people accused of causing קְשָׁף are "daughter Chaldea" (Isaiah 47:9,12); "daughter Zion" (Micah 5:10; cf. Mic. 4:10,13); and a feminine-personified Nineveh (Nah. 3:4). Admittedly, the verb קָשַׁף is also sometimes used of men, but קְשָׁף as a noun is solely the domain of women.

accusations are again linked, this time as the primary crimes of the personified city Nineveh, “who has bartered nations through her **harlotries** and clans with her **witchcrafts** (הַמְכַרְת גוֹיִם בְּזִנוּיָהּ וּמְשַׁפְּחוֹת בְּכַשְׁפֵּיהָ).” Assyria’s true crimes, as described in the surrounding passage, were neither prostitution nor witchcraft, but military ruthlessness. However, the two gendered terms in combination invoked a stereotyped image of the Bad, Foreign Woman, whose crimes are seductive and insidious. We see a similar linkage in an Old Babylonian letter from the Mari archives, in which a queen was sentenced to the divine river ordeal to answer multiple accusations: “if your lady did sorcery against Yarkab-Addu, her lord; [or if she] sent out word from the palace, and another man opened the thighs of your lady.”⁵⁶ Once again, witchcraft and sexual infidelity are central to female wrongdoing.

It is no coincidence that these crimes corresponded to two of the ways that ancient women outside the elite could be economically independent—through prostitution or through practicing magic for clients.⁵⁷ As venues by which women could obtain some power over men, they represented a fundamental threatening specter. In addition, Tzvi Abusch notes that digestive illness and sexual illness “account for a disproportionately large portion of witchcraft texts and are among the most significant medical manifestations of witchcraft.”⁵⁸ He explains this correlation by arguing that “From a male’s point of view, food, drink, and sex are closely associated with women members of the family, and in these areas, males may sometimes feel themselves to be in a position of dependence and/or vulnerability.”⁵⁹ This observation connects back to metaphor theory: if sex is eating and woman is food, then eating and sex represent the same kind of vulnerability, and both carry the threat of a woman swapping roles and consuming rather than being consumed.

We thus see that Jezebel’s description stereotypes her as a dangerous, seductive woman in a way that runs deeper than mere foreign religion. Jehu—and through Jehu, the author—is, in fact, engaging in Adams’s first step of objectification, in which a living being is reduced to a functional object. Put differently, the conceptual blend proposed by the text includes the trait of “sexual object.” Indeed,

56 ARM 26:249.37–41: “šum-ma ki-iš-pí be-le-et-ki a-na ia-ar-ka-ab-^dIM be-lí-ša [i]-pu-šu a-wa-at é-kál-lim ú-še-šú-ú ù ša-nu-um ša-[pa]-ar be-el-ti-ki [ip]-[tu]-ú.” These are either two accusations or three. Wolfgang Heimpel (*Letters to the King of Mari*, 273) and Jean-Marie Durand (*Archives épistolaires de Mari*, vol. 26, 529) read them as three questions: one about witchcraft, one about divulging confidential palace information, and one about infidelity. I am inclined to read them as two questions, with the conjunction “*u*” indicating causation: Amat-Sakkanim sent out a summons, which invited a sexual liaison. In either case, the witchcraft and sexual infidelity are clearly central to her accusation.

57 Tzvi Abusch notes that “Some witches are licit and perform useful acts on behalf of clients” (“Demonic Image of the Witch in Babylonian Literature,” 43). Unfortunately, little research exists into the economic realities of this occupation.

58 Tzvi Abusch, “Witchcraft, Impotence, and Indigestion,” 151.

59 *Ibid.*, 151–52.

sexualization is one of the most pervasive ways of objectifying women, and we see it here with Jezebel as her death looms near: she is reduced to a stereotype of sex and magic.

But just in case Jehu's accusations were insufficient, the text turns to Jezebel herself a few verses later and depicts her in the process of beautification, painting her eyes and arranging her hair (2 Kgs 9:30). As many have noted, this brings to mind the "naughty woman"⁶⁰ of prophetic metaphor. This narrative pause from the military action seems unexpected,⁶¹ until we consider that it helps reinforce Jezebel's objectification; like the prostitute she was accused of being, she is concerned primarily with her appearance. In "Jézabel: Généalogie d'une *Femme Fatale*," Anne Létourneau argues persuasively that "la sexualisation est l'un des principaux procédés mis en œuvre pour produire une altérisation radicale de Jézabel comme l'Autre à abattre, surtout en 2 R 9,30–37."⁶² By portraying Jezebel as a *femme fatale*, in Létourneau's words, she is objectified as a potential object for consumption.

This connects back to the parallel accusation of witchcraft and harlotry in Nahum. In that passage, the metaphorical prostitute is punished by public exposure of her genitalia. Duane Christensen calls this punishment her "just desserts"⁶³—a punishment that fits the crime of promiscuity—and indeed we see such sexual humiliation as a common punishment for metaphorical prostitution in biblical prophecy,⁶⁴ whether or not it had a historical basis.⁶⁵ But for Jezebel, her ultimate crime was illicit consumption, so her "just dessert" is to be consumed.⁶⁶ The same principle of ironically appropriate punishment is applied, but to a different end.

(ii) Jezebel's Fragmentation

We see Adams's second stage of fragmentation, or dismemberment, take place next—first narratively, then literally. The narrative's glimpses of Jezebel—her

60 Montgomery and Gehman's phrase, *II Kings*, 403.

61 Brueggemann notes, "Unlike the terse account of vv. 27–29, here the narrator warms to the subject and leads the reader into every savored detail concerning this queen whom we are to despise" (Brueggemann, *I & 2 Kings*, 387).

62 "Sexualization is one of the principal methods implemented to produce a radical othering/alienating of Jezebel as the Other to be slaughtered, especially in 2 Kings 9:30–37" (Anne Létourneau, "Jézabel," 209, my translation).

63 Duane Christensen, *Nahum*, 344.

64 For example, Jeremiah 13:26, Ezekiel 16:37–38; 23:10, 29; Hosea 2:12; Lamentations 1:8–9.

65 According to Elaine Goodfriend, "It should be noted that the biblical texts alluding to divorce, public stripping, and mutilation contain prophetic metaphors and hence they are not dependable sources for actual Israelite legal practice. . . . Obviously the de facto procedure for the prosecution of adultery is uncertain" ("Adultery," 84).

66 "[T]hese attracting details are there to convey the message that such a powerful and assertive woman deserves what is coming to her." Judith McKinlay, "Negotiating the Frame," 307.

eyes, her hair, her face framed by the window—begin to dismember her into individual body parts, rather than a whole person. Indeed, this is the narrative function of the window. As Exum says of Michal’s window-watching in 2 Sam 6, “the text provides our window on Michal, offering us only a glimpse, the kind of view a window gives, limited in range and perspective. We are, as it were, outside, watching her, inside, watching David.”⁶⁷ So with Jezebel: by framing her in a window, the text begins to fragment her into a partial body, a “glimpse” of a person.

This point may, at first, seem in tension with Ackerman’s argument in *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, where she connects biblical passages of women in windows (including Jezebel) with the Levantine archaeological motif of the goddess in the window, empowering the queen mother by comparing her to a goddess.⁶⁸ Nehama Aschkenasy shares this view, arguing that Jezebel’s appearance “recaptures for the last time her godlike splendor,” thus “reasserting her status as the goddess of fertility and birth.”⁶⁹ However, as Daniel Pienaar notes, “The meaning of this depiction [i.e. women in windows] is not clear.”⁷⁰ Silvia Schroer concurs and finds it “difficult to locate in detail the identity of the woman and thus the meaning of the motif,”⁷¹ while Amy Gansell identifies them as “elite, sequestered women” who simultaneously evoked inaccessible purity and seductive harlotry—an impressive but somewhat confusing attempt to combine the various streams of analysis.⁷²

In short, beyond the tired associations of “fertility” and “beauty” that attach to any iconographic depiction of women, the meaning of the fenestrated women is unclear. What *is* clear is the distance and dissociation that the window provides. It conceals the woman’s body while revealing her deliberately styled hair and face, reducing her to attractive body parts. (One is reminded of Magritte’s several Surrealist paintings that “dismembered female anatomy,”⁷³ such as his two versions of *L’évidence éternelle* [*The Eternally Obvious*, 1930, 1948] and *Le Viol* [*The Rape*, 1934), which replaces a woman’s face with her torso, substituting breasts for eyes and vulva for mouth.)⁷⁴ Whether these faces belong to a goddess, a queen, or a prostitute, they represent the fragmentation of that woman into her constituent parts (Figure 5.1).

67 Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 47.

68 Ackerman, *Warrior, Dancer, Seductress, Queen*, 155–62. Here Ackerman follows others who have connected Jezebel to these goddess images, including Eleanor Beach (“The Samaria Ivories, Marzeah, and Biblical Text,” 94–104) and Peter Ackroyd (“Goddesses, Women, and Jezebel,” 245–59).

69 Aschkenasy, *Woman at the Window*, 15–16.

70 Daniel Pienaar, “Symbolism in the Samaria Ivories and Architecture,” 56.

71 Silvia Schroer, “Ancient Near Eastern Pictures as Keys to Biblical Metaphors,” 156.

72 Amy Gansell, “The Iconography of Ideal Feminine Beauty,” 64.

73 James Soby, *René Magritte*, 14.

74 Cf. the extensive discussion of this painting from a feminist lens in Susan Gubar, “Representing Pornography: Feminism, Criticism, and Depictions of Female Violation,” 712–41.



Figure 5.1 Two ivories from Samaria.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Both are ivory reliefs from Arslan Tash. Top: Louvre, AO 11459. Bottom: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 57.80.13.

As with so much of Jezebel's story, the alluded and metaphorical soon become manifested reality. On Jehu's command, eunuchs⁷⁶ seize Jezebel and throw her down from the upper floor. At that point, her dismemberment becomes very literal; horses trample her and dogs tear into her flesh, leaving behind only a few detached body parts. We see her skull, her feet, and her palms (v. 35): in other words, the external extremities. There is no trace of, for instance, the heart or liver, which symbolized internal thoughts and emotions.⁷⁷ Jezebel has been stripped of her animating force, just as one might disembowel an animal corpse in the process of butchering it. The once-powerful woman is reduced to pieces of bony meat. In short, Adams' model of female fragmentation is fully in effect in the text.

(iii) *Jezebel's Consumption*

The final stage of eating is consumption, or annihilation: the stage at which the consumed object becomes nothing more than sustenance for others, emphasizing its secondary, unimportant status. Again, we see this take place both narratively and literally. In the narrative, Jehu goes into the palace that Jezebel just occupied and eats a meal. The Hebrew here, stripped of its later versification, actually allows for a gruesome possibility: "some of her blood spattered on the wall and the horses, and they⁷⁸ trampled her, and he came,⁷⁹ and he ate, and he drank" (vv. 33–34). By leaving out a mention of entering the palace for his meal, only our sense of propriety prevents us from reading that Jehu is eating and drinking the body and blood of Jezebel's corpse. (I am not arguing for literal cannibalism here—merely noting that the text's gaps evoke

76 The significance of the eunuchs has been widely debated, but it is largely tangential to my argument here. Yet if Rofé and Cronauer are correct that the Jezebel story originates as late as the fourth century, a previously unmentioned possibility must be raised: Could some of the details of her story be colored by early worship of Atargatis, the great Syrian goddess of classical antiquity? Atargatis appears on coins from the fourth century onward (Han Drijvers, "Atargatis," 114) and her shrine is mentioned in 2 Macc 12:26. Notably, her priesthood was infamous for being comprised of eunuchs, though the evidence of this comes from the first centuries CE (cf. J.L. Lightfoot, "Sacred Eunuchism in the Cult of the Syrian Goddess," for an analysis of the evidence and the difficulties with its interpretation). If Atargatis were known and associated with eunuch priests by the authors of Jezebel's story, that could explain the presence of eunuchs—and the significance of their betrayal of Jezebel. As a Phoenician, Jezebel originates from the same area as Atargatis, and their association may have seemed natural at the time.

77 Cf. Mark Smith, "The Heart and Innards in Israelite Emotional Expressions: Notes from Anthropology and Psychobiology," who surveys the various body parts connected to emotional expression in the Bible—all internal organs, with the possible exception of the nose as a site for anger.

78 Or "and *he* trampled her," if we follow the MT. While most manuscripts have a plural verb here, the singular verb of Jehu trampling her body emphasizes his gruesome complicity; it is, to quote Cogan and Tadmor, "the more striking reading" (*II Kings*, 112).

79 "Came" (Hebrew בוא) most often has a sense of entering a different space. If so here, then the space he enters could have been the prophesied "plot" (חלק) where she died (as referenced in v. 36).

the possibility.) Regardless, the two events are clearly paralleled, as Cohn observes:

While her blood is splattering on the wall, . . . Jehu is filling his stomach. As his horses trample Jezebel, he drinks in her house. . . . The body of Jezebel has been devoured while Jehu was himself devouring her food in her house.⁸⁰

Only after Jehu finishes eating does he show a belated interest in respect for the dead, noting that the “cursed woman” was “daughter of a king” (v. 34). Yet even this apparent title of honor is part of the process of annihilation. Just as the Tizkoret was a daughter, a servant, a *pilegesh*, but almost never a woman in herself, so is Jezebel—queen and queen mother in her own right—reduced to a “daughter of a king,” an absent referent defined by a subservient relationship to a man.⁸¹ In Lomax’s words, “in death, Jezebel is neither queen mother nor woman. Jezebel is Other, a collection of things to discard.”⁸²

Having negated her identity, Jehu calls for the burial of her corpse. This odd request (the only place in the Deuteronomistic History that concerns a woman’s burial) serves as a prelude to a pseudo-Deuteronomistic prophecy fulfillment: just as Elijah prophesied, so has Jezebel been killed. Yet when we look at the quoted “prophecy,” some narrative holes appear. In fact, only the first portion of “Elijah’s prophecy” had been previously attributed to Elijah. This table illustrates the actual origins of the “fulfilled prophecy.”

<i>Fulfilled prophecy</i>	<i>Prior prophecy</i>	<i>Speaker of prior prophecy</i>
<p>בְּתֵלֶק יִרְעָאֵל יֹאכְלוּ הַכְּלָבִים אֶת־בֶּשֶׂר אִיזָבֵל: In the plot of Jezreel, the dogs will eat the flesh of Jezebel. (2 Kgs 9:36b)</p>	<p>הַכְּלָבִים יֹאכְלוּ אֶת־אִיזָבֵל בְּתֵלֶק יִרְעָאֵל The dogs will eat Jezebel in the ramparts⁸³ of Jezreel. (1 Kgs 21:23)</p>	Elijah
<p>וְהָיְתָ [וְהָיְתָה] נִבְלַת אִיזָבֵל כְּדָמָן עַל־פְּגֵי הַשָּׂדֶה בְּתֵלֶק יִרְעָאֵל And the corpse of Jezebel will be like dung upon the field in the plot of Jezreel. (2 Kgs 9:37a)</p>	<p>וְנָפְלָה נִבְלַת הָאָדָם כְּדָמָן עַל־פְּגֵי הַשָּׂדֶה And the human corpse[s] will fall like dung upon the field. (Jer 9:21)⁸⁴</p>	Female mourners for Zion

80 Cohn, *2 Kings*, 70.

81 I credit Deryn Guest (“Modeling the Transgender Gaze,” 58) for this insight. Pruin, who assigns the various Jezebel texts to different periods, makes the inverse observation: “Erst in dem letzten Stadium der Überlieferung gewinnt damit Isebel ihre auffallend großen Machtbefugnisse und wird—anders als in den älteren Texten—weder Mann noch Vater zugeordnet” (“Only in the last stage of the tradition does Jezebel gain her remarkably great powers, and—unlike in the older texts—she is given neither a husband nor a father.” Pruin, *Geschichten und Geschichte*, 308).

82 Lomax, *Jezebel Unhinged*, 43.

83 “ramparts”) is probably an orthographic error for חֵלֶק, “plot.”

84 A similar phrase appears three other times in Jeremiah (8:2, 16:4, 25:33), substituting ground (הַמָּדָה) for field, and a related phrase is in Ps 83:11. The repetition indicates that it may have been a common saying, rather than a specific allusion.

<i>Fulfilled prophecy</i>	<i>Prior prophecy</i>	<i>Speaker of prior prophecy</i>
<p>אָשׁר לֹא־יֵאמְרוּ זֹאת אֵיזְבֵּל so that no one can/will say, “This is Jezebel.” (2 Kgs 9:37b)</p>	<p>וְאֵת־אֵיזְבֵּל יֹאכְלוּ הַכְּלָבִים בְּתֵלֶק וְיִרְשָׁאֵל וְאִיוֹן קָבֵר As for Jezebel, the dogs will eat her in the plot of Jezreel, and no one will bury [her]. (2 Kgs 9:10)</p>	<p>Unnamed prophet from Elisha’s disciples</p>

As this table shows, only the first part of the fulfilled prophecy matches Elijah’s words (other than the change in word order).⁸⁵ The section about Jezebel becoming like dung is unparalleled in the Deuteronomistic History; the closest parallel passage in the Bible is an idiom found mostly in Jeremiah, but its contexts (laments for the fall of Zion) are vastly different. Finally, the inability to say “this is Jezebel” resembles the prophecy that no one would bury her, spoken by a disciple of Elisha. In short, the “prophecy” is a pastiche of other prophecies—two of Jezebel’s death, plus a possibly Jeremianic idiom—that emphasizes Jezebel as a fully consumed food product.⁸⁶ The comparison to dung is a twofold reference; it probably represents a pun on Jezebel’s name (as *zbl* was a term for dung in Aramaic and later Hebrew),⁸⁷ but it also represents the final aftermath of consumption: “Jezebel is literally consumed, digested, and excreted out of Israel.”⁸⁸ But the most brutal phrase is the one that is essentially unparalleled elsewhere: “no one can/will say, ‘This is Jezebel.’” This devastating fate represents complete annihilation⁸⁹—one of the deepest fears of the ancient Near Eastern mind, in which royal monuments strove above all else to preserve the monarch’s memory and name.⁹⁰

85 Indeed, the threat of being eaten by dogs appears several times in the Deuteronomistic History. (Cf. the stereotyped language in 1 Kgs 14:11, 16:4, 21:24.) John Holder summarizes, “The true significance and power of the threat are closely bound up with the ‘scavenger’ status of dogs in the ancient Near East. The threat is also linked to the great importance attached to a decent burial in the biblical tradition. . . . [T]he divine judgment will continue beyond death” (“The Presuppositions, Accusations, and Threats of 1 Kings 14:1–18,” 33–34).

86 Mark O’Brien says that this description is “probably made up of traditional sayings” (*The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 200).

87 Cf. Dagmar Pruin, “What Is in a Text? Searching for Jezebel,” 217–18, and Naomi Graetz, “Metaphors Connecting Jeremiah and Jezebel: The Case of *domen*.” *Zbl* as dung is not attested in the Hebrew Bible, but it appears in Arabic and Aramaic—indeed, the Targum uses *zbl* to translate the term “dung” in this verse, emphasizing the pun (Cogan, *II Kings*, 113). Graetz claims that the term also has parallels in Akkadian and Ugaritic (“Metaphors Connecting Jeremiah and Jezebel,” 7), but I have been unable to locate any; Montgomery and Gehman say it is present in “Arab. and Akk. (?)”

88 Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast*, 6.

89 “She is removed from the history of Israel with no visible trace, not to be honored, not to be remembered” (Brueggemann, *I & 2 Kings*, 390).

90 “[C]ommemoration served both commoner and elite alike by offering the possibility of averting the relegation of one’s deeds or personhood to *eternal anonymity* or the dreaded ‘death after death’” (Brian Schmidt, “Memory as Immortality,” 96).

Thus, the cycle of consumption is complete. Having been objectified into something less than human, fragmented into pieces, and finally annihilated, Jezebel disappears from the narrative; her name never appears again in the Deuteronomistic History.

(d) Pruning the Vineyard in Metaphor and Reality

Thus far we have explored Jezebel’s death as a narratively realized metaphor, that is, one evident in the shape of the story, rather than through linguistic metaphors. However, a combination of several semantic choices together forms an extended metaphor that openly portrays Jezebel as foodstuff—specifically, a grapevine—that must be harvested. This metaphor is particularly evident in the Syriac of the Peshitta’s Codex Ambrosianus, but its amplification there is based on preexisting double meanings in the Hebrew. This section examines each instance where the extended metaphor of JEZEBEL IS A GRAPEVINE “surfaces” in the texts, both Hebrew and Syriac. As with most literary allusions, each instance on its own would be easy to dismiss; together, though, they form a coherent picture. Moreover, this picture has a deep thematic resonance, given Jezebel’s central crime of seizing Naboth’s vineyard; becoming a harvested grapevine herself thus reads as poetic justice, a “symmetric” revenge.

(i) Locating the Vine

Jezebel’s final confrontation with Jehu is a concise but dramatic narrative. The beautified queen looks down from her window, exchanging a few terse words with her son’s killer, then meets her bloody death moments later. But the concise dialogue contains an important textual metaphor that only reveals itself through philological examination.

First, let us turn to the Syriac Peshitta of 2 Kings 9. In general, the story parallels the Hebrew closely. However, instead of “[Jehu] lifted his face to the window,” verse 32a reads “ܐܘܘܪܐ ܕܦܢܝܗܘܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ ܕܝܗܘܐ”: “and he lifted his face to the **vine**.”⁹¹

91 Specifically, Codex Ambrosianus (manuscript 7a1), the most important exemplar and the basis for the Leiden Peshitta series, contains ܐܘܘܪܐ. In the printed Leiden version, they “correct” it to ܐܘܘܪܐ, “window,” without citing any other exemplars; presumably they assume an orthographic error in which ܐܘ was written as a ܘ. I cannot rule out the possibility of an orthographic origin for the change, especially as the Peshitta generally strives for a literal translation of the Hebrew. (Cf. Michael Weitzman, *The Syriac Version*, 15ff, and especially 28–30 on figurative language.) But these trends can have exceptions; cf. Carol Dray on the Targum: “although there are examples of figures of speech in the Books of Kings that are removed and replaced by what must have been considered non-ambiguous language, there are some instances where figures of speech are retained and others where they are even introduced” (*Studies on Translation and Interpretation*, 134). Moreover, even if the change had an orthographic origin, it was copied down in that form and left uncorrected, indicating that it made some sense to the copyist—and ܐܘܘܪܐ is certainly the *lectio difficilior*. In the argument that follows, “translator” may be substituted with “copyist” if that is the case.

2 Kgs 9:32a

Hebrew (BHS)	וַיִּשָּׂא פָּנָיו אֶל-הַחֲלוֹן וַיֹּאמֶר מִי אִתִּי מִי	And he lifted his face to the window, and he said, “Who is with me? Who?”
Syriac (Ambrosianus)	ܩܘܡܐ ܘܥܠܐ ܘܩܘܡܐ ܘܩܘܡܐ ܩܘܡܐ	And he raised his face to the vine, and he said, “Who is with me?”

The word ܩܘܡܐ (*st*) has a well-established meaning as “vine, grapevine,” attested in other Syriac texts.⁹² It also appears elsewhere in the Peshitta in Ps 80:16: “the vine that your right hand planted”; there, it is in poetic parallel with “grapevine” (ܩܘܡܐ, the equivalent of Hebrew ܩܦܢ, in Ps 80:15). Unfortunately, there is little discussion of this variant in any of the relevant commentaries⁹³; my own discussion thus follows.

The most extensive discussion of the term ܩܘܡܐ is in Ulrich Seidel, “Studien zum Vokabular der Landwirtschaft im Syriac” (102–103), where he gives several examples of its use. According to Seidel, the term is related to the Hebrew root ָסד (“to establish”) and Akkadian *išdu* (“foundation”), through the form **sedtā* > *sattā*. He defines it as follows:

sattā bezeichnet im Syrischen das Gerüst einer Pflanze, d.h. das Wurzelwerk mit der sich daraus erhebenden Sprossachse (Pflanzstock, Stamm). . . . Meistens aber wird mit *sattā* der, Weinstock’ als das Gerüst der Weinpflanze oder überhaupt als die Weinpflanze bezeichnet.⁹⁴

In addition, Aphrahat uses the term in his 23rd Demonstration as part of an extended metaphor about Jesus’s death: “The vine was destroyed and the vine-twig [ܩܘܡܐ] was uprooted.”⁹⁵ It is not the term generally used in the Demonstration for a grapevine; rather, it emphasizes the utter destruction effected by Christ’s death. The grapevine has been destroyed from the roots upward.

We can thus list the following characteristics of the term:

- It refers to a plant’s core “scaffolding,” that is, its root system and central stem—the central core that the plant needs for life.
- It usually refers to a grapevine in particular.

92 Cf. the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon for other examples and for the page citations in various dictionaries (CAL, “st (sdh?), st”). In the *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, it is defined as “a vine, a creeping plant, a vine-twig, sucker; a stem” (Robert Smith, 393).

93 I believe this absence is due to dismissing the word as an orthographic error, discussed above.

94 “*sattā* designates in Syriac the scaffolding of a plant, i.e. the root system and its corresponding shoot stem (planting stock, trunk) . . . But most of the time, the ‘grapevine stock’ as the scaffolding of the grapevine, or even more generally the grapevine, is designated by *sattā*” (my translation). Seidel, “Studien zum Vokabular,” 102–03.

95 From *Aphrahat Demonstrations II*, tr. Kuriakose Valavanolickal, 279.

- Despite the weighted symbolism of grapevines in both the HB and the NT, כַּדָּמָה is not the term used for grapevine in those contexts; in other words, the Peshitta of 2 Kings is not quoting another biblical reference to grapevines.

We now have the information to understand the Peshitta’s decision to translate the text in this way. A non-literal sense for “vine” is almost certain; there is neither precedent nor relevance for an actual grapevine at Jezebel’s window. But as a metaphor for Jezebel, the queen mother of the old royal lineage, the term is surprisingly apt—and we will explore its rich facets shortly. First, though, a question naturally arises: Is this metaphor a fanciful invention of the Syriac translator? Or is there a textual connection that prompted this specific metaphor of Jezebel as grapevine? A range of evidence supports the latter.

(ii) The Pruner Arrives

Jezebel’s words to Jehu are brief, pointed, and allusive, especially in the original Hebrew.

2 Kgs 9:31

<p>וַיְהִי כִּי בָּא בַשָּׁעַר וַתֹּאמֶר הַשְּׁלוֹם זְמֶרִי הֲרַג אֲדֹנָי</p>	<p>When Jehu came to the gate, she said, “Is all well, <i>zimri</i>, killer of his master?”</p>
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The first word echoes its appearance earlier in the chapter; “Is all well?” (more literally, “Is it peace?”) is asked three times of Jehu: first by his attendants (v. 11), then by Joram’s messenger (vv. 17–18), then by Joram himself (v. 22). The repetition creates an ironic resonance, as Jehu is actually disrupting and destroying peace by his violent actions, and Jezebel here reminds him of his violence.

Her second word reiterates that accusation of violence—but here I suggest a novel interpretation of how it functions. The traditional interpretation of “Zimri” is an allusion to King Zimri, a short-lived ruler of Israel who came to power through a coup, slaughtered his predecessor’s family, and killed himself a mere week later (1 Kgs 16:8–20).⁹⁶ The parallels to Jehu are clear; he, too, seeks kingship of Israel through a bloody coup, and Jezebel’s comparison predicts that his victory will be similarly short-lived.

However, in a 1978 article, Simon Parker made a different suggestion. Citing Jezebel’s beautification as a prelude to seduction, Parker argues for a flattering tone to her speech. Central to his argument is a reevaluation of “*zimri*,” which he derives from the Semitic root Z-M-R III, “to protect.” Thus, “in Jezebel’s speech there is preserved a cognate noun which, by etymology, would mean something like ‘strong one,’ ‘protective one,’ but which may have been used more generally of a hero or champion.”⁹⁷ In other words, Jezebel is trying to appeal to Jehu by calling him a champion.

96 For example, Cogan and Tadmor, *II Kings*, 112; Sweeney, *I & II Kings*, 336; among many others.

97 Simon Parker, “Jezebel’s Reception,” 72.

Parker's argument has rightly been criticized on several grounds,⁹⁸ but he is to be credited with opening up the possibility that "zimri" implied more than a simple personal name. A few years later, Saul Olyan suggested a different connotation for the term—namely, deriving it from Z-M-R II, "to prune" (cf. Lev. 25:3–4, Is. 5:6). He argues that "the name *zimrî* could easily suggest *zāmîr*, 'vineyard-pruning,' in the mind of the reader, who would no doubt be aware of the incident at the root of Jehu's coup, the incident concerning Naboth of Jezreel and his vineyard."⁹⁹ Moreover, since a vineyard "is used metaphorically in the HB to denote a community or a group,"¹⁰⁰ a vineyard-pruner would be understood as someone who comes to cut off an entire group—in this case, the Omride dynasty. The term thus has dual implications: as a metaphor, it describes Jehu's behavior; as an allusion, it cites the cause of the behavior.

Olyan is correct that the vineyard-pruning motif is present, and that this implication "does not depend on denying the allusion to the historical Zimri."¹⁰¹ Where I depart from him is in the specific referent of the vineyard. Jezebel, proud to the end, is referring to *herself* as the metaphorical vineyard, not to the Omrides in general. A closer examination of the vineyard metaphor supports this conclusion. First, metaphorical vineyards appear throughout Song of Songs, and they never refer to the male partner (see in particular 1:6; 2:15, 8:12); rather, they appear to connect to access to female sexuality.¹⁰² Second, Olyan correctly notes that vineyards are a metaphor for Israel in Isaiah (5:1–7 in particular), but this unusual text describes itself as a "love song" (שִׁירַת דְּוִרִי) for the vineyard (Is 5:1), who is therefore metaphorically characterized as an individual woman. The same argument can be made for other instances of the Israel-as-vineyard metaphor, for example, Jer 2:21, where God tells Israel "I planted you [*feminine* singular] as a prime vine," or Ezek. 15, which occurs directly before one of Ezekiel's vivid Israel-as-promiscuous-woman metaphors.

Nor is the metaphor limited to the Hebrew Bible. KTU 1.24 is a Ugaritic myth describing the wedding of the moon-god Yarikh to the goddess Nikkal, perhaps designed to be recited at weddings.¹⁰³ In a passage where Yarikh requests his bride from her father Harhab, the prospective groom declares, "I will turn her field into a

98 For instance, Cohn notes that "the epithet 'murderer of his master' is hardly designed to flame Jehu's desire" (Cohn, *2 Kings*, 70), and Cogan and Tadmor, who call Zimri "in every sense an insulting reference" (Sweeney, *II Kings*, 112). Perhaps the most damning critique is by Janet Howe Gaines: "This sexist interpretation of her applying makeup in an attempt to seduce Jehu vilifies the queen to the point that she is even incapable of feeling human love for her immediate family. It further suggests that women can only obtain power through feminine, sexual tricks, that Jezebel is happy to use her body to curry favor with the new king, and that she believes she has the opportunity to lure him into her bed"—a proposal that Gaines is quick to discredit (Gaines, *Music in the Old Bones*, 82).

99 Saul Olyan, "2 Kings 9:31," 206.

100 *Ibid.*

101 *Ibid.*

102 Cf. the lengthy discussion in Munro, *Spikenard and Saffron*, 98–102, who calls the vineyard "representative of the woman or of her relationship with her lover."

103 Cf. Nick Wyatt, *Religious Texts from Ugarit*, 336ff.

vineyard (*krm*), the field of her love into an orchard” (1.24.23, my translation). In short, vineyards are an established Levantine metaphor for individual women, not for general people-groups or lineages.¹⁰⁴ Of course, this conclusion should come as no surprise within the broader metaphor of WOMAN IS FOOD; a vineyard is a prototypical source of consumable fruit.

Thus, when Jezebel faces down Jehu and calls him a *Zimri*—or perhaps *zomri*, “my grape-pruner”¹⁰⁵—the vineyard she accuses him of decimating is herself.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps she was emphasizing her femininity in hopes that Jehu would hesitate to kill a woman; perhaps she was alluding to the “fruit of her womb”¹⁰⁷ whom Jehu had already slaughtered. Whatever the exact metaphorical implications, the term likely also alludes to Naboth’s vineyard and Jezebel’s culpability. Her statement was multilayered and thick with irony, and it drew its richness from the preexisting metaphor of women as a vineyard.

Once again, we should note that we are describing fictional words put in her mouth by the author of her story, not the recorded rhetoric of a real woman. Her words are bitter and fierce, but they also serve a narrative purpose. By evoking Jezebel as a vineyard and Naboth as the vine-pruner, the narrator emphasized the satisfying “just rewards” of her punishment; she who schemed to cut down a vineyard has become the vineyard, cut down from her (literal and metaphorical) great height.

(iii) Pressing the Vintage

A final manifestation of the extended metaphor comes from the fate of Jezebel’s body after her defenestration: “some of her blood splashed (נזה) on the wall and the horses, and they trampled (רמס) her.” (v. 33) The Hebrew words for “trampled” and “splashed” also appear together in Isaiah 63:3:

I trod the winepress alone,
with none of the peoples with me;
I trod them in my fury,
and trampled (רמס) them in my rage;

104 Further evidence may come from 2 Sam 11, the story of David and Bathsheba, and its parallels to the Naboth story: both involve a royal protagonist seizing something by ordering the death of its owner. But in these parallel stories, the role of a woman in David’s tale is played by a vineyard in Jezebel’s. Cf. Shemesh, “ותחתם בחתמי,” ff. 64 for citations.

105 *Zomri* is זֹמְרִי, the active masculine singular qal participle of זָמַר, plus the first person singular suffix. This otherwise unattested word is not suggested by Olyan, who does not reconstruct a specific pruning-related term. Rather, he seems to argue for a more general associative wordplay with the verb, simultaneous with the actual allusion to King Zimri.

106 In other words, I view the possessive suffix pronoun as indicating the object of the participle: Jehu prunes Jezebel, rather than pruning *on behalf of* Jezebel. The latter meaning, while grammatically possible, makes less sense in the context of the story, given that Zimri’s violent coup is decidedly against Jezebel’s interests.

107 Cf. Gen 30:2, Ps. 127:3, Is. 13:8.

Their juices splashed (נזה) on my robes,
staining all my clothing.

2 Kings 9:33 and Isaiah 63:3 are the only two places in the Bible where these two verbs occur in the same verse. This need not imply an intertextual allusion—merely a shared vocabulary of wine-making. Jezebel is the vine, and she has been harvested and pressed.

Two of the Peshitta’s translation choices in verse 33 emphasize the connection.

2 Kgs 9:33

וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁמְטָהוּ [שְׁמַטְיָהּ] וַיִּשְׁמְטוּהָ נְיָז מִדְּקֻמָּהּ אֶל-הַקִּיר וְאֶל- הַסּוּסִים וַיִּרְמְסֶנָּהּ:	And he said, “Throw him [her] down.” So they threw her down, and some of her blood sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and they ¹⁰⁸ trampled her.
וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁמְטָהּ וַיִּשְׁמְטוּהָ נְיָז מִדְּקֻמָּהּ אֶל-הַקִּיר וְאֶל- הַסּוּסִים וַיִּרְמְסֶנָּהּ:	And he said, “Tear her apart.” So they tore her apart, and some of her blood sprinkled, and the horses came and trod on her.

When Jehu calls to the eunuchs to “throw her down” in the Hebrew, the Peshitta translates the verb as ܡܫܬܗ (pšh)—a verb that elsewhere always refers to chopping or tearing apart a body or a tree,¹⁰⁹ including the Levite’s *pilegesh* in Judges 19.¹¹⁰ Even if the verb here has an unattested alternate meaning of casting Jezebel off, its connotations everywhere else would allude to the dual sense of a corpse being dismembered and a tree being stripped bare. Indeed, it may even be reflecting a nuance of the original Hebrew there. While שָׂמַט ordinarily refers to casting something down, Jeffrey Stackert’s analysis of Exod 23:11 convincingly brings in Akkadian parallels where the term refers to stripping a tree of its fruit.¹¹¹ In this context of a high window, throwing her down makes more literal sense, but the Syriac translation may be intended to preserve the nuance of stripping fruit from a tree.

In addition, for “trample,” the Peshitta translates the verb as ܕܡܫܘܢ (dws), which it uses elsewhere in Isaiah 16:10, Joel 4:13, and Lam. 1:15 (as well as Isaiah 63:3) to

108 Correcting the singular to a plural here, to match most ancient and modern translations—though see elsewhere for the grim implications of the original MT.

109 Elsewhere, it refers to dismembering an animal or human body in Ex 29:17; Lev 1:6, 12, 8:20, 9:13; Judg 14:6, 19:29, 20:6; 1 Sam 11:7, 15:33; and 1 Kgs 18:23, 33. It refers to chopping apart wood in Ps 129:4 (where Hebrew קָצַץ עֲבֹתָ, “he cut the cords,” is translated as ܡܫܬܗܗܘܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܘܢ, “he hewed their branches”); Is 10:34; Joel 1:7; and Dan 4:14. In Job 16:9 and Lam 3:11, the verb signifies God’s destructive action, perhaps again tearing apart. Nowhere does it involve throwing something.

110 The Syriac for Judg 19:29 reads, “ܘܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ ܡܫܬܗܘܢ” (“And he took a knife, and he dismembered her, his ‘concubine,’ into twelve pieces, and he scattered all of them in the bounds of Israel”).

111 Jeffrey Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah*, 132–33.

refer to treading on wine, for example, “ܠܟܘܡܐ ܕܝܘܢ ܠܒܘܠܒܘܠ ܠܒܘܠܒܘܠ ܕܝܘܢ ܕܝܘܢ ܕܝܘܢ” (“[Like] a winepress, the Lord has trodden maiden daughter Judah,” Lam 1:15b). In short, the Syriac translator has recognized the double metaphorical meaning of the words, and he has chosen to emphasize them in his translation by using additional loaded terms.

Thus, given several subtle allusions that describe Jezebel as a grapevine to be cut down and pressed, the Syriac translator’s decision to describe Jezebel as a metaphorical vine was perfectly natural; the term merely brought out and extended an already existing metaphor. The decision was not a fanciful flourish but an attempt to cue readers into an important metaphor that they might have otherwise missed, as Z-M-R is not attested in Syriac in the senses of either protecting or pruning.¹¹² Since *zimri* in Syriac no longer had the connotations of pruning/ܙܡܪ, the metaphor was manifested elsewhere.

Reviewing the evidence, each element of this extended metaphor may be contested. Perhaps the Syriac “vine” is an orthographic error; perhaps “Zimri” is no more than a political callback; perhaps the splashing and trampling like wine are merely coincidence. Yet taken together, they constitute cumulatively powerful evidence—and the metaphor that they entail is eminently appropriate for this passage. First, as discussed previously, Jezebel was an infelicitous provider of food, and thus her poetically inverted fate is to be eaten. Second, the conceptual metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, present elsewhere in the biblical narrative, could naturally be applied to her. Third, as a sexually active woman, a vineyard was a natural choice for Jezebel’s metaphoric depiction, given its biblical precedents.¹¹³ Finally, a vineyard was already present and prominent in her narrative, a veritable symbol of her wicked ruthlessness. The combination of several distinct allusions and the narrative appropriateness of the metaphor dovetail together to make a clear argument for its deliberate inclusion.

(e) Anat and Jezebel: Parallels and Divergences

As this chapter has demonstrated, Jezebel’s two primary stories show her in contrasting lights: first as the consumer and procurer of food, then as the consumed. In this final section of discussion, I turn to a subject that has already been observed by multiple commentators: the parallels between Jezebel and the goddess Anat.¹¹⁴ After reviewing some of the grounds previously explored by others, I add my own additional parallels, especially focusing on Anat as huntress and provider.

112 Cf. Smith, *Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, 117–18.

113 Again, I am not attempting to prove an intertextual relationship with any individual passage portraying a woman as a vineyard; rather, their frequency indicates that A WOMAN IS A VINEYARD metaphor was a commonly accepted conceptual metaphor to the biblical authors, and their individual metaphors all drew upon it.

114 Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast* 152–73; Ackroyd, “Goddesses, Women, Jezebel,” 245–59; Beach, “The Samaria Ivories,” 94–104.

(i) Background to Anat

Anat was a Canaanite goddess whom we know primarily through Ugaritic texts. Her most extensive depictions are in the Epic of Baal and the Aqhat Epic, but she also appears in more fragmentary texts, some of which have hotly debated meanings. Because of the many lacunae and ambiguities in these secondary Anat texts, this section focuses on those two Ugaritic epics as my primary sources. Likewise, due to the frankly speculative nature of the suggestions that “reinstate” Anat into verses of the Hebrew Bible, they do not figure in this discussion.

A violent hunter and warrior, Anat’s primary epithet is *batulatu*, connected to the Hebrew בתולה, which means something like “adolescent female.” (More about this epithet later.) Scholars have primarily noted connections between Jezebel and Anat in the story of Jezebel’s death. Just as Jezebel beautifies herself before confronting Jehu,¹¹⁵ so does Anat beautify herself before and after battle in the Baal Cycle, in KTU 1.3.ii–iii.¹¹⁶ Certain body parts figure prominently in both texts: Jezebel’s corpse is reduced to skull (גלגלת), hands (כף), and feet (רגל), while Anat adorns herself with the bloody heads and hands from her battle (though no feet): “She fastened heads (*rišt*) to her back; she girded hands (*kpt*) at her belt.”¹¹⁷

Mostly from these two connections, Appler argues for Jezebel’s “direct correlation with Anat,” saying that “the Deuteronomistic historian implies that Jezebel is . . . the embodiment of the goddess Anat.”¹¹⁸ This statement is problematic on several grounds, from the ascription of the Jezebel story to the Deuteronomistic Historian¹¹⁹ to the idea that textual details from Ugaritic myths about Anat would be intimately well-known to a biblical audience.¹²⁰ Nonetheless, Jezebel certainly does embody the same literary type as Anat: the woman from the North whose beauty and ruthlessness were equally strong.

(ii) Naboth and Aqhat: Parallel Victims?

With respect to parallels between Jezebel and Anat, the incident with Naboth provides even stronger evidence than Jezebel’s death. Here, the parallels to Anat’s

115 Literally, “she prepared her eyes with eye-makeup, and she improved her head,” (v. 30) generally understood as styling her hair. (Cf. the JPS translation “dressed her hair,” CEB “arranged her hair,” and NIV “arranged her hair.”)

116 Unfortunately, both beautification scenes are broken. They seem to include eye makeup, perfume, and purple dye before (1.3.ii.2–3) and the application of murex (perhaps the same purple dye?) afterward (1.3.iii.1); the verb for beautification is *tpp*, a 3fs prefixing Rt form of the root Y-P-Y (connected to Hebrew יפה).

117 *’kt. rišt. lbmth. šnst kpt. bhšh* (KTU 1.3 ii.11–13).

118 Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast*, 188.

119 As discussed above, multiple authors (especially Rófe and Cronauer) have suggested that the primary Jezebel stories come from a late, post-Exilic redaction that portrays her as the dreaded “foreign wife” of Ezra/Nehemiah. Their arguments have both philological and thematic merits, though I cannot discuss them at length in this space.

120 Anat was probably known at some level to the biblical audience, but knowing of a Canaanite goddess and recognizing specific textual allusions to the thousand-years-prior Baal Cycle are two very different levels of cultural exchange.

actions in the epic of Aqhat are particularly strong. In this Ugaritic tale, the boy Aqhat displays his new, divinely gifted bow at a feast hosted by his parents. Anat covets the bow and bargains for it with Aqhat, but the boy refuses, scornfully mocking the idea that a woman would use a bow at all. In her rage at his refusal, Anat plots to kill Aqhat, enlisting her male lieutenant Yatapan. Although the scenes that follow are broken, she seems to set up another feast for Aqhat, during which Yatapan strikes him dead. Unfortunately, although the god El grudgingly approved her plan, killing Aqhat has cosmic consequences; it seems to cause a drought that afflicts the whole land.

The stages of action here are remarkably parallel to Jezebel’s actions against Naboth. A man was approached for a prized possession connected to acquiring food, whether by hunting or by gardening. After he refused to give it up, a powerful woman plotted his death. She did so by commissioning a male intermediary to attack him at a public gathering. Once he was dead, she attempted to take possession. But a divine message—Elijah’s prophecy or the national drought—indicated that her actions were “infelicitous.”¹²¹

<i>Summary</i>	<i>Aqhat (KTU 1.17–19)</i>	<i>1 Kings 21</i>
A man possesses something that is divinely gifted and associated with food production.	Aqhat and his bow gifted by Kothar-wa-Ḥasis. (1.17.v.26–28)	Naboth and his ancestral vineyard. (vv. 1,3)
The man is approached with an offer, but he rebuffs it indignantly.	Anat offers to pay Aqhat, then offers immortality. He refuses. (1.17.vi.16–40)	Ahab offers money or a replacement vineyard to Naboth. He refuses. (vv. 2–3)
With a petulant response, eating/drinking ceases.	Anat casts her goblet on the ground when she sees the bow. (1.17.vi.15)	Ahab refuses to eat when Naboth refuses him. (v. 4)
A powerful woman verbally plots his death in order to obtain the possession.	Anat declares to El that she will smite Aqhat. (1.17.vi.52–?)	Jezebel tells Ahab that she will get him the vineyard. (v. 7)
She commissions men to kill him at a ritual gathering.	Anat tells Yatapan to kill Aqhat. (1.18.iv.17–27)	Jezebel tells the city nobles to kill Naboth. (vv. 8–10)
The man is killed successfully at the assembly	Aqhat dies at a feast (1.18.iv.29–37)	Naboth dies at a public fast (vv. 12–13)

121 Cf. David Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 112–18. Wright borrows the terms of felicity/infelicity from Ronald Grimes’ *Ritual Criticism*, which itself borrows them from John Austin’s *How to Do Things with Words*. Where Austin uses the terms specifically to describe performative utterances, Grimes and Wright use them for rituals more broadly. A felicitous performance is one that goes off happily or successfully, having avoided various infelicities (e.g., incomplete execution or insincere intention). Because Jezebel and Anat’s acts are neither performative utterances nor rituals, in the traditional sense, my use of the term represents an expansion—but an appropriate one, in my view. Each of the women engages in a sequence of behaviors that has cosmic negative consequences, and the reason for those consequences can be explained as a combination of two infelicities: “misapplication” (the fact that they are women) and “violation” (the fact that their behavior causes harm).

<i>Summary</i>	<i>Aqhat (KTU 1.17–19)</i>	<i>1 Kings 21</i>
A divine sign reflects and reveals the unjust death.	Regional drought follows Aqhat's death. (1.19.i.29–34)	Elijah brings a prophetic message of punishment to Ahab. (vv. 17–24)
Revenge is delayed for years, but ultimately follows.	After years of mourning, Pughat goes in disguise to kill Yatapan. (1.19.iv.28–47)	Years later, Ahab, Jezebel, and their children are all slaughtered. (1 Kgs 22:34–38; 2 Kgs 1:17, 9:24–26, 30–37, 10:7–11)

Now, there *is* some evidence that biblical authors may have been familiar with the Aqhat narrative in some form; the prophet Ezekiel thrice mentions Danel, Aqhat's father, as a paradigm of righteousness and wisdom.¹²² But without stronger intertextual data, it is impossible to demonstrate that the story of Naboth is deliberately modeled on the story of Aqhat. Rather, both of them envision dangerous femininity in a similar way. The Dangerous Woman is not satisfied with domestic life; she reaches out and covets that which is not hers. The Dangerous Woman inverts the natural metaphor where men hunt for women; instead, she hunts men,¹²³ though she may do so through intermediaries who can carry out her hunger for power. Because of her actions, natural events are inverted; the communal gathering, whether feast or fast, becomes a site of danger and death. And in the end, though her violence may succeed, the cosmos reacts against her unnatural behavior.

This theme is supported by an additional parallel between Aqhat and Jezebel's death. Just as Jezebel is first murdered, then devoured by animals, so is Aqhat. When Aqhat's father Danel searches for Aqhat's body, he invokes Baal, who systematically breaks the pinions of vultures so that Danel can cut them open to look for human remains. Each time, he sews up the vultures, and they miraculously recover and fly away. Finally, Aqhat's body is found inside the female vulture Šamal.¹²⁴ As "the mother of all vultures," she is identified by Wright as "almost a reflection of" Anat¹²⁵ and is notable for her gender. But unlike Anat, Šamal is mortal and thus vulnerable. After Danel discovers Aqhat's remains inside her, having slit open her gullet, he takes the remains and leaves her lying dead and disemboweled. The female predator has been appropriately punished.

122 Ezek 14:14, 20, 28:3. For discussion of these passages and whether they refer to the Ugaritic/Canaanite Danel, cf. the major commentaries on Ezekiel, as well as (most prominently) John Day, "The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the Hero of the Book of Daniel," 174–84, and Harold Dressler, "The Identification of the Ugaritic Dnīl with the Daniel of Ezekiel," 152–61.

123 Compare the modern slang term describing a woman as a "man-eater," someone for whom "the beauty is there but a beast is in the heart" (lyrics from "Maneater" by Hall & Oates). The quoted song is quite biblical, using the image of a predatory seductress as an extended metaphor for a corrupt, decadent city (Leah Kauffman, "John Oates on his new album").

124 Šamal's name is enigmatic (cf. Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 177), but it may connect to the Akkadian *zamaltu/šamaltu*—a food utensil of some kind—or *samālu*, a cup.

125 Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 219. Note also Anat's general connection to vultures (Appler, *Queen Fit for a Feast*, 153).

Incidentally, Jezebel and Anat are far from the only instances of this “dangerous woman” in ancient Near Eastern texts. In addition to the biblical examples already cited, where the Dangerous Woman is a metaphor for sinful nations, one of the most famous females of this type was Lamashtu—and again, we see the same themes of consumption and objectification around her. Lamashtu is frequently depicted as a carnivorous she-wolf, dripping with flesh and blood, with talons like a bird of prey. In one typical incantation (RA 18, 163/TCL 6 49 r.13–29), in order to subdue her threat, she is urged to accept the trappings of womanhood¹²⁶:

21	<i>am-ma-ki mârât</i> ^d <i>A-nim gi-tar-ra-tú amelu-tú tal-ma-[ni-]ma</i>	Instead, O daughter of Anu, of doing evil as humanity’s adversary, ¹²⁸
22	<i>am-ma-ki ina šêri u dâmi qâtâ</i> ^{II-ki} <i>šak-nu</i>	instead of staining your hands with flesh and blood,
23	<i>am-ma-ki bîtu tir-ru-bu bîtu tu-ši-i</i>	instead of moving in and out of houses:
24	<i>mu-uh-ri ša</i> ^{amel} <i>tamqari qa-an-na-šu u ši-di-ŠI-su</i>	Accept a bag [lit. “horn”] and provisions from the merchant.
25	<i>mu-uh-ri ša</i> ^{amel} <i>nappahi si-me-ri si-mat qâtê</i> ^{II-ki} <i>u šêpê</i> ^{II-ki}	Accept bangles from the smith to adorn your hands and feet.
26	<i>mu-uh-ri ša</i> ^{amel} <i>kutimmi in-ša-ab-tú si-mat uznê</i> ^{II-ki}	Accept an earring from the goldsmith to adorn your ears.
27	<i>mu-uh-ri ša</i> ^{amel} <i>purgulli</i> ^{aban} <i>sâmtu si-mat kišadi-ki</i>	Accept carnelian from the gemcutter to adorn your neck.
28	<i>mu-uh-ri ša</i> ^{amel} <i>nangari</i> ^{isga-šu} ^{is} <i>pilakku u du-di-it-ti-ki</i> ¹²⁷	Accept comb, spindle, and brooch [a merism for the feminine world] from the craftsman.

Once again we are reminded of Jezebel beautifying herself in the window. To adorn a woman is to emphasize her femininity, and therefore to reinstate her as the consumed object instead of the consuming threat.

(iii) The Anat Conundrum

We thus return to the central conundrum of this section. Over and over, we have seen a consistent scheme. The texts in this study metaphorically treat and depict women as food; those women who invert the metaphor, hunting for their own prey, face a narrative backlash of forced feminization, becoming prey themselves. Yet despite the consistency of this conceptual metaphor, Anat seems to contravene it. She is a huntress and a warrior; she preys upon Aqhat and wades knee-deep in the blood of her foes. And as far as we see in any of the extant Ugaritic sources, she never receives her “just desserts” for this behavior.

126 Cf. Walter Farber, *Lamaštu*, 268–70, 298–99, for a recent edition of this text.

127 Transcription is from François Thureau-Dangin, “Rituel et Amulettes Contre Labartu,” 161–198. Translation is my own. Also compare the parallel incantation in SpTU 3 84 r.9–24.

128 Farber reads “*mut-tar-ra-tú*,” instead of “*gi-tar-ra-tú*,” thus translating, “Instead of, O Daughter-of-Anu, playing the nurse, you should have learned human behavior!”

The answer comes when we turn to examine Anat's gender. An initially promising possibility identifies Anat as an androgynous figure, based on her masculine prowess at hunting and warfare. Some scholars have even argued for an actual masculine appearance, claiming a beard for Anat based on one still-debated line of the Baal Epic.¹²⁹ But this dubious line aside, there is little evidence for Anat as androgynous in body. When we turn to iconographic evidence, despite the difficulties with identification, the data agree; Izak Cornelius found only six images of Anat identified by inscription, and all of them are unequivocally women.¹³⁰ (Unfortunately, no Ugaritic images of her survive with an identifying inscription, but those Ugaritic images often identified with her—usually because of the presence of wings—are also not androgynous.) In short, while Anat's actions may have been traditionally masculine,¹³¹ she is never clearly identified as male or even androgynous.¹³² So as a woman, how can she successfully consume without being consumed?

The answer lies in the metaphor of WOMAN IS FOOD—and specifically the site of its origin as a cross-cultural metaphor. Zoltán Kövecses summarizes the process as follows:

This conceptualization of women and men chiefly occurs when they both are considered for sexual purposes. The relationship of sexuality that exists between women and men is perhaps the main and most productive perspective from which men think and talk about women.¹³³ . . . The SEX IS EATING and THE OBJECT OF SEX IS FOOD metaphors combine with the metaphor of SEXUAL DESIRE/LUST IS HUNGER, where the object of

129 Compare the lengthy discussion and authors cited in Samuel Loewenstamm, "Side-Whiskers and Beard," which concludes against a bearded Anat.

130 Cf. Izak Cornelius, *The Many Faces of the Goddess*, 89.

131 In addition to her hunting and warfare, both traditionally masculine, there are other hints that Anat's behavior was masculine. "It seems that 'Anatu, in lacerating herself (in the Ba'lu Myth, KTU 1.6:1.2–5), overstepped gender boundaries. The goddess more often revealed this behaviour. In the Ba'lu Myth she furthermore buried the corpse of her husband Ba'lu, which was generally considered to be a male task (KTU 1.6:1.8–18)" (Hennie Marsman, *Women in Ugarit*, 522).

132 I have not yet addressed the much-debated description of Anat that appears after she approaches El, in a formulaic exchange present in both Aqhat and the Baal Epic. After Anat makes her demands, El responds, "I know you, daughter, that you are *anšt*." This final word "can be related to two roots, *nš*, one meaning 'human, man, person,' and the other, 'weak, ill'" (Mark Smith and Wayne Pitard, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle: Volume II*, 352); the latter root could be extended to mean "sick with anger or emotion," and was used to describe Baal in that sense. Some (e.g., Wright, *Ritual in Narrative*, 125–26, and Meindert Dijkstra and Johannes de Moor, "Problematical Passages," 193) have argued that El is calling Anat "manly," that is, "unfeminine," here. But I find the philological evidence unpersuasive. *nš* means human, not male; if this first root was intended, I would read it as "you are acting like a human, i.e. not a divine being." Moreover, since the latter root is used in the same text to describe Baal, it is the more likely choice. The description refers to Anat's temperament, not her gender—a conclusion supported by Neil Walls (*The Goddess Anat*, 83–86), among others.

133 There is an interesting parallel here in Abusch's observation that the witch primarily was responsible for digestive and sexual ailments ("Witchcraft, Impotence, and Indigestion"), made above: in other words, the domains most connected to this female figure were sex and food.

hunger is again APPETIZING FOOD (Lakoff 1987). These metaphors led to the conceptualization of women as appetizing food.¹³⁴

In other words, sex and eating are both bodily processes of appetite satiation with semantic domains that naturally overlap in metaphor.¹³⁵ From the perspective of a heterosexual male, the object of eating, that is, the equivalent of food, is women. But this metaphor does not apply to everyone. (For instance, not all speakers are heterosexual men; however, since the author of *Aqhat* likely was one, we do not delve into that oversight here.) Most relevantly, not all women are sexually accessible. In my survey of literature on the WOMAN IS FOOD metaphor, a universal constant was that the object of the metaphor was a sexually desirable woman—that is, not someone whose age, appearance, or identity would “turn off one’s appetite.”¹³⁶ Put differently, in Adams’s language, objectification is a necessary stage of consumption; to metaphorically eat a woman, one must first dehumanize her into a sexual object.

What of Anat, then? One line in *Kirta* compares a woman’s beauty to Anat and Astarte, so she was considered beautiful.¹³⁷ But as far as sexual availability goes, scholarly opinion has changed dramatically in recent decades. While Anat was once seen as a “fertility goddess” who openly had sex with Baal, *Aqhat*, and perhaps others, the evidence for that behavior was based on lacunae that simply do not stand up to rigorous scrutiny.¹³⁸ (In many cases, the outdated tendency to connect any female goddess with “fertility” is a visible bias.) As for the *Aqhat* story in particular, I agree with Delbert Hillers that *Aqhat*’s bow would have had phallic connotations. But I am less persuaded by the parallels that he draws with other tales of divine seduction, which feature a protagonist who is “immature and inexperienced compared to the older and wilier woman.”¹³⁹ *Aqhat* is young, true, but Anat is portrayed as a similarly impetuous teenager, not an older temptress. Her demand to take his bow is a threat of emasculation, not an offer of seduction. Indeed, since the epic focuses on *Aqhat* as the long-awaited culmination of Danel’s hopes for continuing his male lineage, the possibility of *Aqhat*’s emasculation is central to the dramatic tension. This threat is why Anat can offer *Aqhat* riches and immortality, but not the one thing his father craved: offspring, and specifically male offspring.

134 Kövecses, “Metaphor and Ideology in Slang,” 156.

135 This metaphor can go in either direction, as with the slang term “food porn” to refer to especially appetizing images of food.

136 One exception exists: the use of sweet foods as slang for pre-pubescent girls (a cupcake, a little cookie). However, the metaphor here is of sweetness and small size rather than sexual desirability; little girls are not “pieces of meat.”

137 KTU 1.14.iii.41–42.

138 Cf. Peggy Day’s “Anat” in particular for summarizing this shift, but also Walls, *The Goddess Anat*, 122–52, for a discussion of some of the prominent texts. Tamber-Rosenau, in *Women in Drag*, follows their conclusions in this regard.

139 Delbert Hillers, “The Bow of *Aqhat*,” 215.

Anat's epithet of *batulatu* further supports this non-sexualized conclusion. While the Semitic term may not have meant “virgin” in an absolute sense, as numerous linguistic studies have demonstrated,¹⁴⁰ it generally represented a “a transitional, preparatory stage,” to quote Martha Roth¹⁴¹—a young woman who was old enough to marry, yet not married. But one of the most important aspects of *batulatu*, which has not previously been discussed to my knowledge, is what she was *not*: a fetishized object of desire.¹⁴² Among the many epithets in “Song of Songs,” the lover never calls his beloved a בְּתוּלָה. Nor do any of the Akkadian appearances of *batultu* occur in erotic contexts. As for Ugaritic texts, it appears only as an epithet of Anat.

One important hint of the term's connotations is in the biblical text of 2 Samuel 13, Amnon's rape of Tamar.

David's son Absalom had a beautiful sister named Tamar,
and David's son Amnon loved her.
But Amnon was sick with misery over Tamar his sister,
because she was a בְּתוּלָה,
and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.
(2 Sam 13:1–2)

These final two statements seem linked: Tamar is a בְּתוּלָה, and thus it seems impossible—or miraculous (פלא)—to do anything to her. Indeed, her status as בְּתוּלָה is presented as a roadblock to Amnon: she is beautiful, **but** she is a בְּתוּלָה. This implies that a key part of the בְּתוּלָה status was inaccessibility for sexual contact. Perhaps, rather than defining a *batulatu* as a young woman who has not had sex, we should define her as a young woman *with whom no one ought to have sex*, until her status was changed to something else.¹⁴³

Notably, and *contra* Walls and Day, this categorization does not mark Anat as a “liminal” figure. Walls argues that Anat had a liminal gender status,¹⁴⁴ and his

140 For instance, Gordon Wenham, “B^tulāh: ‘A Girl of Marriageable Age,’” 326–48; Walls, *The Goddess Anat*, 78–79; Peggy Day, “Personification of Cities,” 283; J. Bergman et al., “betulā, betulim,” TDOT 2 (1975): 338–43.

141 Roth, “Age at Marriage,” 746.

142 Here I diverge strongly from Walls, who argues that “As a divine, nubile adolescent, Anat is erotic whether she intends to be or not. Indeed, her virginity actually accentuates her sexual availability” (*The Goddess Anat*, 201). Whatever Walls' opinions on the allure of virgin adolescents, I can find no evidence that ancient Near Eastern tastes eroticized them.

143 This definition is supported by the word's use in Esther. After banishing Queen Vashti, the king puts out a call for “beautiful young *betulot*” (נְעוּרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת) to be brought to the palace and placed in his harem (Esther 2:2,3). But they are only בְּתוּלוֹת before they are ready for sexual contact (2:4: “Let the girl (נְעָרָה) who pleases the king become queen.”; 2:12, “each girl would go in to the king”; etc.) The term's reappearance in 2:16 (“she obtained favor and grace, more than all the בְּתוּלוֹת”) is ambiguous.

144 “She is a liminal figure, both socially and sexually, in that she is outside of the normative feminine categories of mother, wife, or dependent daughter” (Walls, *The Goddess Anat*, 158).

argument has been supported more recently by Day.¹⁴⁵ In this view, Anat is female, yet not quite a woman, due to her lack of sexualization.¹⁴⁶ As someone outside the category of women, she can transgress normal gender boundaries. Yet Caryn Tamber-Rosenau is right to criticize the application of the term “liminal” here (and in other instances of ancient warrior women), on several grounds. First, she notes, “the term assumes that there *is* a clear gender boundary or threshold for the characters to straddle.”¹⁴⁷ Second, she observes:

[I]t is suspicious that the figures most often dubbed “liminal” in this context are female. If goddesses and mortal female characters in literature are repeatedly labeled as liminal on the basis of purported gender transgression, perhaps modern scholars are holding to an overly restrictive definition of what constitutes womanhood. One also wonders whether there is not some modern bias regarding unmarried or childless women at work here.

On the one hand, the “bias regarding unmarried or childless women” is hardly modern; as Candida Moss and Joel Baden observe, there is “a master narrative running throughout the Bible in which fertility is a sign of divine blessing, procreation an obligation, and infertility a sign of divine judgment and moral failure,” all especially true for women.¹⁴⁸ At the same time, Moss and Baden’s broader goal is to show that this “master narrative” is far from uniform or universal. After all, the Bible “recognizes that there are, within the class of women, individuals who do not have children. This is clear enough from the mere presence in the text of such women, and prominent ones: Dinah, Miriam, Deborah.”¹⁴⁹ Tamber-Rosenau’s point is thus an insightful one: if Miriam and Deborah can be childless and yet not marked by the text as other than wholly women, why should we impose the category of liminality upon them?

Thus, Anat is not a “liminal woman”—but she is a sexually unavailable one. In contrast, we have the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD, which is predicated on the woman being an object of sexual attraction. No wonder, then, that the metaphor was not seen as applying to her. As someone outside this metaphor’s semantic range, and therefore impossible to reduce metaphorically to food, she could follow a different

145 “As perpetual *btlt* she is suspended in the liminality of adolescence, where male and female social roles have not yet been fully differentiated. This lack of complete gender separation is expressed mythologically by a ‘confusion of categories,’ the absence of a boundary between male and female spheres of activity” (Day, “Anat: Ugarit’s ‘Mistress of Animals,’” 183).

146 To be clear, Anat was not a real woman; therefore, psychoanalytic explanations like that of Walls are unsatisfying. To quote Kelly Murphy, “these texts were written by males who were probably far less concerned with representing ‘feminine rage’ or critiquing ‘repressive androcentric social and gender ideology’” (“Myth, Reality, and the Goddess Anat,” 538).

147 Tamber-Rosenau, *Women in Drag*, 24.

148 Candida Moss and Joel Baden, *Reconceiving Infertility*, 14.

149 *Ibid.*, 90.

set of norms—the norms of the wild huntress—without needing to be rewarded with a “just punishment.”¹⁵⁰

(f) Jezebel: Conclusions and Insights from Blending

“Do women now go hunting?” Can women be devourers instead of being food? The answer, we have seen, is “no”—or at least, “no, they ought not.” Jezebel goes hunting metaphorically, and in turn she becomes the metaphorically hunted. Anat goes hunting, but as a *batulatu*, she is exempt from being contemplated as metaphorical food. This distinction both illuminates and complicates the metaphorical map of WOMAN IS FOOD. In the terms of formal logic, we have seen three forms of the statement:

	<i>Statement</i>	<i>Example</i>
Original (presumed true)	All <i>women</i> are <i>food objects</i> .	Jezebel, a woman, becomes food.
Negation (necessarily false)	There is a <i>woman</i> who is not a <i>food-object</i> .	Jezebel, a woman, takes the role of food-procurer. (Ultimately negated.)
Contrapositive (necessarily true)	If someone is not a <i>food-object</i> , then they are not a <i>woman</i> .	Anat is not food, therefore is not a woman.

By exploring these three statements—two true and one false—we have illuminated the domains of each term. “Woman” refers to a woman who is available for sexual advances, not merely any female. Being “food” refers to participating in the three-stage process of objectification, fragmentation, and annihilation—and specifically participating as the patient (i.e., grammatical object) of these stages, instead of the agent who is feeding.

We have also explored the ways that metaphors can shape narrative in extended, nonlinguistic form. In particular, we have seen an unconventional literary manifestation of the concept of conceptual blending, as pioneered by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner in *The Way We Think*.¹⁵¹ In conceptual blending, a metaphor does not merely substitute one concept for another; it creates a blended space where some, but not all, features of both concepts coexist. For instance, one might map the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD as shown in Figure 5.2.

150 Although this work lacks the space to explore it fully, an intriguing inverse to this situation may occur in the Sumerian Descent of Inanna. Inanna is, of course, not a virgin goddess in any sense of the word. When she descends into the underworld, overstepping her natural boundaries, Inanna is first stripped nude, then “was turned into a corpse, A piece of rotting meat, And was hung from a hook on the wall” (Samuel Kramer and Diane Wolkstein, *Inanna, Queen of Heaven and Earth*, 60). Even the Queen of Heaven could be punished by literally turning her into meat, to remind her of her place. So Anat’s freedom from restrictions cannot be fully explained by her being a goddess; even goddesses had to obey “natural” limitations. Only her specific gender fully explains her freedom from consequences.

151 Compare their entire book, but particularly pp. 40–50.

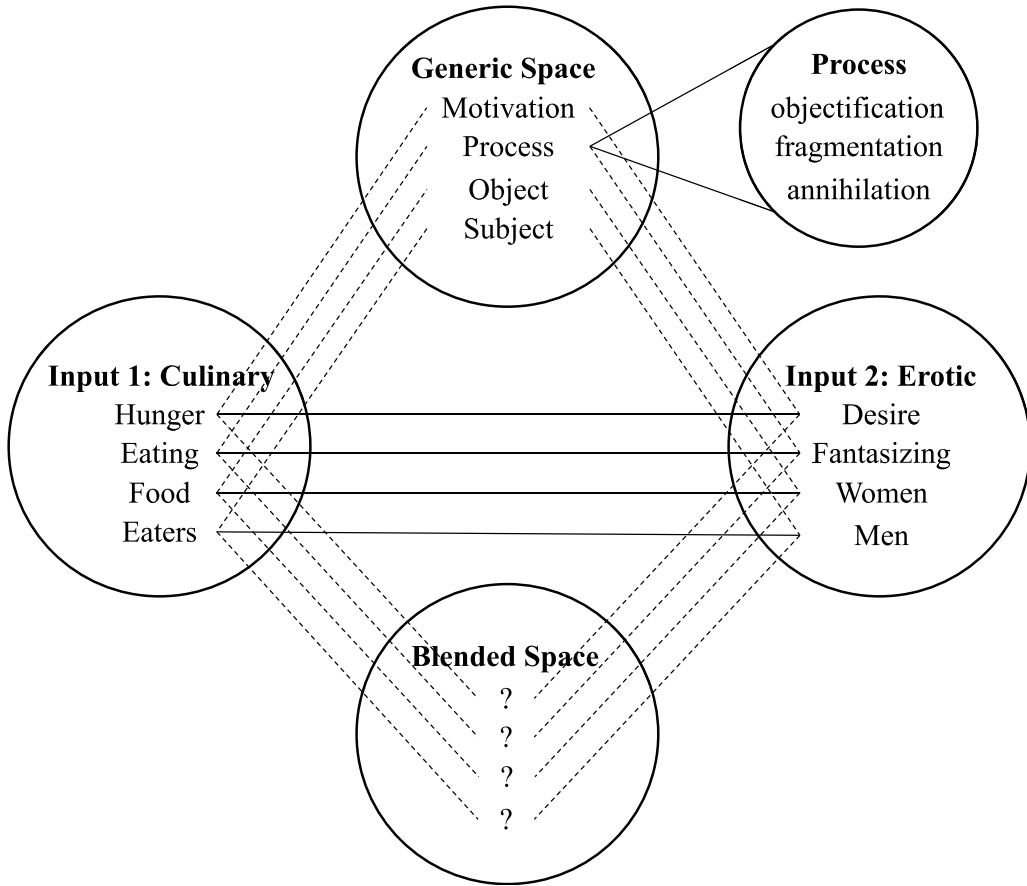


Figure 5.2 The blended space of WOMAN IS FOOD.

When we apply this map to KTU 1.23, the Feast of the Goodly Gods, we obtain a particular blended space where El’s sexual hunger manifests through preparing meat to be eaten—so the consumption is physical eating, and the food is literal poultry. On the other hand, when we apply it to Song of Songs and its “paradise of pomegranates,” the lover’s sexual hunger manifests through kissing and making love to a woman. But in the story of Jezebel’s death, we see a mix of the two types of manifestation (Figure 5.3).

Jezebel is both a literal woman and literal food. She is objectified and annihilated in a narrative sense, but she is also actually eaten by dogs. As for the generic space of “motivation,” there is neither overt lust nor overt hunger in the text; rather, the motivation is the reader (and Jehu)’s desire for justice. The blended space of the metaphor in this passage is therefore complex and dynamic, and the fact that it was evoked so skillfully within a broader narrative is a mark of admirable writing ability.

The author of the Jezebel narratives used the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD to make an implicit argument: Jezebel, as an example of the Bad Foreign Woman, reversed the natural order of things; the appropriate response to such unnatural behavior is the violent reassertion of traditional norms. In doing so, this author drew upon

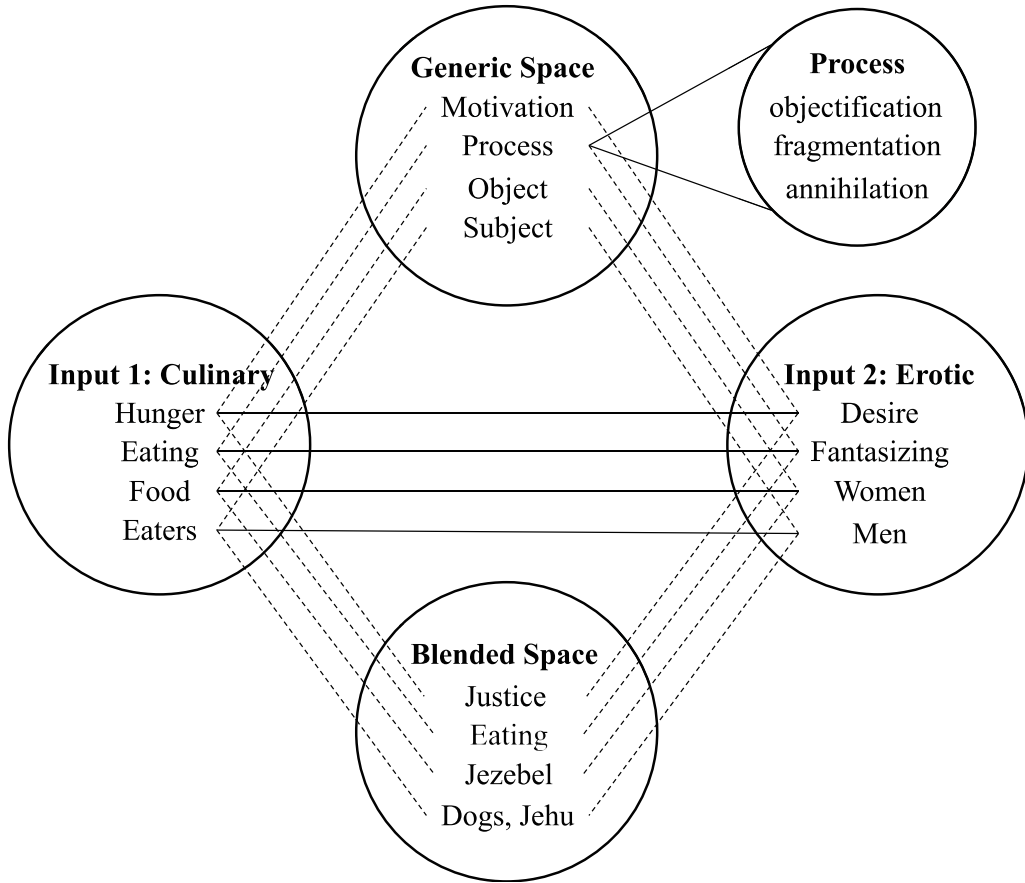


Figure 5.3 The blended space of WOMAN IS FOOD in Jezebel’s death.

ancient Near Eastern images of independent women that had previously manifested in the Ugaritic depiction of Anat, images that portrayed the extreme danger of a woman who hunted others instead of being consumed. But by transplanting these traits from Anat, who could engage in such behavior because of her non-sexual associations, to Jezebel, who was a sexually active woman, the author was able to link them to the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD—first in negated form, but ultimately in its original form. To paraphrase Proverbs 6:26, Jezebel was no simple loaf of bread, but a “man’s wife who went hunting for precious life.” Yet in the end, her fate and the bread loaf’s would be the same.

6 Clearing the Table

Anyone who has looked at premodern recipes knows how foreign they seem. For instance, our only true “cookbook” from the ancient Near East is the Yale Culinary Tablets, a collection of mostly meat dishes written in Akkadian. They include recipes like the following stew:

Elamite broth. Meat is used. Prepare water; add fat, dill (?), *šuhutinnû* [an allium], coriander (?), leek and garlic bound with blood, a corresponding amount of *kisimmu* [soured milk], and more garlic. The original name of this dish is *Zukanda*.¹

To the modern cook, this recipe contains many obstacles: What sort of meat, and how much, is used? Which modern onion most closely resembles Mesopotamian *šuhutinnû*? Where does one obtain fresh blood these days? Should the ingredients be seared or otherwise cooked before boiling? Educated guesses can answer some of these questions, but not all. What made perfect sense to the author of this ancient text is a cipher to us today.

This challenge was all the more intimidating when I decided to reproduce the *levivot* of 2 Samuel 13 (cf. Section 4.b.ii of this monograph). I had even less information—just the hints that pointed to a boiled, sweetened bread roll. I had to apply my own guesses about what ancient bread probably contained, relying on my hard-won knowledge about modern bread products and the stray clues about ingredients and techniques from ancient texts. The resulting bread product was undoubtedly a hybrid between ancient and modern, perhaps even unrecognizable to ancient taste buds. While the rolls were tasty, I would be irresponsibly conceited to claim that I had truly reproduced a historical Israelite dish.

In a way, the Bible is like a collection of recipes from the distant past. Its stories rely on external knowledge to fill in the gaps; they assume readers coming from a set of shared experiences and resources. And too often, feminist criticism arrives on scene to judge the flavor of the resulting dishes: Is a text patriarchal, or does it enable women’s flourishing? Should we recommend the

1 Jean Bottéro, *Textes culinaires*, 10.

recipe to others, or criticize its faulty flavors? Whether the sensitive food critic lauds or excoriates the dish, they implicitly set themselves up as the arbiter of its worth.

Such work is not without value. Would-be chefs need recipes they can rely upon, and would-be theologians build their beliefs from scriptural precedents. But in this monograph, I have proposed a third way: a valuation that interrogates the “recipe” for what it says about its creators, not how it tastes to us today. My goal is neither to laud the Bible as a model for women’s liberation, nor to criticize it as a tool of oppression. It has been used for both. Rather, as a scholar focused on the biblical text, more than its historical reception, my ultimate goal is to understand how it functioned rhetorically: to reconstruct its “pantry” of conceptual metaphors, for one, and to explore how they functioned in each textual “recipe.”

Nor is this task purely intellectual and historical. Just as my knowledge of modern bread-making helped me unravel how the *levivot* might have functioned, so is the inverse true: an understanding of how ingredients worked in ancient recipes can provide a model and inspiration for modern cookery. Or, to return from the extended metaphor: analyzing the functioning of biblical metaphors and how they influenced narrative structures can suggest new possibilities for how metaphors function in the narratives of today.

I began this book with a simple claim: that three biblical narratives embodied the “felt truth”² of WOMAN IS FOOD. Within these three cases, I found ample evidence for its manifestation. But in the process, as a “forensic pathologist,” I have demonstrated the pervasive power of metaphor to shape the language, themes, and *muthos* of biblical narrative in ways that range from very overt to obscure and subtle. This power is “insidious” because it is cyclic: it shapes a narrative to reflect the readers’ presumed associations, but in the process, it reinforces those very associations.³ The sad tale of Tizkoret relies on her metaphorical depiction as food, but it also leaves the reader with a reinforced belief that women’s place *ought to be* as food—that, to quote Brad Embry, “only a female figure works to drive the narrative forward [by motivating male action].”⁴ Thus, for readers of the Bible, it is vital to unravel the metaphors within these narratives, to understand their workings and how they influence readings, in order to resist the lure of accepting metaphorical identification as commonsense reality.

This monograph has thus proposed two critical shifts: one feminist, and one methodological. Within the dialogue of feminist biblical criticism, I have suggested both a concrete mechanic—the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD—and a hermeneutic that steps away from the affective responses of rejection or embrace. But

2 Hines, “Rebaking the Pie,” 146.

3 To quote Paul Cho, “On the one hand, *muthos* contributes to the faithful representation of the world outside literature in literature. On the other, *muthos* submits the outside world to its filtering and organizing work and imposes a beginning, a middle, and an end onto a complex reality” (*Myth, History, and Metaphor*, 222).

4 Embry, “Narrative Loss,” 266.

equally important within academic dialogue is the examination of realized metaphor as a bridge to connect the powerful observations of Conceptual Metaphor Theory with the narrative texts found throughout the Bible. In this concluding chapter, I will revisit my case studies, then step back to look at the implications and potentials of realized metaphors. I conclude with some thoughts about the connections between the fictional women of the Bible and the very real women experiencing violence today.

(a) Reevaluating the Case Studies

This monograph has examined the portrayal of woman as food through a variety of comparisons, from pop songs to Ricoeur, but always returning to the biblical text as its touchstone. The three stories under examination, each from a different portion of the Deuteronomistic History, reveal different facets of that portrayal.

Judges 19 contains the most clear-cut depiction of Carol Adams' three-step model of consumption, in which a woman is metaphorically objectified, fragmented, and annihilated. Its victim, whom I name Tizkoret, is an "absent referent"—an entity distanced from her personhood by language that emphasizes her value to others. Even as she undergoes this process, her husband the Levite engages in feasting and butchery that hint at the broader underlying metaphor. This text thus illustrates how a realized narrative metaphor surfaces through thematic textual cues that point toward its broader metaphoric claims. In order to emphasize the timelessness of Adams' process, I have interwoven the biblical narrative with a modern comic-book narrative of another slaughtered and dismembered woman. This extended comparison clarifies Adams' key elements, and it underlines the fact that the metaphoric associations that make Tizkoret's death narratively effective are present not just in the Bible but up to the present day.

2 Samuel 13 centers on Tamar—a woman who, unlike Tizkoret, has a voice and a name and a stake in her own violation. The text is therefore more emotionally complex and less easy to accuse of commodifying its victim. For that reason, I have examined it through Ricoeur's framework of metaphor as "seeing as," and through his key concepts of *muthos* and *mimêsis*, which together serve to elevate literary texts into something that both reflects and comments on reality. As with Tizkoret, actual food and eating underscore the realized narrative metaphor; indeed, Tamar is compared to the very bread rolls she prepares, diminished to a consumable object by the lascivious viewpoint of her brother. This viewpoint, through which we can understand how Amnon *sees* Tamar *as* erotic food, is reflected in the narrator's voice, the evocative term *levivot*, and a series of allusions to Song of Songs—but not in Tamar's verbal interruptions, which provide clarifying *mimêsis* of Amnon's self-deceiving folly.

2 Kings 9, unlike the other stories, depicts a woman who literally is eaten, albeit by dogs. However, earlier in Kings, Queen Jezebel enters the scene as an apparent exception to the rule: a woman who commands and consumes. Indeed, in the

tale of Naboth, her actions parallel those of the goddess Anat. Yet even Jezebel faces ultimate objectification, fragmentation, and consumption in a metaphorical (as well as literal) sense. The story of her death specifically sets up a subtle metaphor of Jezebel as a vineyard to be torn down, which one Syriac translation amplifies with its own word choices. Moreover, as in the other two texts, themes of food and feasting are replete in her narratives, cueing the reader to the metaphors that shape those narratives. As an “evil” character, Jezebel has rarely been discussed among the female victims of violence in the Bible, but my analysis shows that she receives the same narrative treatment; indeed, her treatment is designed to elicit pleasure in the reader by giving Jezebel her “just desserts” and reiterating her status as consumable.

When brought together, these three narratives demonstrate numerous similarities—not the sort of similarities of syntax and style that would signal shared authorship to a historical-critical examination, but similarities in narrative details and metaphorical associations that demonstrate the authors *thinking about gender* along similar lines. These similarities include the presence of food or feasting as a major narrative element, often described with unusual detail; the sexualization and objectification of their woman victims, frequently relying on innuendo and double entendre; and the broader narrative subsuming of female suffering to the male actions that it inspires. These similarities are clues that point toward their shared metaphorical basis, their shared *muthos*.

The fact that all three of these stories are contained within the Deuteronomistic History is largely coincidental to my selection; less coincidental is the fact that they are all indisputably narrative, rather than poetic, and have few of the overt linguistic metaphors on which most previous metaphor studies have focused. To understand these three distinct yet connected stories, the scope of metaphor studies must be broadened beyond its traditional focuses—for in all three of them, the realization of WOMAN IS FOOD occurs both in a symbolic, non-literal sense, as well as in literal scenes of eating and food preparation.

Thus, while I have illuminated previously unexplored aspects of my three texts, this work’s broader contribution to the field goes beyond a fresh textual analysis of three much-studied passages. It is to this broader contribution—that of metaphors realized in biblical narrative—that I now turn.

(b) The Future of the Realized Metaphor

I am not the first to coin the phrase “narratively realized metaphor,” but to my knowledge, the term has yet to be introduced to the field of biblical studies. As my second chapter discussed with numerous examples, its potential for application to biblical narratives is rich and largely untapped. The multipronged approach that I have developed in this monograph may thus serve as a potential blueprint for biblical metaphor studies that go beyond the simple cases where one word signifies another meaning.

In order to invite further exploration of realized metaphors in the Bible, I have distilled my approach into a series of questions that can guide exploration of a conceptual metaphor expressed in narrative.

Analyzing a Narratively Realized Metaphor: Questions to Ask

<i>Process</i>	<i>Example in this monograph</i>
Identification of a metaphor	
↳ Has the metaphor been identified in cognitive linguistic research?	→ Yes: WOMAN IS FOOD.
↳ Does the metaphor exist in linguistic form in the Bible and/or parallel literature?	→ Yes, for example, throughout Song of Songs.
↳ Are there multiple biblical narratives that seem to realize this metaphor?	→ Yes, for example, the three texts studied by this work.
Influence of the metaphor on structure	
↳ What is the metaphor's <i>muthos</i> ?	→ Objectification/fragmentation/consumption.
↳ Can this <i>muthos</i> be matched to stages of the narrative text?	→ Yes (cf. individual chapters).
↳ Are there "exceptions that prove the rule," that is, counterexamples that reinforce the <i>muthos</i> ?	→ Yes: Tamar's vocal resistance; Jezebel's initially unchecked predatory actions.
Influence of the metaphor on content	
↳ Are there instances of unusual/excessive narrative detail that contribute to the <i>muthos</i> ?	→ Yes, for example, Tamar's culinary preparations or Tizkoret's dismemberment.
↳ Does the metaphor's source domain appear as an element of the narrative?	→ Yes—eating/feasting/food are prominent.
↳ Are there "double entendres" that connect philologically to the metaphor's source and/or target?	→ Yes, for example, Jezebel's body being trampled (like grapes), or Tizkoret engaging in זָנָה (like a prostitute).
Further implications	
↳ Can this metaphor be identified in modern or other non-ANE contexts?	→ Yes; cf. Carol Adams' many examples.
↳ What cultural/physiological/anthropological elements make this metaphor "make sense"?	→ Woman as object (not subject); sexual desire as physiologically akin to hunger.
↳ What are the consequences of this metaphor for marginalized groups?	→ Portrays women as consumable, thus expendable; normalizes violence against women; imposes assumptions of heterosexuality.

These questions are not a checklist but an invitation to analysis. Not every question in this chart would need to be answered affirmatively for a narratively realized metaphor to be present, but each "yes" increases the odds that one can be identified. The fact that the metaphor WOMAN IS FOOD provides such ample evidence has made it an excellent prototype for this method; however, I have no doubt that there are numerous other biblical passages and metaphors that would benefit from its application. The best extant example that I am aware of is Cho's excellent discussion of the Sea Myth throughout the Hebrew Bible.⁵

5 Cho, *Myth, History, and Metaphor*.

I particularly want to highlight the “further implications” section of my chart, as it addresses questions that are often considered tangential to “proper” biblical scholarship. Metaphor can be embodied in narrative, in dialogue, in plot itself, and the conceptual metaphors that shape these texts are often precisely those “dead” metaphors that remain invisible to interpreters because of their familiarity. Yet even a dead metaphor is not an innocent metaphor. Our assumptions about how the text’s *muthos* ought to play out are shaped by the metaphors that it realizes, and those metaphors reflect views—whether about gender, theology, or human nature—that modern readers might not accept so easily, were they overt. Only by bringing these metaphors into the light can we examine them and ask whether the text’s metaphorical underpinnings match our own theoretical assumptions.

Thus, the approach of this monograph could be applied more broadly to other biblical texts. To start, my passages are hardly the only ones to combine the themes of gender and food in narrative; one may cite Eve in the garden, the baking widow of Zarephath, the feasts of Esther, even the entire book of Ruth. Having established that the Bible does elsewhere depict women as food, scholarly inquiry into these passages would no doubt bear fruit. Beyond this specific metaphor, though, the technique of analyzing realized metaphors in narrative has a vast array of potential applications. One need only skim through Lakoff and Johnson’s array of conceptual metaphors to see the breadth of possibilities. Back in Section 2.b, I gave some examples of biblical realized metaphors, such as applying FAITHFUL BEHAVIOR IS A JOURNEY as a lens on Jonah’s travels. Other possibilities are too numerous to count; as one example that goes back to issues of gender, if GOD IS A SHEPHERD (cf. Ps 23:1, 28:9, 80:1, etc.), then how might that conceptual metaphor influence our reading of Rachel, first introduced as a shepherdess (Gen 29:9)? Clearly there remains much to explore.

In addition, the focus of this monograph has largely been limited to the Hebrew Bible. Yet, as my initial discussion demonstrated, WOMAN IS FOOD is a conceptual metaphor that permeated the ancient Near East more broadly. How might this metaphor influence our understanding of Lamashtu, the Mesopotamian demoness who is “hungry like the wolf”? What about the Mesopotamian tale of Nergal and Ereshkigal, in which Ereshkigal, queen of the Netherworld, finds the god Nergal unwilling to give her a portion of food? Or Tiamat, the chaos goddess in the *Enuma Elish*, whose corpse is split by Marduk “like a fish for drying” (*kīma nūn mašṭê*, IV.137)? Likewise, though I have spent some space analyzing the Levantine goddess Anat, there is undoubtedly work still to be done on her complex character.

The innovation of this monograph largely consisted of bringing an unexplored element of cognitive linguistics into biblical studies. However, its implications go beyond the biblical world and affect the broader field of metaphor studies. As a monograph on a narratively realized metaphor, it joins a very small field, and one that has rarely researched texts earlier than Shakespeare. This work thus demonstrates the potential of expanding Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) into the study of ancient literature more broadly, and its blueprint for detecting and analyzing realized metaphors, above, could easily be adapted for the study of more modern works. Indeed, despite the scattered application of CMT to the narratives

of literary works, I am aware of few attempts to systematize the method of detecting where and how a conceptual metaphor is influencing a story's narrative. This systematization is a significant source of potential further study in CMT.

I also wish to foreground one fertile direction that this monograph largely left unexplored. For reasons of simplicity, I have largely treated gender as a binary and focused on normative cultural codes that automatically place men as the subject (the eater) and women as the object (the eaten). Yet both of these assumptions are oversimplifications. To return to an earlier quote by Meredith, if a man consumes a woman, then she has penetrated him; “the traditional invasive structures of heteronormative sex have been momentarily reversed.”⁶ Conversely, “heteronormative sex” could be seen as a woman consuming a man, ingesting his member—hence the pervasive folklore of the *vagina dentata*. To what extent does this inversion influence or resist imagery of the consumed woman? And to what extent are trans and nonbinary people—too often invisible in historical studies—identified with either side of the eater/eaten exchange? Moreover, when we focus on women subjected to violence, like all the central women of this monograph, are we dismissing alternate models of biblical womanhood, such as Jael, who both provided food and executed penetrative violence against a man?⁷

A related concern has been foregrounded by more than one reader of my manuscript: What about the men? Women are hardly the only people dismembered or consumed in ancient texts. For instance, within the Hebrew Bible, Saul's body was beheaded and stripped (1 Sam 31:9), and his dead sons' bodies were left out to be consumed by animals, though his *pilegesh* Rizpah prevented actual consumption (2 Sam 21:10). Outside the Bible, there are numerous myths of dismemberment, such as the Indo-European myths examined by Bruce Lincoln, in which “a primordial being is killed and dismembered, and from his body the cosmos is fashioned.”⁸ A similar story, in the sphere of biblical writers, was the dismemberment of Osiris by his brother Set. My response to these examples is twofold. First, in stories like that of Saul and his sons, the threat of dismemberment and consumption may precisely have been a threat of feminization, of enacting the *muthos* of consumption that normally objectified women.⁹ Second, while dismemberment is a key feature of many myths about male figures, these myths generally avoid the stages of objectification and consumption that mark Adams' cycle of women-as-meat. That is, the men are powerful subjects before

6 Meredith, “‘Eating Sex,’” 352.

7 Cf. Tamber-Rosenau, *Women in Drag*, 23–26, for discussion of the problematic term “liminal” for these warrior women.

8 Bruce Lincoln, “The Indo-European Myth of Creation,” 128. See also his book on the subject, *Myth, Cosmos, and Society*.

9 I am not the first to suggest that the Bible has a tendency toward “unmanning Saul in favor of David's masculinity” (Kelly Murphy, “Masculinity, Moral Agency, and Memory,” 194). See in particular Marcel Măcelaru, “Saul in the Company of Men.” Also worth noting is the “dismemberment of Saul's house” (Cynthia Chapman, private correspondence)—in which the elimination of women's power, as represented by maternal houses, played a crucial role. Cf. Chapman, *The House of the Mother*, 166–76.

they are dismembered, and the result of their dismemberment is some kind of resurrection or creation. Rather than fueling the narratives of primary actors, they *are* the primary actors. Osiris may have been chopped into pieces, but “parts of his body were explicitly equated with the nomes of Egypt . . . so that Osiris was thus identified with the whole of Egypt.”¹⁰ In short, while the dismemberment of mythic men is a subject worthy of further investigation, it is quite distinct from the focus of this monograph.

(c) **Dead Metaphors, Living Women**

In this final section, I conclude on a question of relevance: How does the analysis of these “texts of terror” connect to the terror still inflicted upon women today? In her 1993 Nobel Lecture, Toni Morrison addressed this question with a metaphor that will appear very familiar to readers of this monograph:

Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge. . . . There is and will be more seductive, mutant language designed to throttle women, to pack their throats like paté-producing geese with their own unsayable, transgressive words.¹¹

This is a rich metaphor that deserves some unraveling. Women are like “paté-producing geese” in that they are metaphorically edible, objects destined to be butchered and consumed. But what makes these geese particularly edible is their foie gras—the engorged livers produced by their overconsumption of “unsayable, transgressive words.” It is the muffling of women, their forced consumption of oppressive language and their silenced speech, that makes them so delectable. In short, Morrison’s comment is a metaphor about metaphors, and about their power to transform living women into aliment through control of what ideas they imbibe and what ideas they can express.

Morrison was not speaking of ancient scripture. Rape and organized gang rape are still a reality for many women worldwide, femicide (the gender-motivated killing of women and girls) is a global epidemic,¹² and instances of the metaphorical reduction of women to food litter popular culture and writing.¹³ Amidst this barrage of physical and emotional violence, why turn to texts of our past to find more of the same? And even if we come to the not-so-surprising conclusion that biblical authors had a patriarchal and even misogynistic worldview, what does this observation gain us? Methodological advances in metaphor theory are crucial, but may seem distant from real-world concerns.

10 Gwyn Griffith, “Osiris,” 618.

11 Toni Morrison, “Nobel Lecture,” 1993.

12 See the UN’s latest report on “Gender-related killings of women and girls (femicide/feminicide).”

13 As one example among many, cf. L.V. Anderson, “Hey Food Writers, Stop Comparing Food to Women.”

In a recent article, Natalia Andrievskikh examined two bestseller women's memoirs of the twenty-first century: *Eat, Pray, Love* and *Julie and Julia*. In both books, she finds an "affinity between sex and food,"¹⁴ with sentences like "sausages of every imaginable size, color and derivation are stuffed like ladies' legs into provocative stockings, swinging from the ceiling of the butcher shops" and "the mussels were plump and pink and ruffled as tiny vulvas."¹⁵ Andrievskikh does not specifically note that all of her examples place *women* in the role of food, despite their heterosexual female narrator-authors. So unless we want to speculate that the authors' "lust" for food conceals a passion for other women, we must conclude that the underlying conceptual metaphor of WOMAN IS FOOD is, in some sense, "dead" for them. That is, while they may evoke the metaphor with fresh linguistic manifestations like mussels as vulvas, the association is not meant to imply that they wish to devour women like mussels.

So, too, the fact that the biblical authors utilized metaphors of women as food does not make them all rapists and abusers. The authors of these three texts found it expedient to portray the women in them using a familiar set of imagery and associations; that does not imply that they mistreated the real women in their own lives, or intended to advocate for such mistreatment. Indeed, they may have been altogether unaware of the dehumanizing implications of portraying certain people as consumable.

Yet the fact that a metaphor is "dead" does not diminish its power. To return to the quote by Goatley that I invoked in my introduction, "What is relatively powerless qua metaphor (inactive or dead)—the literal or the conventionally metaphorical—becomes all the more powerful ideologically through its hidden workings."¹⁶ Just like *Eat, Pray, Love* and *Julie and Julia*, the Bible remains today a source of interest and inspiration for countless readers across the globe, and its dead metaphors, the ones that undergird the *muthos* of its narrative, are "all the more powerful ideologically" for their invisibility. Tizkoret, Tamar, and Jezebel may be characters in an ancient book, but the same rhetorical strategies used to marginalize them are still in operation, as Morrison so pointedly noted. If "oppressive language . . . is violence," then the only way to stop gendered violence is by transforming gendered language, building metaphors that enable flourishing instead of oppression.

Thus, while this book is directed at the academic reader, my heartfelt hope is that it will ultimately influence the understanding of these texts for all readers. The more that we can consciously trace the consumability of women in the biblical narrative, the more power we have to find—and fight—that consumability today. The Bible may be a recipe from the distant past, saturated with the assumptions and metaphorical associations of its time, but it still dictates the preparation of spiritual food for billions. Ours is the choice to feed them poisoned rhetoric or true nourishment.

14 Natalia Andrievskikh, "Food Symbolism, Sexuality, and Gender Identity," 143.

15 Ibid.

16 Goatly, *Washing the Brain*, 29.

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