LIBERATING FEMALE SCAPEGOATS

Mimetic Theory, Feminist Theory, and the Biblical Representation of Gendered Violence and Victimhood

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STATEMENT OF SOURCES

This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations in this dissertation are in keeping with the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Second Edition. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2014.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is concerned with girls' and women's experience of men's violence as a particular phenomenon apparent within the Bible, and one that is 'hidden in plain sight' in the contemporary world. This study is especially concerned with the problem of biblical narratives that depict men's extreme victimisation of women, for, as feminist scholarship has found, these texts are dangerous and difficult to redeem in light of their capacity to proliferate and normalise men's enactment of violence against women. The following investigation offers an important response to these issues. It devises and implements an interpretive model that illuminates how biblical narratives of persecuted women may be redeemed for inherent positive value and relevance to the contemporary issue of gendered violence. Specifically, this investigation shows how the biblical witness to women's victimhood may be perceived as demystifying and subsequently undermining enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence.

The interpretive model put forward in this dissertation is constructed from concepts drawn from René Girard's mimetic theory, and feminist theory of sexual difference as informed by scholars such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. These two theoretical frameworks are shown to provide analytical tools that 1) combine to enable detailed examination of the biblical representation of gendered violence; and 2) determine how the representation of women's victimhood exposes and disrupts patterns and processes of violence that are characteristic of androcentric contexts.

This interpretive model is applied to two biblical narratives depicting men's extreme victimisation of women: Jephthah's daughter of Judges 11 and the unnamed woman of Judges 19. Analysis establishes that these texts, contrary to other comparable

contemporaneous mythology, are salient in their witness to men's enactment of violence against women. In particular, the two victims within these narratives become perceptible as distinctive, potent female scapegoats with liberatory value as they demystify and disrupt clandestine patterns of gendered victimisation so human experience might work free from them.

This study importantly contributes to biblical scholarship as it brings forward new ways of reading dangerous texts that counteract their capacity to proliferate violence against women. Significantly, this dissertation provisions women and men with an alternate interpretive model that enables them to encounter violent biblical content as redeemable and relevant to women's experience, and to ameliorating the contemporary global issue of pervasive male-performed violence against girls and women.

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is concerned with girls' and women's experience of men's violence as a phenomenon evident within the Bible and the contemporary world.[1] According to the vast wealth of literature, women's victimisation by men is a distinctive and prolific form of violence.[2] It has been described as a phenomenon "so prevalent that it binds women together across every region and tradition" and "so pervasive that many women expect violence to be part of their lives and are surprised when it is not".[3] Like many women who come to research in this area, I do so with personal experience of this form of violence, and with awareness that this issue requires persistent illumination. Though it has been accorded some social recognition in recent times, and most societies outwardly proscribe it, men's violence against women endures nevertheless in association with entrenched social structures and dynamics that mystify and obscure it.[4] These dynamics include particularly insidious modes of obscuration. Many women, for example, become so normalised to

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[1] In this dissertation, the term 'violence' is understood as the adverse performance of power and control that results in the dehumanisation, harm, and/or destruction of others. Violence is perceived as capable of taking *physical* and *psychological* forms, *and structural* form when social systems hinder and deny people their rights to physical and mental integrity and wellbeing. Enactments and experiences of violence are also understood as significantly influenced by gendered socialisation that characteristically accords more social power and control to men than women. Thus, adverse power and control, and performances of violence, are experienced along gendered lines. See also footnote 6 below. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Introduction - Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 3; Nancy R. Bowen, "Women, Violence, and the Bible," in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World*, ed. Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 187; Alan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 4-5, 75.

[2] See for example the extensive reports by UNICEF and Innocenti Research Centre, "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls," *Innocenti Digest* 6 (2000), https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/213-domestic-violence-against-women-and-girls.html; United Nations, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (New York: United Nations, 2015): 139-161, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads /worldswomen2015_report.pdf; World Health Organization, *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005), https://www.who.int /gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/summary_report/summary_report_English2.pdf; John Archer, ed., *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994).

[3] World Council of Churches, *Living Letters: A Report of Visits to the Churches during the Ecumenical Decade – Churches in Solidarity with Women* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), 23.

[4] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 2.

maltreatment that they do not recognise it as violence. If they do, it is common for them to internalise these experiences and blame themselves for their occurrence. Many women simply stay silent about their victimisation as they perceive efforts to seek redress will be detrimental and futile.[5]

This form of gendered violence[6] is consequently a phenomenon that is "hidden in plain sight".[7] My own personal experiences of this dichotomy, of the explicit enactment and obscuration of men's violence, has led to my focus upon gendered violence. It has led to the formation of a dissertation anchored upon the belief that it is vital to theorise new lenses capable of interrogating, deconstructing, and demystifying this violence. For disabling the modes through which this violence is obscured is crucial to positively transforming the social constructs that enable it to continue.

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[5] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.

[6] Underlying this dissertation's focus on gender, violence, and the Bible, and discussed at length in later chapters, is the understanding of gender as generally perceived by contemporary feminist theory. This perspective entails conceptualisation that the terms *male* and *female* denote the differentiation of the human species according to biological reproductive/sex differences. Furthermore, this biological difference is intertwined with socially constructed *gender* markers, which differentiate males and females according to dualistic/binary identity categories and roles that define what it is to be a *man* and *masculine*, or a *woman* and *feminine*. These categories and roles, which gender *males* and *females* divergently as *men* and *women* according to a system of contrasting binary qualities, are not biologically determined, but the learnt products of socio-political contexts. This predominant gender socialisation is also perceived in French feminist theory as denying authentic subject formation for females/women, as they have been defined as the 'other' to males/men. Subsequently this gender socialisation is also perceived as generative of unequal power relationships between the sexes. This is because the socio-political context has been typically male-centred, and this dominant worldview has led to the valuing and privileging of *males*/*men*/*masculinity*, over *females*/*women*/*femininity*. This gender socialisation is also understood as intrinsic to the prevalence of male-performed violence, as violent performance is a credited characteristic of dominant masculinity. Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9; Kirk-Duggan, "Introduction," 2-3; Juliet Mitchell, *Women: The Longest Revolution: Essays in Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago, 1984), 241-2; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; London: Vintage Books, 2011), 6; Luce Irigaray, "The Question of the Other (Democracy Begins Between Two)," in *French Women Philosophers: A Contemporary Reader*, ed. Christina Howells (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 82-91, ProQuest Ebook Central; Paul Kivel, *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* (Minnesota: Hazelden, 1992), 71.

[7] Simon Springer and Philippe Le Billon, "Violence and Space: An Introduction to the Geographies of Violence," *Political Geography* 52 (2016): 2, doi.10.1016/j.polgeo.2016.03.003.

This dissertation is also concerned with the Bible, because this male-centred/androcentric[8] text "is not a safe place for women".[9] As feminist scholarship in particular has established, the Bible has been, and continues to be, a highly problematic and dangerous collection of texts in terms of perpetuating men's violence against women. This is not to deny that the Bible has substantial positive reach for many and includes content that promotes conceptualising healthy relationships between men and women as equals.[10] However, the Bible's significantly androcentric textual character also comprises copious material conducive to supporting ideologies of men's superiority and power over women. Furthermore, this androcentricity has been pervasively perpetuated to the detriment of women by historically male-dominated interpretation and dissemination of biblical content.[11]

The interpretive history of Genesis 2-3 within Christianity stands as a significant case in point. Interpretation of these biblical passages as signifying the creation of woman *after* man, *from* man, and *for* man, who also causes man's 'Fall' and evil to enter the world, have served to ingrain into the social consciousness of Western society the myth that women's subordinate location in relation to men is intrinsic to the divine/natural order.[12] These texts, along with numerous others that locate women's bodies, labour, sexuality, and

[8] Derived from Greek, the term 'androcentricity' literally denotes 'male-centredness'.
[9] Bowen, "Women," 187.
[10] Gen 1:27, for example, proposes males and females are equal as both are created in the image of God. Paul also upholds ideas of equality in Gal 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
[11] Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From A Feminist Perspective* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Eryl W. Davies, *The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 2002).
[12] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 3-35; Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon,1985), 45; Jack Holland, *A Brief History of Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice* (London: Robinson, 2018), 278-279; Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 157; Paul Gilbert, "Male Violence: Towards and Integration," in *Male Violence*, ed. John Archer (London: Routledge, 1994), 373-375.

procreative capacity under the ownership and control of fathers and husbands[13] have been interpreted and disseminated in ways that have reinscribed men's power over women as normative. This includes expectations of women's obedience to men, and men's subsequent entitlement to perform violence upon women as part of the preserve of the natural order.[14] Extending beyond contexts of faith, such biblical foundations have undergirded the socially entrenched belief that men's supremacy over women is inherent and right. As Carol Bohn has expressed: "This belief pervades the whole of our social structure and provides the underpinnings of our human relationships."[15]

In short, the cultural power of biblical texts to inform and validate harmful gender ideologies and contemporary discourses, both within and beyond faith communities, is unmistakable.[16] Androcentric biblical texts and interpretation have served to reinforce the devaluation of girls and women, to condition them to injurious gender formation that renders them vulnerable to violence, and to normalise this violence against them. Consequently, biblical content and its interpretation has contributed to women's

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[13] See for example: Ex 21:4, 7-9; Lev 21:9; Num 30:3-16; Deut 22:20-28; 1 Cor. 14:33-35; Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet 3:1-7.

[14] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 31-41; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Towards a Feminist Theology* (London: SCM, 1983), 94-97. Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 1-21, 42, 172-175; Pamela J. Milne, "Feminist Interpretations of the Bible: Then and Now," *Bible Review* 8, no. 5 (1992): 26-27; Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 67; Elisabeth Gössmann, "The Construction of Women's Difference in the Christian Theological Tradition," in *The Special Nature of Women?* ed. Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1991), 50-59.

[15] Carole R. Bohn, "Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 108.

[16] For contemporary, secular expressions of this cultural power of the Bible see Katie B. Edwards, *Admen and Eve: The Bible in Contemporary Advertising* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012); and the television series created by Bruce Miller, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Los Angeles: Hulu, 2016), based on the novel by Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1985). For further discussion on these texts and the intersection of the Bible and gender discourses, see respectively Caroline Blyth, "Lost in the 'Post': Rape Culture and Postfeminism in Admen and Eve," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 10, no. 2 (2014): 1-10, https://novaojs.newcastle.edu.au/ojsbct/index.php/bct/article/view/598; and Margaret Atwood, "Margaret Atwood on What 'The Handmaid's Tale' Means in the Age of Trump," *The New York Times* 10 (2017), https://www.spps.org/cms/lib/MN01910242/Centricity/Domain/842/Margaret%20Atwood%20The%20New%20York%20Times.pdf.

experiences of men's violence, and the mystification and obscuration of these experiences.[17] Put simply, the Bible's influence upon Western culture and the sustaining of androcentric consciousness and social structures, makes it a primary instrument that has served to subjugate women.[18]

In keeping with the literature and testimony of other women,[19] I know well the capacity of biblical content to serve injurious formation that intersects with girls' and women's vulnerability to violence. Biblical interpretation disseminated within the Catholic context I grew up in realised problematic personal formation through a perplexing 'double-speak' concerning the status of girls and women. Purportedly girls and women were equally valued and loved by God, but my experience of ecclesial life had clearly located us as secondary. Prohibited from enacting my earnest desire to serve on the altar alongside my brother and male cousins, barred from sharing in their experiences and privileges in the liturgical setting because of my femaleness, is one example of my systematic enculturation to exclusion and subsidiary status. Further socialisation to biblical concepts that I was 'fallen' and 'flawed' and must endeavour to be 'good', and to be good was to be compliant and self-giving, became directly dangerous teachings, for they did not resource me with the

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[17] Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 4-5; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 100-101, 113; J. Cheryl Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 65-90; Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 44-97.

[18] Milne, "Feminist Interpretations of the Bible," 38.

[19] Sheila A. Redmond, "Christian 'Virtues' and Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 70-88; Rita Nakashima Brock, "And a Little Child Will Lead Us," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 42-61; Joanne Carlson Brown and Rebecca Parker, "For God So Loved the World?" in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 1-30; Bohn, "Dominion to Rule," 105-116; Radford Ruether, "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home," 31-41; Daly, *Beyond God the Father*; Stephanie Golden, *Slaying the Mermaid: Women and the Culture of Sacrifice* (New York: Three Rivers, 1998); Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 100-101, 113; Carole R. Fontaine, "The Abusive Bible: On the Use of Feminist Method in Pastoral Contexts," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Judith S. Antonelli, *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah* (London: Jason Aronson, 1995), xxx, xxxv; Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai*, 81-87.

self-esteem and circumspection to adequately protect myself against others who take advantage of innocent and altruistic natures. Like many women, I became acutely aware that men's interpretation of androcentric biblical texts frequently conditions women to reductive ways of being that are ill-conducive to healthy psychosocial development. What is more, such interpretations are typically relayed with little acknowledgement of girls' and women's particular vulnerability to exploitation and abuse within the wider social context.

This dissertation then, has arisen from an awareness of the ethical necessity to continually critique biblical narratives and their interpretations, so as to no longer be subject to their harmful androcentric ideology. This dissertation has also emerged from my postmodern onto-epistemology which understands 'truth' as contingent, fluid, and multiple, and that all texts and their meanings are contextual and co-constructed.[20] As such, biblical texts may be explored for other interpretive possibilities that provision women (and men) with alternate imaginings and positive ways of being in the world beyond the limitations and biases of androcentric interpretation.

This dissertation is especially concerned with investigating whether biblical narratives that depict men's extreme violence against women hold constructive value for contemporary women and men. As much feminist scholarship has found, biblical narratives of this type are deeply troubling, both in their preservation of detrimental masculine ideology, and in their potential to proliferate violence against women. As Caroline Blyth expresses: "any literary work that articulates the unjust treatment of women has the potential to act as an instrument of female subjugation, by perpetuating, validating, and legitimising patriarchal

[20] A.K.M. Adam, *What is Postmodern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995),18-19; Philip D. Kenneson, "Truth," in *Handbook of Postmodern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. A.K.M. Adam (St Louis: Chalice, 2000), 268-275. This is not a position undermined by accusations of 'relativism' and the criticism that *any* and *all* interpretive positions are valid; for it is a position contextualised within feminist liberation objectives to ascertain constructs of 'truth' and 'justice' oriented to mitigating oppression and fostering egalitarianism in society.

gender inequality and female oppression within the reader's own contemporary milieu."[21] Within feminist biblical scholarship such violent texts present a considerable challenge as to what to do with them in the face of their disturbing display of men's destruction of women - a challenge that is frequently compounded by divine silence and absence, which seems only to further justify the violence.[22] Narratives of this type remain confronting as they have proven highly resistant to interpretive efforts to redeem them for any inherent positive value for women.[23]

The findings of this dissertation, however, offer a response to feminist scholarship that has wrestled with such 'texts of terror'. This investigation ascertains how biblical narratives depicting violent males and persecuted females may be perceived as redeemable and highly relevant to the contemporary issue of gendered violence against women; for these male and female characters can be analysed for their representation of men's and women's distinctive experiences of violence and victimhood within androcentric contexts. Unquestionably the experiences of victimised biblical women share striking commonality with contemporary women's experiences of men's violence. Yet, as this investigation comes to show, when read through an interpretive lens that illuminates the biblical witness to gendered victimhood, these victims become more than a reflection of women's historical subjection to men's violence. They become discernible as relevant scapegoat figures with significant liberatory scope.

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[21] Caroline Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence: A Feminist Re-Reading of Dinah's Voicelessness in Genesis 34," *BibInt* 17, no. 5 (2009): 497, doi:10.1163/156851508X401150.
[22] Bowen, "Women," 189.
[23] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 2-3; J. Cheryl Exum, "The Ethics of Biblical Violence Against Women," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies, and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 248-271, ProQuest Ebook Central; Athalya Brenner, "Some Reflections on Violence Against Women and the Image of the Hebrew God: The Prophetic Books Revisited," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach and Ester Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2003), 79.

This liberatory scope is shown to lie in the capacity of these female scapegoat figures to stimulate a disruptive new knowledge within human consciousness that is oriented to curtailing the victimising structures inherent in androcentric societies. Notably counter to other world mythology that is identified as serving to mystify and conceal scapegoat victimhood within human consciousness, biblical texts of persecuted females are observed as overtly witnessing to the scapegoat location and victimisation of women within androcentric contexts. Female biblical victims subsequently become identifiable as comparatively distinctive characters who demystify and expose, via their explicit victimhood, the enduring, clandestine gendered patterns and processes of scapegoat violence that underlie androcentric contexts and shape women's experiences of men's violence.

As a result, it becomes possible to discern female biblical victims as figures who prompt readers to empathetic awareness of humanity's embroilment in violent scapegoat structures shaped by androcentricity's hierarchical consciousness that renders women naturally inferior to men and vulnerable to violence. Such awareness is liberating, for as these structures are demystified, they lose their subliminal quality and therefore the means by which they most effectively operate. In other words, these violent biblical narratives and their women victims may be perceived as liberatory insofar as they undermine the structures, that shape, mystify, obscure, and thereby sustain, women's victimhood in androcentric societies.

Project Overview

In order to investigate the potential for constructive readings of biblical texts of men's extreme violence against women, it was necessary to develop an interpretive lens capable of examining this violence. This dissertation subsequently theorises an interpretive model

appropriate to the task, which is comprised from analytical concepts drawn from René Girard's mimetic theory, and feminist theory of sexual difference as informed by scholars such as Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. These two theoretical domains are shown to be applicable interrelating conceptual partners. They provide analytical tools that combine to enable discerning patterns and processes of violence and victimhood that underly texts and contexts of persecution. Both domains are oriented to perceive how victims are made subject to violence, and how desire and agency is influenced in ways that shape their experience of victimhood. Furthermore, these two theoretical frameworks combine to investigate the degree to which texts and contexts of persecution *mystify* or *demystify* patterns and processes of violence.

Briefly, mimetic theory presents a framework for understanding the anthropological patterns and processes of human violence that subject victims to violence as scapegoats. Mimetic theory provides concepts whereby contexts and texts of persecution may be examined for their depiction of how imitated desires can become distorted, leading to rivalry and violence that escalates to a point of social crisis, which is finally alleviated via blaming and persecuting an innocent victim. Mimetic theory also facilitates determining the extent to which scapegoating is obscured within different mythologies that motivated and validated the persecution while simultaneously concealing the truth of the unjust nature of the expulsion or murder.[24]

Critically, Girard's mimetic theory highlights that numerous texts in the Bible witness to the truth of innocent victims, and thus these texts operate counter to the victim-concealing functions of other mythologies. As biblical narratives emphasise victimised figures, they varyingly expose the patterns and processes of human violence. Moreover, as biblical texts

[24] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).

expose these patterns and processes of scapegoating, they counteract the consciousness that otherwise generates, justifies, and obscures victimisation. As the truth of the innocent victim's expulsion or murder is laid bare, mythical/obscuring features lose their efficacy, and the 'scapegoat mechanism' as Girard calls it, is undermined. In this way, the Bible can be perceived as manifesting a liberatory dynamic that draws out the clandestine patterns and processes of human violence so human experience might move beyond them.[25]

As this dissertation will show, mimetic theory provides a valuable conceptual lens for analysing violent biblical texts. However, mimetic theory's tendency to universal conceptualisation of patterns and processes of violence has meant limited attention to their gendered construction, and therefore insufficient consideration of gendered experiences of violence.[26] Feminist theory of sexual difference,[27] then, provides a necessary qualifying lens. Analytical concepts drawn from this domain, namely *androcentricity*,[28] *androcentric language*,[29] and *androcentric power*,[30] emphasise that violence is performed and

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[25] Girard, *I See Satan*, 103-136.

[26] Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism: Critique and Appropriation," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture* 1, no. 1 (1994): 24-25.

[27] This sphere of feminism challenges the binary constructs that render females as the opposite, inferior 'other' to superior males. Furthermore, this sphere of feminism contends that genuine sexual difference may be realised through destabilising the dominant binary symbolic order and reimagining female and male subjectivities. As Luce Irigaray has expressed: "Women's exploitation is based upon sexual difference; its solution will only come about through sexual difference." *Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference*, trans. Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1993), 12.

[28] Feminist discourse highlights that societies are typically structured upon an androcentric worldview that situates dominant males as normative for humanity, and places men and their experience of maleness at the centre of meaning making. This worldview is contingent upon hierarchical, dualistic perspectives that employ binary opposites, such as male-female, good-evil, spirit-body, white-black, rich-poor, with the effect of privileging and empowering one pole of the binary in comparison to the other. This worldview subsequently results in the privileging, empowerment, and valuing of men (typically in Western society white, heterosexual, wealthy men), and the marginalisation and silencing of those women and men who are defined as 'non-normative'. This androcentric worldview produces unequal power distributions as it generates and sustains male-identified, male-dominated, and male-controlled social structures and institutions. Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 19n3.

[29] Androcentric societies are understood as employing dominant linguistic frameworks and systems for making meaning and ordering reality that are shaped by and sustain male-centredness, male norms, identity, and dominance. Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine," in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 68-85.

[30] As women and men are enculturated into an androcentric worldview, institutions, and linguistic contexts that value and elevate men above women, so they are socialised into societies that normalise men's power over women. Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 19n3; Irigaray, "Power of Discourse," 68-85.

experienced differently by women and men, as it is also significantly shaped in accordance with women and men's divergent gendered socialisation within androcentric societies. Consequently, also analysing biblical texts of persecution through this feminist lens facilitates investigating their representation of women's victimhood as distinctive from men's victimhood. This dissertation thus develops an interpretive model that combines analytical categories from mimetic and feminist theory in a way that has not been previously attempted, to examine the biblical witness to gendered violence and victimhood.

This interpretive model is applied to two narratives that are particularly confronting in their depiction of women's experience of victimhood, namely Jephthah's daughter of Judges 11:29-40 and the unnamed woman of Judges 19:1-30. These two narratives and characters were selected as highly pertinent to the investigative lines of this dissertation to ascertain whether such violent biblical texts may be perceived as redeemable and relevant with inherent positive value for women. These narratives afforded examination of diverse women's experiences of men's violence within the androcentric world of Judges. In Judges 11 an unmarried virgin daughter is slain by her father as a sacrifice. In Judges 19 a Levite's wife suffers fatal sexual and physical violence enacted by multiple men. Together these texts provided for enhanced exploration of the biblical witness to the complexities of women's victimhood within androcentric contexts. Subsequently, they enabled extensive application and evaluation of the capacity for concepts from mimetic and feminist theory to discern within this biblical witness, a disclosure of enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence.

Research Questions

Developing and applying this interpretive model has been conducted in relation to the following leading lines of inquiry:

- How do biblical texts represent the distinctive experiences of women victims of violence within androcentric contexts?
- How does an interpretive dialogical model of mimetic theory and feminist theory concepts illuminate enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence?
- In what ways does this interpretive model foreground the biblical witness to, and liberatory disclosure of, enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence that renders these violent narratives redeemable and relevant for contemporary readers?

The Rationale of the Study, Aims, and Purpose

As previously noted, this project has emerged from personal awareness of the injurious reach of androcentric biblical material and interpretation to reinforce hierarchical gender consciousness and the vulnerability of girls and women to devaluation and violence. This dissertation is consequently motivated by the want to investigate biblical narratives, especially highly problematic texts of persecuted women, beyond traditional androcentric lenses and readings. New readings might then be brought forward with the potential to counteract dangerous interpretations that preserve injurious androcentric ideology and associated structures of gendered violence. This project is important, as women (and men) continue to be subject to, and wrestle with, the destructive influence of androcentricity that is characteristic of the Bible, religious institutions, society, and their interrelationships.

In keeping with this rationale, three overarching aims have directed this dissertation. Firstly, this dissertation sought to develop a model of reading biblical narratives comprising extreme victimisation of females that deconstructed these androcentric texts in ways that allowed women's gendered experiences of violence to become visible. Secondly, this project sought to illustrate that such narratives can be redeemed especially through their witness to gendered victimhood, when read through the combined dialogical lens of

mimetic and feminist theory. Thirdly and finally, this dissertation sought to show how female biblical victims, via this interpretive lens, can be perceived as manifesting significant liberatory potential through their demystification and undermining of enduring gendered patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. In light of the power of the Bible to socially influence gender ideologies and discourses, these aims have been founded upon the purpose of offering all people who encounter and wrestle with biblical texts of victimised women, within faith contexts and without, a way to positively engage them and their contemporary relevance to the problem of prolific gendered violence against girls and women.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

The scope of this dissertation is defined by two key areas of concentration. Firstly, this dissertation concentrates upon women's experiences of men's violence with a view to ascertaining deep-seated patterns and processes of gendered violence as they occur within androcentric contexts. Secondly, attention focuses upon discerning the biblical witness to these patterns and processes within the Book of Judges, and, in particular, the two narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the unnamed woman of Judges 19. These narratives are extensively examined in association with primary and secondary sources, including other biblical narratives and non-biblical myths.

Limitation: Girls'/Women's Experience of Violence

Certainly, this dissertation recognises that violence assumes numerous forms and expressions and is not always and everywhere gender specific. This dissertation, however, is restricted primarily to examining women's experiences of violence which is occasioned upon them by men. This focus, as will be shown in the following chapters, accords with extensive research that illustrates women experience distinctive vulnerability and exposure

to violence perpetrated by men. It is also in accordance with comprehensive determinations that human violence is a significantly pervasive male-performed phenomenon. Furthermore, concentration upon this type of gendered violence is in alignment with the biblical corpus and its array of violent narratives that likewise signify human violence to be a prevalent male activity to which girls and women are particularly susceptible. Though this investigation centres upon women's experiences of men's violence, analysis is also sensitive to men's experiences of violence and to those of other groups deemed non-normative and marginalised within androcentric contexts.

Limitation: Intersectional Violence

As this dissertation is concerned with ascertaining deep-seated patterns and processes of gendered violence in androcentric contexts, it is beyond the scope of this project to examine the specifics and variables of gendered violence as they pertain to different cultures and contexts. Similarly, it has been beyond the bounds of investigation to give detailed attention to the intersectional qualities that also impact on the issue of human violence and its gendered expression. Circumstances of ethnicity, nationality, religion, class, ability, age, and sexual orientation, are here acknowledged as significant interrelating elements in comprehending experiences of violence and victimhood.[31] This dissertation hopes to be of service to these types of analyses through its deconstruction of androcentricity and its hierarchical, binary consciousness that underpins and impacts upon intersectional violence. As numerous scholars have expressed, the disparity between men and women can be perceived as a bedrock of subjugation that influences all other forms of prejudice and violence.[32] In the words of Rosemary Radford Ruether: "the domination of

[31] Kirk-Duggan, "Introduction - Pregnant Passion," 1.
[32] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, xv-xvi; Luce Irigaray, *I Love to You: Sketch for a Felicity Within History*, trans. Alison Martin (London: Routledge, 1996), 47. Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 5, 37, 58; Ruether, *New Woman New Earth*; Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (New York: William Morrow, 1970; London: Verso, 2015); Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York: Doubleday, 1970; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); Holland, *A Brief History of Misogyny*.

women is the most fundamental form of domination in society, and all other forms of domination, whether of race, class, or ethnic group draw upon the fantasies of sexual domination."[33] As this dissertation draws out women's distinctive experience of gendered violence, it does so with a view to the need to understand and challenge the fundamental harm that is caused to all humanity by androcentricity that denies the multiplicity of human experience and personhoods, and fosters distorted human relationships and discrimination through imbalances of power.

Limitation: Sex/Gender Terms

Furthermore, the sex/gender terms employed in this dissertation, namely *male/men/masculinity* and *female/women/femininity*, are not exhaustive and unproblematic. Certainly, human experience exceeds heterosexual normative ideas of male and female sexualities, to include homosexual, bisexual, and transgendered realities. Human experience also includes ample manifestations and expressions of gender as fluid and ambiguous. These sex/gender terms are also problematic insofar as they suggest a basic and common identity. As Judith Butler has noted: "If one 'is' a woman, that is surely not all one is... because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities."[34]

The parameters of this dissertation, however, have not been to explore the multiplicity of experiences of sex and gender expressions, but the intersection of sex and gendered socialisation, and violence. This dissertation problematises binary gender categories, yet it

[33] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Women's Liberation in Historical and Theological Perspective," *Soundings* 53 (1970): 363.
[34] Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthropology*, ed. Ann E. Cudd and Robin O. Andreasen (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 146. See also Kirk-Duggan, "Introduction," 2-3; R.W. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 4-5.

also employs the binary gender terms: *male/men/masculinity*, *female/women/femininity*. It does so, however, not in ways that presume essentialist differences between the sexes, but in light of the significant data that indicates the relationship between dominant cultural discourses that socialise males/men as superior to females/women, and men's performance of violence as a characteristic considered appropriate for normative masculinity.[35]

Contributions to the Field

There are several viable outcomes from this dissertation's inquiry. Foremost, the proposed interpretive model is shown to be an effective instrument for illuminating and investigating the biblical witness to women's victimhood and patterns and processes of violence within androcentric contexts. This interpretive model shows that biblical texts of extreme persecution of women can be redeemed for inherent positive value, as they facilitate positive liberatory insights into enduring structures of gendered violence. This model of reading provides women and men, who continue to struggle with the negative androcentric constructs in the Bible and in society, with an alternate, constructive way of perceiving the relevance of violent biblical texts that reflect common experiences of women today. For the biblical narratives and victimised female characters examined demonstrate the potential of such texts to support a transformation away from androcentric consciousness and constructs that sustain gendered patterns and processes of violence.

This dissertation realises notable outcomes for biblical scholarship and attendant issues of ethical interpretation, as it generates robust readings that stymie and guard against the misuse of violent narratives to cause injurious effects for women. In particular, this dissertation provides an additional way of reading violent narratives that align with interpretive approaches that discern an implicit critique or liberation dynamic within the

[35] Johnson, *Gender Knot*; Kivel, *Men's Work*.

Bible.[36] This project provides enhanced conceptualisation, through the heuristic lens of mimetic and feminist theory, as to how this dynamic becomes visible in narratives that have typically seemed devoid of any liberating value.

Further valuable outcomes arise for feminist biblical scholarship. The potential of the analytical tools of mimetic theory to facilitate more intricate understandings of human patterns and processes of violence is demonstrated. So too, is the capacity of these analytical tools to constructively aid examination of androcentric biblical texts, their female victims, and the representation of women's victimhood therein. Via the theoretical frames of mimetic theory, female biblical victims are shown to transcend their victim status as distinctive and potent scapegoat characters who demystify and disrupt victimising dynamics.

This dissertation's analysis of female biblical victims also extends the application and evaluation of mimetic theory within biblical scholarship. To date, there is still extensive work to be done on testing mimetic theory in relation to biblical texts that comprise female victims. Analysis of female biblical victims via the feminist lens contributes to mimetic theory through illuminating the distinctive role these figures play in disclosing that patterns of violence are also significantly gendered as they are shaped by androcentricity. Subsequently, exploration of how sexual difference and gendered enculturation informs women's and men's experiences of violence furthers the scholarship of mimetic theory. As Michael Kirwan has judged, within mimetic theory the theoretical apparatus for comprehending gendered difference in dynamics of violence is still lacking.[37] This dissertation's development of an interpretive model that facilitates intricate

[36] Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 22-24; Mary Ann Tolbert, "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 113-115; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 150-151.
[37] Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 111.

conceptualisation of mimetic structures of violence and their gendered co-construction provides such an apparatus.

Lastly, this dissertation contributes to the work of wider disciplines and research concerned with conceptualising how and why gendered violence against women transpires as it does. Notably, it aligns with extensive research that perceives boys' and men's socialisation into dominant masculinity as intrinsic to the problem of gendered violence.[38] It also aligns with scholarship that identifies victim blaming and scapegoating, particularly of women, within the dynamics of human violence. This dissertation offers to these domains, however, a comprehensive theoretical framework for conceptualising anthropological patterns and processes of gendered scapegoating anchored in the distorted desires androcentricity influences. It presents a vantage point for comprehending in new ways, via biblical narratives depicting extreme persecution, how the scapegoating of women is an intrinsic phenomenon of androcentric societies that serves the purpose of channelling men's aggression and preserving the androcentric social order.

Outline of Chapters

This dissertation comprises eight chapters; a literature review chapter, two theoretical framework chapters, a methodological design chapter, three chapters focusing on textual analysis, and a final chapter consolidating investigative conclusions. The first chapter encompasses a review of literature that establishes and problematises the research context.

[38] See for example Johnson, *Gender Knot*; Holland, *A Brief History of Misogyny*; Kivel, *Men's Work*; John Archer, ed., *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994); Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Diana Tietjens Meyers, *Gender in the Mirror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Oxford Scholarship Online, doi:10.1093/0195140419.003.0001; Paul J. Fleming et al., "Men's Violence Against Women and Men are Inter-related: Recommendations for Simultaneous Intervention," *Social Science and Medicine* 146 (2015): 249-256, doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.10.021; Michael Flood and Bob Pease, "Factors Influencing Attitudes to Violence Against Women," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 10, no. 2 (2009): 125-142, doi:10.1177/1524838009334131; World Health Organization, *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005).

Three overarching and interrelated problems are explicated: 1) the problem of prevalent men's violence against girls and women and the mystification of this violence; 2) the problem of the complicity of androcentric biblical texts and scholarship in sustaining this form of violence; and 3), the particular problem of biblical texts that depict men's extreme violence against women, as found by feminist scholarship to be dangerous and irredeemable in their expression of malign androcentric ideology. This survey of literature illuminates, however, that given the commonality between biblical and contemporary women's experience of men's violence in androcentric societies, further investigation is necessary to scrutinise the Bible's representation of persisting gendered patterns of violence. The literature review thus establishes the context of this dissertation and the rationale of constructing and applying a new interpretive model - one that is capable of investigating the possibility that these violent biblical narratives and their female victims relay deeper demystifying insights into gendered violence.

Chapter two briefly introduces the interpretive model comprising analytical concepts drawn from mimetic and feminist theory. This chapter then sets out a detailed overview of the mimetic theory concepts and establishes them as relevant to examining patterns and processes of violence within texts and contexts of persecution. This chapter explicates how mimetic theory has been constructively applied within the field of biblical scholarship. It also discusses and responds to critiques of the theory. Contrary to the common current standpoints within feminist scholarship, mimetic theory is shown to have significant points of compatibility with feminist approaches, as well as analytical tools conducive to appropriation for heightened examination of biblical and contemporary women's experiences of violence. This chapter shows, however, that mimetic theory's predominant universal comprehension of patterns and processes of violence renders it insufficient in scope to adequately determine and examine the patterns and processes of *gendered*

violence. The necessity of a feminist lens to facilitate enhanced analysis of the biblical representation of women's victimhood is confirmed.

Chapter three establishes the analytical concepts drawn from feminist theory as critical tools for examining gendered experiences of violence. This chapter substantiates how patterns and processes of violence can be perceived as intrinsically co-constructed in gendered ways, as females and males are predominantly, though divergently, socialised as women and men with androcentric societies. This chapter confirms that the concepts drawn from mimetic and feminist theory combine to form a comprehensive dialogical interpretive model that enables detailed examination of gendered victimhood in texts and contexts of persecution. This interpretive model is presented as proficient to the task of examining androcentric biblical narratives of persecuted females for their representation of gendered patterns and processes of violence that occur within androcentric societies.

Chapter four sets out the methodological design and provides the rationale behind the various choices made in relation to exploring this project's investigatory interests. Discussion clarifies the various strategies, methods, and techniques employed in association with constructing, applying, and evaluating this dissertation's proposed interpretive model in accordance with the research questions.

Chapter five introduces and analyses key themes and events in the Book of Judges and determines a broad foundational context upon which the ensuing chapters of textual analysis of Judges 11 and 19 will be set. In this chapter the Book of Judges is established, via the interpretive lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, as a corpus that labours to demythologise and demystify human patterns and processes violence. This chapter also substantiates how the female victim characters within this corpus may be discerned as instrumental to the disclosure of androcentric, gendered patterns and processes of violence

as they illuminate women's experience of victimhood within the androcentric world of the text.

Chapter six examines in detail the narrative and character of Jephthah's daughter of Judges 11 according to the interpretive model of mimetic and feminist theory. The capacity of this narrative and female character to demystify gendered structures of violence is discerned. Jephthah's daughter is highlighted as instrumental to this disclosure as she is portrayed as an explicit scapegoated woman within a context of men's rivalry, conflict, and crisis. She is shown to expose the androcentric base of the violence and how women are socialised to participate in their vulnerability and victimisation through performing delimited and distorted subjectivities, desires, and agency. The demystification of the patterns and processes of gendered violence apparent in the narrative and character of Jephthah's daughter are further emphasised via comparison with the Greek myth of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia – a myth ultimately shown to conceal scapegoat victimhood.

Chapter seven then examines, again through the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, the narrative and character of the unnamed woman of Judges 19. Like Jephthah's daughter, this female figure is shown to be central to disclosing patterns of gendered scapegoating as they occur in lucid fashion within a context of men's rivalry, conflict, and crisis. This chapter highlights the narrative testimony to androcentric enculturation that socialises women to a vulnerable scapegoat category within androcentric cultures. Androcentricity is shown to normalise the subsidiary location of women and render them vulnerable to men's violence, as they are made subject to the overriding, dominant desires and agency of men. The biblical demystification of the patterns and processes of gendered violence in this narrative are emphasised through comparison with Greco-Roman myths, which are

identified as concealing women's victimisation and the reality of men's perpetration of physical and sexual assault.

Chapter eight derives conclusions from the prior textual analysis and consolidates how these narratives of men's extreme victimisation of women are redeemable and relevant to the contemporary issue of prevalent gendered violence against girls and women. This chapter accentuates how female biblical victims become conceivable as more than the sum of their suffering as they illuminate women's experience of men's violence in androcentric contexts, and accordingly disrupt, as they demystify, the clandestine patterns and processes of gendered violence. Discussion emphasises how these female biblical victims effect a potent liberatory presence through their witness to women's scapegoat victimhood, a presence capable of inspiring human consciousness to move beyond its gendered structures of violence that continue to entrap girls and women today.

CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Contemporary Relevance and Redeemability of Violent Biblical Texts

In this chapter I set out the three interwoven problems central to this dissertation. They are: 1) the enduring issue of men's violence against women and the mystification of this violence; 2) the complicity of androcentric biblical texts and scholarship in sustaining this form of violence; and 3) the specific problem of biblical narratives that depict men's extreme violence against women. As the following survey of literature shows, these issues have been well documented. In light of these problems, this survey highlights the necessity of developing alternative interpretive approaches, especially in relation to biblical narratives portraying men's extreme victimisation of women, that explore their capacity to challenge and inhibit the detrimental gender ideologies represented within them.

In laying this contextual foundation, the following chapter sets out a brief survey of literature concerning women's contemporary experiences of men's violence and its tendency to be 'hidden in plain sight'. This information is critical to this dissertation as contemporary women's experiences of men's violence are shown to be mirrored in biblical narratives depicting women's victimhood, which in turn is indicative of fundamental, enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence. Following discussion of the problems of male-dominant interpretation and biblical texts of men's violence against women, this survey finds that there is still much to be investigated regarding the Bible's witness to gendered violence. Given the correlation between biblical and contemporary women's experience of men's violence, this survey determines the potential for analysis of female biblical victims to generate insights into the enduring structures of gendered violence.

The Contemporary Problem of Men's Violence against Women

The following survey provides an overview of the contemporary problem of men's violence against women as it is recognised and articulated by leading research bodies. It is beyond the scope of this section to analyse the minute intricacies and variables of this phenomenon. The literature illustrates, however, that while this type of violence assumes diverse expressions, it is fundamentally a common experience among women that traverses age, ethnicity, class, and culture.[1] Furthermore, this commonality is anchored in universal attitudes and normative structures that maintain women as subsidiary to men and subsequently vulnerable to men's victimisation. The ensuing overview employs categories frequently used to classify violence - economic, physical, sexual, and psychological - in awareness that victims typically experience these types of violence as interrelated.[2]

Economic Violence

Contemporary data reflects that poverty at a global level has a significant female face.[3] Women and children are especially prone to extreme poverty in less developed regions where access to income and assets is systemically low for women.[4] Transculturally women are highly disadvantaged in the labour market due to expectations that they fulfil significant unpaid domestic work and caregiving tasks. This imbalance in unpaid domestic labour, combined with globally pervasive conventions that maintain occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, and 'glass-ceiling' barriers, mean that women even within affluent nations are especially vulnerable to poverty.[5] UNICEF notes women mired in

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[1] UNICEF and Innocenti Research Centre, "Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls," *Innocenti Digest* 6 (2000): 2, https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/213-domestic-violence-against-women-and-girls.html.
[2] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.
[3] Rosa Cho and Gail Cooper, "Gender Lens on Poverty: 2nd Edition," International Center for Research on Women, March 2014, 1-2, https://www.icrw.org/publications/gender-lens-on-poverty-primer/; Melinda Vandenbeld Giles, "Mothers of the World Unite: Gender Inequality and Poverty Under the Neo-Liberal State," *Development* 57 (2014): 417, 419, doi:10.1057/dev.2015.8.
[4] United Nations, *The World's Women 2015: Trends and Statistics* (New York: United Nations, 2015), xiv, https://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/worldswomen2015_report.pdf.
[5] UN, *World's Women*, 109-111, 119, 135, 179, 186. Cho and Cooper, "Gender Lens on Poverty," 11.

cycles of poverty characteristically do not have the financial resources or psychological empowerment to remove themselves and their children from violent environments. For some women improved economic independence exposes them to increased violence as they are perceived to threaten the dominant status of men; for others it is fear of such violence that prevents them from seeking better employment opportunities.[6]

Physical Violence

When it comes to men's physical violence against women, UNICEF asserts that the "statistics are grim no matter which part of the globe one focuses on."[7] Unequivocally, girls and women are most at risk of violence within their family and intimate settings. The World Health Organization estimates suggest 20%-50% of women experience domestic violence.[8] The United Nations global homicide report discloses that 95% of homicide is perpetrated by men, and girls and women are more likely to be murdered by family members or intimate partners.[9] Australian data has noted domestic violence to be the "leading preventable cause of death, disability, and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years."[10] Approximately two women per week are killed in Australia by a current or former partner.[11] Significant cultural practices also physically and fatally harm females. Estimates hold, for example, that between 100 and 140 million girls and women globally have undergone genital mutilation, with three million girls still subjected annually to this

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[6] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 8.
[7] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.
[8] World Health Organization, *WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2005), 6, https://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/summary_report/summary_report_English2.pdf. For comparable statistics from multiple countries see UN, *World's Women*, 143-145.
[9] United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (Vienna: UNODC, 2013); 13-14, https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.
[10] Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, "Australia's Welfare 2015," *Australia's Welfare Series* no. 12. Cat. no. AUS 189 (Canberra: AIHW, 2015): 341, https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/692fd1d4-0e81-41da-82af-be623a4e00ae/18960-aw15.pdf.aspx?inline=true.
[11] Tracey Bowden, "Thirty-One Women Killed in Fifteen Weeks Renews Call for Action," *7.30, Australian Broadcasting Association*, April 13, 2015, http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2015/s4215739.htm.

custom and its extensive associated health risks.[12] 'Honour' and dowry related killings are other engrained cultural practices of homicide that "almost exclusively target women".[13]

Sexual Violence

Current data indicates that rape is overwhelmingly a male crime.[14] Research indicates that approximately 19% of females in the United States of America have been raped, with 44% of women experiencing other forms of sexual violence.[15] Regardless of region or culture, girls 15 years and younger are especially vulnerable to sexual assault from male family members.[16] Research also attests that indigenous girls and women, and those with disabilities, are more susceptible to such violence.[17] South African, American, and Australian data further indicates that 13%-18% of rapes are perpetrated by more than one assailant.[18] Girls and women also figure as the major 'commodity' within sex trades. They account for 80% of human trafficking and prostitution,[19] and are transacted into abusive

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[12] World Health Organization, *Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation: An Interagency Statement* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2008), 1, http://orchidproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/UN-Interagency-statement-2008.pdf.
[13] UNODC, *Global Study on Homicide 2013,* 52.
[14] Australian Institute of Family Studies, "Sexual Violence Offenders: Prevention and Intervention Approaches," (Canberra: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2006), https://aifs.gov.au/publications /sexual-violence-offenders/sexual-violence-and-sex-offenders-australia; Matthew J. Breiding et al., "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence, Stalking, and Intimate Partner Violence Victimization," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 63, no.8 (2015): 5, https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6308.pdf.
[15] Breiding et al., "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence," 1.
[16] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 6.
[17] Janet Fanslow et al., "Juxtaposing Beliefs and Reality: Prevalence Rates of Intimate Partner Violence and Attitudes to Violence and Gender Roles Reported by New Zealand Women," *Violence Against Women* 16, no. 7 (2010): 816, doi:10.1177/1077801210373710; Breiding et al., "Prevalence and Characteristics of Sexual Violence," 16; Council of Australian Governments, *COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence Against Women and Their Children Final Report: Empowering Women, Challenging Men, Integrating Responses*, (2016), http://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/communique/COAGAdvisoryPanelonReducingViolence againstWomenandtheirChildren-FinalReport.pdf.
[18] Rachel Jewkes et al., "Gender Inequitable Masculinity and Sexual Entitlement in Rape Perpetration South Africa: Findings of a Cross-Sectional Study (Rape Perpetration in South Africa)," *PLoS ONE* 6, no. 12 (2011): 5, doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0029590; Jennifer Avegno, Trevor J. Mills, and Lisa D. Mills, "Sexual Assault Victims in the Emergency Department: Analysis by Demographic and Event Characteristics," *Journal of Emergency Medicine* 37, no. 3 (2009): 331, doi:10.1016/j.jemermed.2007.10.025; Bree Cook, Fiona David, and Anna Grant, "Sexual Violence in Australia," *Australian Institute of Criminology Research and Public Policy Series*, no 36. (Canberra, 2001): 11, https://aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/rpp36.
[19] Annette Lansink, "Human Rights Focus on Trafficked Women: An International Law and Feminist Perspective," *Agenda* 20, no. 70 (2006): 46-48, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4066725.

environments in accordance with cultural customs such as child marriage and polygamy,[20] religious prostitution,[21] and sexual cleansing.[22] Systematic sexual violence against girls and women is also a noted key component of warfare for purposes including psychologically conquering male enemies, and perpetrating ethnic cleansing and genocide.[23] Accompanying the data of pervasive rape in the contexts of war is frequent testimony to the subjection of victims to protracted torture and mutilation of their genitals.[24] More generally, the globally entrenched androcentric objectification and power over female bodies has effected a prevalent double standard. Irrespective of class or culture, women's sexual activity is used to justify their defamation, shaming, and often brutal mistreatment.[25]

Psychological Violence

The data concerning psychological violence against women has multiple aspects including subjection to immediate, deliberate acts of psychological violence and the violence experienced through enduring trauma and habituation to violence. Research shows that acts of psychological violence, including forced isolation, restrictions to mobility and verbal aggression, threats, and humiliation, are frequently the precursor and attendant of physical and sexual violence against women.[26] Psychological violence also manifests in the

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[20] Nawal M. Nour, "Child Marriage: A Silent Health and Human Rights Issue," *Reviews in Obstetrics and Gynecology* 2, no. 1 (2009): 51-56, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2672998/.
[21] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 6.
[22] For a detailed discussion of this custom see Lydia Mugambe, "Rethinking Culture in the Face of HIV/AIDS in East Africa," *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 68 (2006): 73-78, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/4066767; Rose Ayikukwei et al., "Social and Cultural Significance of the Sexual Cleansing Ritual and its Impact on HIV Prevention Strategies in Western Kenya," *Sexuality and Culture* 11, no. 3 (2007): 32-34, doi:10.1007/s12119-007-9010-x.
[23] Lucy Fiske, and Rita Shackel, "Ending Rape in War: How Far Have We Come?," *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 6, no. 3 (2014): 124, 127, doi.org/10.5130/ccs.v6i3.4183; Allison Ruby Reid-Cunningham, "Rape as a Weapon of Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 3, no. 3 (2008): 282-283, doi.10.1353/gsp.2011.0043; Sherrie L. Russell-Brown, "Rape as an Act of Genocide," *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 21, no. 2 (2003): 350n2, doi.10.15779/Z380M0V. https://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1241&context=bjil; Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976).
[24] Reid-Cunningham, "Rape," 286; Russell-Brown, "Rape," 353.
[25] Michael Flood and Bob Pease, "Factors Influencing Attitudes to Violence Against Women," *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* 10, no. 2 (2009): 125-142, doi:10.1177/1524838009334131.
[26] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 2, 4; WHO, *Multi-Country Study*, 9-10.

consequences of physical and sexual violence - in fears of pregnancy and contracting diseases, in the distress of lasting physical damage and health issues, and in effects such as post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression, shame, alcoholism and drug abuse.[27]

Psychological violence is also enacted when girls and women become habituated to men's abusive behaviour that they do not perceive such behaviour as a form of violence.[28] Normalisation to gender biased traditional attitudes and customs means some women and mothers also actively participate in sustaining ongoing delimiting codes and abusive practices against females. Female genital cutting, for example, which reinforces male power dynamics, is commonly performed by women.[29] In such ways, psychological violence is deeply imbedded within the gender-specific social formation of girls and women as their consciousness is influenced in detrimental ways towards the self and towards other girls and women.[30]

Men's Violence 'Hidden in Plain Sight'

The statistics on girls' and women's experience of violence are widely considered to be conservative. This is especially due to challenges of under-reporting in developing and developed countries alike.[31] The World Health Organization, for example, found that 21% to 66% of women had never told anyone about their partner's violence. Between 55% and 95% of physically abused women had never reported the violence to any formal health service, police or legal advice service.[32] Determining how to adequately assess the subtleties and intangible reaches of women's experience of violence, when women themselves frequently struggle to identify and articulate it, also creates immense

[27] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 9.
[28] WHO, *Multi-Country Study*, 10, 19.
[29] WHO, "Eliminating Female Genital Mutilation," 6-7.
[30] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 7; Flood and Pease, "Factors," 127-130.
[31] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.
[32] WHO, *Multi-Country Study*, 18-20.

difficulties in collating comprehensive data.[33] In general terms, the growing body of evidence has given rise to the topical estimation that at least one in three women will experience physical or sexual victimisation in her lifetime.[34] However, the current data and complexities of data collection indicate that the majority of women live within societies and cultures that continually act violently upon them in explicit or implicit ways. While the categories of violence used above (economic, physical, sexual, and psychological) enable some orderly insight into gendered violence, it is apparent that violence as experienced by girls and women is so multifaceted and masked, as to defy compartmentalisation and quantification.

Though the problem has in some sense been overtly identified, research bodies note the myriad of ways this violence is obscured. Intrinsic to this obscuration is the extensive enculturation of men and women into male-dominant political, legal, economic, religious, and cultural systems that maintain men as superior to women, as heads of households, with direct or indirect proprietary rights over them. These structures suffice to sanction women's maltreatment as normal or negligible, or they lack the infrastructure to produce any adequate response or meaningful change.[35] Enculturation and normalisation to this male-dominant edifice then influences the concealment of women's experience of violence in other manifold ways. Some women do not consciously comprehend their exposure to abuse. Some justify the violence and/or blame themselves for its occurrence. Some remain silent as they expect indifference from confidants. Some stay silent out of fear and mistrust

[33] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.
[34] World Health Organization, "Violence Against Women: A 'Global Health Problem of Epidemic Proportions,'" *World Health Organization Media Centre*, 20 June, 2013, http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2013/violence_against_women_20130620/en/.
[35] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 2. The United Nations emphasises that some global states still have no legislation on violence against women in place. Where they do, significant gaps, limitations, and institutional malpractice remain. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, *Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women* (New York: United Nations Publications, 2010), 1, https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/handbook/Handbook%20for%20legislation%20on%20violence%20against%20women.pdf.

of police and legal processes, and out of fear of further victimisation, retaliation, stigmatising, humiliation, blaming, shaming, and ostracism. Some lack the money, knowledge, and skills to pursue legal redress.[36] Some prioritise shielding their children, and protecting their family's honour, and/or the offending family member.[37] For some, the violence is ultimately concealed as their murders have been construed as accidental deaths or suicides.[38]

Women's experience of men's violence, then, is significantly mystified and obscured. It is mystified through social and cultural structures that have normalised it to men and women alike. It is obscured through facets that isolate and delimit women to subsidiary status, and psychologically and physically hinder or deny them access to avenues of protection and redress. It is also obscured through manifestations of blame – blame directly levelled against the victim, and/or self-blame generated within the victim herself. In such ways, women's persecution at the hands of men abounds in a manner that is hidden in plain sight.

This overview of the global situation establishes that girls' and women's experience of men's violence is a distinctive form of violence. It is also one that requires drawing out and distinguishing from universal, generic conceptualisations of violence. For to adequately address this form of violence, the patterns and processes that characterise and conceal it need to be constantly unmasked so the frameworks that normalise, justify, and inure this violence might be transformed. As leading research bodies convey, the problem of men's violence against women is fundamentally grounded in hierarchical gender consciousness

[36] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 4.
[37] WHO, *Multi-Country Study*, 19-20; UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 6; Rachel Jewkes, Loveday Penn-Kekana, and Hetty Rose-Junius, "'If They Rape Me, I Can't Blame Them': Reflections on Gender in the Social Context of Child Rape in South Africa and Namibia," *Social Science & Medicine* 61, no. 8 (2005): 1815-1816, doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2005.03.022.
[38] Andrzej Kulczycki and Sarah Windle, "Honor Killings in the Middle East and North Africa," *Violence Against Women* 17, no. 11 (2011): 1442, doi:10.1177/1077801211434127.

and structures that systematically devalue and victimise women.[39] As the following discussion sets out, in communities influenced by Jewish and Christian cultural and religious practices biblical material has played a significant role in instituting and perpetuating this hierarchical gender disparity and victimisation of women. The task of countering men's violence, then, includes the necessity of responding to and countering the complicit role the Bible has played in sustaining this form of violence.

Androcentric Biblical Texts

Unquestionably for many people the Bible has been a positive influence on their formation and flourishing. For many women and men it remains a fundamental authoritative source that nurtures identity, purpose, ethical and moral bearing, faith, spirituality, and meaningful relationships with God and between each other. For many people the Bible provides a source of solace in the face of physical and spiritual struggle, as well as inspiration for challenging oppressive forces in the pursuit of social justice and egalitarianism. Certainly, Hebrew Bible and New Testament teachings have positively contributed to the social world. They have informed conceptualisation of the inherent dignity of every person as equally created and loved by God, and they have fostered advocating and caring for those who are vulnerable – the poor, children, widows, lepers, strangers, 'outsiders' and the like.

Yet, as Pamela Milne has expressed, the Bible is also "one of the most formidable barriers to women's social and political equality".[40] Biblical texts are significantly male-centred and contain ample content that diminishes women. Furthermore, the long history of biblical interpretation and its dissemination has been the domain of men.[41] Though the Bible has substantial positive reach, it has also been recognised for its monumental

[39] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 2; WHO, *Multi-Country*, viii.
[40] Pamela J. Milne, "Feminist Interpretations of the Bible: Then and Now," *Bible Review* 8, no. 5 (1992): 28.
[41] Milne, "Feminist Interpretations," 27.

significance in shaping Western culture,[42] where men's appropriation of its androcentric material has served to reinforce oppressive androcentric power structures.[43] Accordingly, biblical content has functioned to underpin the devaluation of females, to inure girls and women to injurious gender constructs, to normalise violence against them, and to contribute to the concealment of their experiences of violence.

The Bible is generally understood as characterised by androcentricity and reflective of the androcentric cultural contexts and societies that shaped and transmitted them.[44] Eryl Davies has suggested that these texts served to promote and legitimise the ideology and socialisation of men's superiority and women's subordination necessary to the success of patriarchal power in antiquity.[45] Scholars such as Elaine Pagels, Rosemary Radford Ruether, and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza have also proposed that this ideological orientation was at work in the editorial processes of censoring more gender-positive extant materials out of 'the canon'.[46] The myriad ways androcentricity is evident within the canonical Hebrew and Christian biblical literature are now well documented in numerous overviews and analyses of the male-centred language, imagery, experiences, perspectives, concerns and biases that pervade the texts.[47]

By way of brief example, Judith Plaskow explains how the central categories of Israel, Torah, and God reflect construction according to masculine standpoints, agendas, and

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[42] Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1.
[43] Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 4-5.
[44] J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), 10-11; Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 59; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 13.
[45] Eryl W. Davies, *The Dissenting Reader: Feminist Approaches to the Hebrew Bible* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 49.
[46] Elaine H. Pagels, "What Became of God the Mother? Conflicting Images of God in Early Christianity," *Signs* 2, no. 2 (1976): 293-303, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173448; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 19, 25-26. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 48-56.
[47] See Davies for a detailed overview of the extensive androcentricity within the Bible, *Dissenting Reader*, 1-15.

authority.[48] The depictions of strong matriarchs in Genesis give way to the dominating narratives of the patriarchs and the patriarchal family. Women have an ambiguous relationship to the covenant community as Israel comes to be identified in relation to circumcision, the twelve sons of Jacob, and male heads of households. Laws referring to women frequently place them, their bodies, sexuality, procreative capacity, and labour under the ownership and control of fathers and husbands. Israel's God is also extensively personified in male pronouns and terms, and in authoritative power roles such as 'lord', 'ruling king', and 'warrior'.[49] As Plaskow explains, the predominance of such masculine language and imagery reinforces the value of men's attributes and experience and validates the male-dominant power arrangements governing family and political structures. The dominating masculinised personification of God to whom Israel submits, has served to fortify the attitude that women should likewise dutifully submit to their male heads.[50]

Though perspectives within New Testament scholarship have sought to highlight material that challenges such gendered socialisation and social constructs, an enduring androcentric foundation and bias in favour of men's perspectives and experience continues to permeate the Christian literature. Though the Gospels indicate, for example, Jesus' positive attitude towards and inclusion of women,[51] women and women's experience are nonetheless textually subsidiary. The New Testament's predominantly masculine focus centres upon Jesus, Jesus' relationship with God as Abba/Father,[52] Jesus' clash with the male leaders of the day, the experiences of the twelve male apostles, and men's experiences of the post-

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[48] Judith Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai: Judaism From A Feminist Perspective* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 3.
[49] Ibid., 3-4, 6-7.
[50] Ibid., 7-8.
[51] Joan Chittister, *Women, Ministry and the Church* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1983), 2-3; Catherine M. LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991), 384-388; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 63-68.
[52] Luce Irigaray, "Equal to Whom?," trans. Robert L. Mazzola, in *The Postmodern God: A Theological Reader*, ed. Graham Ward (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 200-202, 208.

resurrection events and missionary efforts described in the ensuing epistles.[53] Though there are clear indications of women's experience in the New Testament and their important roles in early missionary work, as Radford Ruether and Schüssler Fiorenza note these glimpses signify a positive though finally repressed history that needs to be reimagined so as to be reclaimed.[54]

Certainly, as Davies states, "care must be taken not to overemphasise the inferior role assigned to women"[55] within the Bible. There are to some degree representations of powerful, courageous, and independent women; for example, Miriam and Huldah, Judith, Deborah, Jael, Delilah, Jezebel, and Esther. Clearly there is some relaying of women's experiences and adversities in the patriarchal biblical world evident in characters such as Sarah and Hagar, Dinah, Puah and Shiphrah, Tamar, Ruth and Naomi, Bathsheba, Mary and Martha, and Mary Magdalene. Yet, the extensive signification of women as second class and subsidiary nevertheless renders these characters more as exceptions that prove the rule.[56] Frequently the characterisation of biblical women functions to emphasise male characters as public leaders, heroes, and warriors over against women's private, domestic location, and their roles as wives and mothers.[57]

There is immense difficulty in drawing out positive representations of biblical woman from the androcentric interests they were constructed to serve.[58] Given their characterisation has been formulated and communicated in androcentric terms,[59] women's authentic voices and

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[53] Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 58, 108; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Interpreting Patriarchal Traditions," in *The Liberating Word: A Guide to Nonsexist Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Letty M. Russell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976), 52-59.
[54] Radford Ruether, *New Woman*, 63-78; Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 56.
[55] Davies, *Dissenting Reader*, 5.
[56] Ibid., 4-5.
[57] Ibid., 49.
[58] J. Cheryl Exum, "Second Thoughts about Secondary Characters: Women in Exodus 1.8-2.10," in *A Feminist Companion to Exodus to Deuteronomy*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 76.
[59] As scholarship has shown, seemingly positive representations of biblical women have been determined as more dangerous for their insidious continuation of men's perspectives and agendas. For discussion on the

experiences have been significantly and varyingly interpreted, adapted, obscured or lost.[60] As Plaskow expresses, even where women are central to a narrative, the narrative is rarely about them: "As women appear in male texts, they are not the subjects and molders of their own experience but the objects of male purposes, designs and desires."[61] Further to this, the marginal place assigned to women is unmistakable in the convention of leaving most of them unnamed even if they are central to the plot. Of the 1,426 named characters in the Hebrew Bible, only 111 are women.[62] Rendered anonymous, these female characters are denied identity and the textual power located in the meaning names regularly supply in the Bible. As Davies concludes, these unidentified women "effectively assume the status of a non-subject."[63] In sum, this partisan construction and suppressed representation of women has wider negative ramifications where, as Plaskow asserts: "The silence and submission of women becomes part of a greater pattern that makes it appear fitting and right."[64]

Androcentric Scholarship

Overt and subtle proliferation of this greater pattern of female subordination, drawn from the Bible's androcentricity, has been a constant in the long history of male-dominated biblical interpretation and dissemination. As diverse feminist scholarship has determined, the fabric of Western societies and the secondary place of women within them have been considerably influenced by the predominance of male biblical translators, scholars, and

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problematic gender representation of Esther, Judith, and Song of Songs see respectively, Itumeleng J. Mosala, "The Implications of the Text of Esther for African Women's Struggle for Liberation in South Africa," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 129–137; Pamela J. Milne, "What Shall We Do with Judith? A Feminist Reassessment of a Biblical 'Heroine,'" *Semeia* 62 (1993): 37–58; David J.A. Clines, *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1995), 122-144, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[60] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai,* 3; Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology,* 59.

[61] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai,* 2.

[62] Carol Meyers, "Everyday Life: Women in the Period of the Hebrew Bible," in *The Women's Bible Commentary,* 2nd ed, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 251-252.

[63] Davies, *Dissenting Reader,* 63-64.

[64] Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai,* 7-8.

religious leaders, and their preference for overlooking more positive texts, in favour of biblical 'proofs' that men are divinely appointed superior to women.[65] Discriminatory readings of the Adam and Eve narratives have been particularly instrumental in normalising the deeply-rooted consciousness that women are inferior to men.[66] The interpretation of Genesis that reads the creation of woman after man, from man, and for man, who is named by man and is an instigator of man's downfall, has served over the centuries as a keystone for socially conditioning women to second-class status.[67] The longstanding denigration of Eve as the archetype of woman has served to substantiate all women as inferior, weak willed, carnal, prone to evil, and therefore deserving of punishment and rightful subjugation.[68]

This assessment finds striking expression in the annals of history. "Woman is a temple built over a sewer" - "It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and rags" – Tertullian (155-240). "Among all the savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman" - John Chrysostom (347-407). "I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children" – Augustine (354-430). "Woman is a sick she-ass… a hideous tapeworm… the advance post of hell…" - John Damascene (d.749). "Woman is secondary both in purpose (sex) and in material (body)… It is

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[65] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792; London: Penguin, 2004), 20; Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; London: Vintage Books, 2011), 91-2; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (Great Britain, MacGibbon & Kee, 1970; London: Granada, 1981), 258-259; Marilyn French, *The War Against Women* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992), 12, 73-86; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward A Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).
[66] Milne, "Feminist Interpretations of the Bible," 26-27.
[67] Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 67; Elisabeth Gössmann, "The Construction of Women's Difference in the Christian Theological Tradition," in *The Special Nature of Women?* ed. Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1991), 50-59.
[68] Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 94-97. Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Western Religious Tradition and Violence Against Women in the Home," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 31-41.

unchangeable that woman is destined to live under man's influence and has no authority from her Lord" – Aquinas (1225-1274).[69]

Mary Daly calls close attention to the deep and enduring effects of the vilification of Eve on the modern consciousness, which might otherwise be assumed to have moved beyond its sway. "The fact is, however, that the myth has projected a malignant image of the male-female relationship and of the 'nature' of women that is still deeply imbedded in the modern psyche. The myth undergirds destructive patterns in the fabric of our culture. Literature and the mass media repeat the 'temptress Eve' motif in deadly earnest, as do the rationalizations for social customs and civil laws…"[70] Alongside Eve, other female characters such as Delilah and Jezebel have similarly been ingrained in the Western psyche via the same partial androcentric interpretive modes and imagination that emphasise woman as deceitful, depraved, and treacherous.[71]

Still other texts have been historically exploited to biblically legitimise the subsidiary nature of women. For example, those texts that direct women to be silent in church (1 Tim. 2:8-15 and 1 Cor. 14:33-35); those which instruct wives to submit to their husbands (Eph 5:22-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7, Col 3:18-19), and profess that women's redemption lies in motherhood (1 Tim 2:15).[72] As Schüssler Fiorenza has emphasised, such texts have been

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[69] Quoted in Chittister, *Women, Ministry and the Church*, 2, 6-7.
[70] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon,1985), 45. See also Katie B. Edwards, *Admen and Eve: The Bible in Contemporary Advertising* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012).
[71] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 11.
[72] Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology*, 76. For further discussion of the long history of injurious interpretation of the Adam and Eve narrative and other New Testament passages for women see Pamela J. Milne, "No Promised Land: Rejecting the Authority of the Bible," in *Feminist Approaches to the Bible: Symposium at the Smithsonian Institution*, ed. Hershel Shanks (Washington: Biblical Archaeological Society, 1995), 47-73.

used to continue the kyriarchal[73] household patterns of the Greco-Roman world.[74] They serve to normalise the injurious, traditional, binary, heterosexual family structure that implicitly positions men as heads of the household.[75]

Some contemporary institutional ecclesiastical efforts have endeavoured to redress such gender injustices. In the Catholic Church, for example, there have been efforts to acknowledge the uniqueness, significance, and authority of women by advocating that women are 'different but equal' to men, and this difference entails characteristics of mutual 'complementarity' in their ways of being in relationship with men.[76] Yet, as Schüssler Fiorenza and Radford Ruether among others, have expressed, such discourses reinscribe the preservation of traditional, essentialist, and heteronormative gender roles and norms, that are anchored upon distortions of men's domination and subjugation of women.[77] Pope John Paul II's *Letter to Women*, though conceivably intending to do otherwise, reiterates via biblical confirmation aspects of men's privilege and power over against women's perceived roles as self-giving nurturers. The letter affirms the Gospel testament that the ministerial priesthood was entrusted only to men, while women "reveal the gift of their womanhood by placing themselves at the service of others in their everyday lives. For in

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[73] The term 'kyriarchy' is a neologism termed by Schüssler Fiorenza to denote "a social-political system of domination and subordination that is based on the power and rule of the lord/master/father. *In Memory of Her*, xix.

[74] As Fiorenza expresses: "The Western *socio-politics of subordination* has its roots in Greek philosophy and Roman law and is mediated through Jewish, Islamic and Christian Scriptures." Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 111. For further discussion on the history of women's subordination in the West, as anchored in ancient Greek and Roman thought and biblical texts and their interpretation, see Jack Holland, *A Brief History of Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice* (London: Robinson, 2018), 12-96.

[75] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 102-103.

[76] For discussion on the intricate gender complexities of this position see, Edward Collins Vacek, "Feminism and the Vatican," *Theological Studies* 66, no. 1 (2005): 159-177, doi:10.1177/004056390506600108.

[77] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Congress of Wo/men: Religion, Gender, and Kyriarchal Power* (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2017), 76-81; Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Distortion, Misrepresentation and Caricature: The Vatican's Letter to Women is Confused About Scripture and Feminism," *Conscience* 25, no. 3 (2004): 43-44, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A125831895/ITOF?u=acuni&sid=ITOF&xid=f6846669; Katherine E. Zappone, "'Woman's Special Nature': A Different Horizon for Theological Anthropology," in *The Special Nature of Women?* ed. Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1991), 87, 90; Christine E. Gudorf, "Encountering the Other: The Modern Papacy on Women," *Social Compass* 36, no. 3 (1989): 295-310, doi:10.1177/003776868903600303.

giving themselves to others each day women fulfil their deepest vocation."[78] As Schüssler Fiorenza states: "the Vatican's lofty the*logy of womanhood turns out to be articulated as kyriarchal ideology…".[79] Ultimately, prevailing androcentric theology and ecclesial power structures, grounded in men's interpretations of biblical texts used to justify these structures, inherently perpetuate the socialisation of women as subsidiary to men.[80]

Formative Capacity of Biblical Content

Women's encounter with biblical content is clearly complex. Not least, this is because it frequently occurs within a climate already influenced by the Bible's androcentric character and dissemination. For those women who are in contexts that do not cultivate their ability to critically negotiate these androcentric complexities, biblical content can shape a women's worldview, imagination, and sense of self in profoundly injurious ways. For innumerable girls and women, encounters with biblical content conditions within them the embodiment of a diminished, dependent, vulnerable self as divinely right and fitting. They come to construct and accept a low self-image, to be detrimentally self-sacrificing and child-like in their deference and obedience to men, and to be punitively dealt with as means of living a biblically dutiful life.[81]

Some girls and women learn that to be 'good' is to be wholly self-denying. They are convinced that, irrespective of the risk to their own wellbeing, they should continue 'giving to the extent of the widow's mite', 'turning the other cheek', and 'carrying their crosses',

[78] John Paul II, *Letter of Pope John Paul II to Women* (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: June 29, 1995), no. 12, https://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1995/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_29061995_women.html.
[79] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Congress of Wo/men*, 78.
[80] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Women's Difference and Equal Rights in the Church," in *The Special Nature of Women?* ed. Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1991); Elizabeth A. Johnson, "The Maleness of Christ," in *The Special Nature of Women?* ed. Anne E. Carr and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (London: SCM, 1991), 108-116.
[81] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 100-101, 113.

even enduring physical and/or sexual abuse as deserved corrective punishment from God.[82] For many such suffering is thought to hold salvific value and merit insofar as it imitates Christ's suffering.[83] Some girls and women construct their identity and imagination uncritically in acceptance that the same God who liberated the Jewish people from Egypt and worked through the prophets and Wisdom writers, also corroborates the textual expressions that women are weak, unfaithful, ignorant, foolish, devious, and immoral.[84] Some perceive that this same liberating God also sanctioned the transaction of daughters by Jewish fathers to other Jewish men,[85] and mandated that women's primary roles, determined by their sex, are to be wives and mothers. Some perceive that this same God who values women's child-bearing capacity, also judges that menstruation makes them 'unclean'. Judith Antonelli encapsulates well the problem of uncritical imbibing of biblically anchored concepts: "When a little girl has already learned by the age of five that a married woman with uncovered hair is somehow immoral, what kind of positive female self-image can she develop? Whether or not she is 'happy' in her role is irrelevant; people

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[82] For personal testimonies in this vein see Carole R. Fontaine, "The Abusive Bible: On the Use of Feminist Method in Pastoral Contexts," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 86-87.

[83] Feminist theology has emphasised the dangerous effects of sacrificial interpretations of the cross for women and disempowered groups. As Schüssler Fiorenza has expressed: "By ritualising the suffering and death of Jesus and by calling the powerless in society and church to imitate his perfect obedience and self-sacrifice, Christian ministry and theology do not interrupt but continue to foster the cycle of violence…" Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision*, 113. See also the collection of essays in Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn., eds., *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse: A Feminist Critique* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989). Authors in this text explicate further the injurious formation and vulnerability to violence experienced by women and children in relation to normative Christian theology that upholds imitating Christ's suffering as righteous and salvific. Sheila Redmond, for example, sets out the interrelation between sexual abuse and Christian contexts that inculcate in children the values of suffering, forgiveness, sexual purity, seeking redemption, and obeying authority figures. Sheila A. Redmond, "Christian 'Virtues' and Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 70-88. Carole Bohn discusses how a theology of men's ownership of women and children underlies Christian church structures and responses to abused women that perpetuates attitudes that men's violence is to be tolerated. Carole R. Bohn, "Dominion to Rule: The Roots and Consequences of a Theology of Ownership," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 105-116.

[84] Davies, *Dissenting Reader*, 8-9.

[85] Judith S. Antonelli, *In the Image of God: A Feminist Commentary on the Torah* (London: Jason Aronson, 1995), xxx, xxxv.

have learned to be 'happy' in the most oppressive conditions, simply because they have never known any better."[86]

Biblical content, then, has been and continues to be encountered and consumed as a toxin by many girls and women in ways that sustain their vulnerability to violence. Many women are without the means to discern how the androcentricity of the text is being pressed into the service of authenticating and empowering androcentric social structures and the gender imbalances implicit within them. Constructing a critical vantage point is obstructed as they internalise these gender imbalances as normal, and these norms are confirmed and cemented by the dominant worldview around them. Androcentric biblical content and dissemination both defines and is defined by their habitus. Thus, rather than being a resource through which girls and women might challenge the subordinating structures that generate their diminished experiences as females, biblical content becomes dangerous for girls' and women's experience insofar as it socialises them to a state of exploitable lesser complexity and importance. Where this occurs, biblical content and interpretations can be seen as complicit in structures of gendered power and abuse.

Feminist Scholarship and Androcentric Biblical Texts

In light of the above, the response of woman scholars has been markedly diverse. Some have rejected the Bible outright as inherently and irredeemably misogynistic.[87] Others emphasise that the Bible is so comprehensively patriarchal that interpretation must be strongly concerned with exposing its extensive expression of misogynistic ideology.[88]

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[86] Antonelli, *Image of God,* xxxi.
[87] Elizabeth Cady Stanton, *The Woman's Bible* (New York: European Publishing, 1895; repr.; Seattle: Coalition Task Force on Women and Religion, 1974). Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father;* Mary Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon, 1978); Daphne Hampson, *Theology and Feminism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).
[88] Exum, *Fragmented Women*, 1-23*;* Esther Fuchs, *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003); Mieke Bal, ed., *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989). Milne, "No Promised Land," 47-73; Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).

Other positions, such as those often categorised as *loyalist*, *sublimationist*, *revisionist*, and *liberationist*,[89] reflect the perspective that authoritative, liberating potential for humanity can be found in the Bible beyond the influence of the ancient patriarchal societies within which it originated.

Collectively these latter interpretive orientations have defended biblical authority using a myriad of strategies. Scholars such as Letha Dawson Scanzoni, Nancy Hardesty,[90] Patricia Gundy,[91] and Elaine Storkey,[92] have countered injurious texts through offsetting them with positive ones. Some, such as Michele Schumacher,[93] Anne-Marie Pelletier,[94] and Elizabeth Fox-Genovese[95] have emphasised 'classical' feminine virtues and women's 'otherness' to men within particular texts, identifying, for instance, the Virgin Mary as symbol of the church and a distinctive femininity to be imitated. Others such as Radford Ruether,[96] Schüssler Fiorenza,[97] Sandra Schneiders,[98] Elizabeth Johnson,[99] and Carolyn Osiek,[100] have elevated concepts of the eternal/divine feminine within biblical language, metaphor, symbolism, personification, and imagery.

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[89] For detailed discussion on these interpretive positions see Carolyn Osiek, "The Feminist and the Bible: Hermeneutical Alternatives," *TS* 53, no.4 (1997): 956-968, doi:10.4102/hts.v53i4.1753.
[90] Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, *All We're Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today Third Revised Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992).
[91] Patricia Gundy, *Neither Slave nor Free: Helping Women Answer the Call to Church Leadership* (London: HarperCollins, 1987).
[92] Elaine Storkey, *What's Right with Feminism?* (London: SPCK, 1985).
[93] Michelle M. Schumacher, "The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity," in *Woman in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michelle M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 49.
[94] Anne-Marie Pelletier, "The Teachers of Man, for the Church as Bride," in *Woman in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michelle M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 232-247.
[95] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Equality, Difference, and the Practical Problems of a New Feminism," in *Woman in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michelle M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 306.
[96] Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*; Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia and God: An Eco-Feminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1992).
[97] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (London: SCM, 1994); Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 2001.
[98] Sandra Schneiders, *Women and the Word: The Gender of God in the New Testament and the Spirituality of Women* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986).
[99] Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse* (New York: Crossroad, 1992).
[100] Carolyn Osiek, "Images of God: Breaking Boundaries," *Spirituality Today* 40, no. 4 (1988): 333-344.

Another line of scholarship represented in the work of Carol Meyers[101] and Rodney Stark,[102] has contended that women were not as disempowered in the ancient societies behind the texts as customarily perceived. Similarly, scholars such as Elaine Wainwright,[103] Schüssler Fiorenza,[104] and Eleanor McLaughlin and Radford Ruether,[105] have endeavoured to emphasise and reconstruct women's roles from the glimpses, however fleeting, in canonical and non-canonical texts. Other approaches, like those of Cheryl Exum,[106] Phyllis Trible,[107] Phyllis Bird,[108] and Judith McKinlay,[109] have drawn out and envisioned anew neglected or traditionally defamed female biblical characters; while some have highlighted more positive ones.[110] Scholars have also undertaken detailed exegetical inquiries with a view to establishing 'depatriarchalised' interpretations of the original language.[111] For example, Trible and Bird's respective examinations of Genesis 2-3 argue that the text does not support the notion that woman was created subordinate to man.[112]

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[101] Carol L. Meyers, "Recovering Objects, Re-Visioning Subjects: Archaeology and Feminist Biblical Study," in *A Feminist Companion to Reading the Bible: Approaches, Methods and Strategies*, ed. Athalya Brenner and Carole Fontaine (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997); Carol L. Meyers, "Was Ancient Israel a Patriarchal Society?," *JBL* 133, no. 1 (2014): 8-27, doi:10.1353/jbl.2014.0012.
[102] Rodney Stark, "Reconstructing the Rise of Christianity: The Role of Women," *Sociology of Religion* 56, no. 3 (1995): 229-244, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3711820.
[103] Elaine M. Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel according to Matthew* (New York: De Gruyter, 1991).
[104] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 2002.
[105] Rosemary Radford Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin, eds., *Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).
[106] J. Cheryl Exum, "'You Should Let Every Daughter Live': A Study of Exodus 1:8-2:10," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 63-82.
[107] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 1984.
[108] Phyllis A. Bird, *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997).
[109] Judith E. McKinlay, "Eve and the Bad Girls Club," *Hecate* 33, no. 2 (2007): 31-42. Judith E. McKinlay, "Jezebel and the Feminine Divine in Feminist Postcolonial Focus," in *Feminist Frameworks: Power, Ambiguity and Intersectionality*, ed. L. Juliana Claassens and Carolyn J. Sharp (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 59-78.
[110] Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1998). Leonard Swidler, *Biblical Affirmations of Women* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979); John Craghan, "Esther, Judith and Ruth: Paradigms for Human Liberation," *BTB* 12 (1982): 11–19, doi:10.1177 /014610798201200104.
[111] Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978); Letty M. Russell, ed., *The Liberating Word: A Guide to Nonsexist Interpretation of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976); Alicia Ostriker, *Feminist Revision and the Bible* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993).
[112] Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 72-141; Bird, "Missing Persons," 155-173.

Some scholars have also advocated censoring harmful, misogynist passages. They emphasise instead texts and reading practices that promote the primacy of the biblical message as a counter-cultural one - one that urges liberation from oppression[113] and promotes redeemed humanity as a 'community of equals'.[114] As Schüssler Fiorenza has expressed: "Only when we have listened to the many voices of women's experience in patriarchy will we be able to articulate how and through which Biblical texts God speaks to us today."[115] Mary Ann Tolbert similarly states: "one must defeat the Bible as a patriarchal authority by using the Bible as liberator."[116] Such hermeneutical approaches have worked to highlight how the Bible can be considered to positively encompass and speak to women, and how rich textual content for all human flourishing might be distilled from the androcentric bias within the literature.

Critically, feminist scholars have challenged predominant interpretive methods of exegesis and their perceived objective/scientific, value-free, apolitical stances.[117] Feminist interpreters have emphasised that scholars are conditioned by their social location and need to be aware of how their work may serve injurious political functions.[118] Feminist, womanist, and *mujerista* scholars have shown the importance and value of reading biblical texts from the standpoint of women's experience, where a plurality of meaningful interpretations can arise in acknowledgement of how readers' subjectivity shapes their encounter with the text.[119] Feminist, womanist and *mujerista* approaches to the Bible have

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[113] Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 965; McKay, "On the Future of Feminist Biblical Criticism," 74; Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk*, 22-24.
[114] Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 150-151; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 167, 179; Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 966; McKay, "On the Future of Feminist Biblical Criticism," 75.
[115] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, quoted in Elaine M. Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1991), 34.
[116] Mary Ann Tolbert, "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics," *Semeia* 28 (1983): 113-115.
[117] Davies, *Dissenting Reader*, 40-41.
[118] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 5-6.
[119] Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 956.

thus been instrumental in emphasising the ethical responsibility of biblical scholarship and modes of disseminating biblical content.[120]

Yet these interpretive approaches are not without their limitations, to which various debates among feminist scholars have drawn attention. Among feminist biblical scholars, it is argued that some perpetuate the distortion of stereotypical gender representations, and promote separatist, elitist attitudes, without interrogating their own Eurocentric, white, middle class perspectives.[121] Other critical positions suggest that feminist exegesis attacks the symptoms of androcentricity inscribed in the text, rather than the deep structures and causes behind it.[122] Further to this, some contend that the androcentric picture of women remains firm in the text, despite the gains made through inclusive, creative, and reconstructive interpretive efforts.[123] It is also argued that some feminist scholars tend to prioritise favoured texts, a narrow and selective 'canon within a canon', that will bear the positive interpretive outcomes desired.[124] While calls to censor misogynistic texts are reasonable voices in light of the substantial injurious potential of some biblical content, determining what texts should be disregarded due to their androcentric bias is far from straightforward. As this dissertation intends to explore, biblical texts that may seem unredeemable due to their portrayal of men's extreme violence against women might, in actuality, have significant liberatory value.

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[120] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship," *JBL* 107 (1988): 1-2, doi:10.2307/3267820.
[121] Janet Radcliffe Richards, *The Sceptical Feminist: A Philosophical Enquiry* (London: Penguin, 1983), 17-18; Susanne Heine, *Women and Early Christianity: Are the Feminist Scholars Right?* (London: SCM, 1987), 28-52; Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 958; McKay, "On the Future of Feminist Biblical Criticism," 72-73; Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology,* 79.
[122] Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 964.
[123] McKay, "On the Future of Feminist Biblical Criticism," 74. For a critical discussion of Trible's interpretation of Genesis 2-3, that illustrates the immense struggle to free a text from its original androcentric language see Milne, "Feminist Interpretations of the Bible," 30.
[124] Osiek, "Feminist and the Bible," 966.

Given these criticisms, feminist biblical scholarship could benefit from an interpretive method that analyses the androcentric language and imagery of women as it explicitly stands within the original text, while also illuminating the deeper substructures that cause and sustain injurious androcentricity and its hierarchical gender consciousness within the Bible and beyond. Furthermore, an interpretive approach capable of discerning liberatory potential through appeal to biblical texts beyond those supposedly associated with the 'canon within the canon', would contribute to revisionist/liberationist perspectives. It would be especially useful if this interpretive approach was able to draw contemporary liberatory meaning from those copious texts depicting extreme violence against women that feminist scholars have found most impervious to efforts to garner positive value.

Texts of Men's Extreme Violence against Women

The biblical texts depicting men's extreme violence against women[125] have proven especially problematic to feminist goals as they seem to do little more than capture overt, disturbing, and sometimes highly perverted misogyny. This misogyny is often made further troubling in its intimation of divine sanctioning. Certainly some women readers, often of womanist and *mujerista* identities, have found varying degrees of comfort, strength, and valued acknowledgement of their own experiences in the biblical witness to suffering women.[126] Scholars such as Delores Williams,[127] Elsa Tamez,[128] and Mercy

[125] See for example, Gen 16:1-6, 34:1-8; Judg 11:34-38, 15:6, 19:25-29, 21:10-23; 2 Sam 13, and Ezek 16:35-52.
[126] Judette A. Gallares, *Images of Faith* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992); Valerie C. Cooper, "Some Place to Cry: Jephthah's Daughter and the Double Dilemma of Black Women in America," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 181-191.
[127] Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (New York: Orbis Books, 1993).
[128] Elsa Tamez, "The Woman Who Complicated the History of Salvation," in *New Eyes for Reading: Biblical and Theological Reflections by Women from the Third World*, ed. John S. Pobee and Barbel Von Wartenberg-Potter (Oak Park: Meyer-Stone Books, 1986).

Oduyoye,[129] have explored how textual figures, such as Hagar, who eventually enjoy God's deliverance from maltreatment and anguish, provide avenues of solace and reassurance for persecuted women. Some scholarship, however, avoids these extreme passages altogether, while others minimise the violence through contentions that the male villain is not as villainous as we might think, and the female victim could have avoided the violence had she behaved differently. Solomon Landes argues, for instance, that Jephthah does not literally sacrifice his daughter;[130] and Ita Sheres, though clearly emphasising Dinah's experience of sexual violence, suggests she is somewhat responsible for her rape as she ventured out on her own.[131]

Yet, the biblical texts depicting imagery of women enslaved, raped, tortured, disfigured, and murdered entail something of an exegetical halting. They seem in their final assessment to be unable to adequately transcend the disturbing quality of the extreme violence depicted in any positive way. Many scholars emphasise that these texts must be given attention and exposed for all the dangerous perpetuation of patriarchal ideology that is in them.[132] Others hold they are important if only to confront us with difficult questions.[133] Still others contend that depictions of brutal violence against women, whether explicitly apparent in the text or metaphorically rendered, must be rejected as

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[129] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Biblical Interpretation and the Social Location of the Interpreter: African Women's Reading of the Bible," in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*, ed. Fernando F. Segoiva and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995).
[130] Some scholars suggest Jephthah's daughter's sacrifice may have been enduring lifelong virginity. See Solomon Landes, "Did Jephthah Kill His Daughter?," *Biblical Review* 7, no. 4 (1991): 28-42; David Marcus, *Jephthah and His Vow* (Lubbock: Texas Tech, 1986).
[131] Ita Sheres, *Dinah's Rebellion: A Biblical Parable for Our Time* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), 8, 17. For discussion on how this reading lessens the culpability of Shechem see, Mignon R Jacobs, "Love, Honour, and Violence: Socioconceptual Matrix in Genesis 34," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 23.
[132] J. Cheryl Exum, "The Ethics of Biblical Violence Against Women," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies, and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 248-271, ProQuest Ebook Central; Judith E. Sanderson, "Amos," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1992), 205-209, 215-221.
[133] Katheryn P. Darr, "Ezekiel," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1992), 183-90; and "Ezekiel's Justifications of God: Teaching Troubling Texts," *JSOT* 17, no. 55 (1992): 97-117, doi:10.1177/030908929201705508.

unacceptable, inexcusable, and beyond redemption.[134] For many scholars there is nothing of liberating worth for women in the figurative condemnation of Jerusalem as a wife deserving to be stripped naked in front of a mob, to be humiliated, beaten, abused, mutilated, stoned, and eventually hacked to pieces by them (Ezek 16:35-52). Efforts to lighten the severity of the staggering gendered violence depicted here through appeals to elevating its metaphorical meaning are frequently judged untenable, because they explain away the ethical issue of women's lived experience of such violence rather than seeking to engage it. As Gale Yee expresses: "this metaphor makes its theological point at the expense of real women and children who were and still are victims of sexual violence."[135] In sum, substantial feminist scholarship aligns with Trible's prevailing sentiment that 'texts of terror', expressive of so much intense violence perpetrated by men against women, cannot be positively reclaimed. At best we can only remember the victims associated with them, "to remember a past that the present embodies" in the hope that these "sad stories may yield new beginnings."[136]

Evidently, texts portraying men's extreme violence against women remain at the forefront of the struggle to discern what portions of the Bible may be accessed by women in a constructive way. The debate in relation to these violent texts is important, especially given the sheer volume of them.[137] These texts, which are often sidestepped, sanitised, or left

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[134] Athalya Brenner, "Some Reflections on Violence against Women and the Image of the Hebrew God: The Prophetic Books Revisited," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach and Ester Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2003), 79.
[135] Gale A. Yee, "Hosea," in *The Women's Bible Commentary, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Carol Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 305.
[136] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 2, 3.
[137] Further representative of the scholarship wrestling with the breadth of biblically based violence against women are: Mieke Bal, *Lethal Love Feminist Literary Readings of Biblical Love Stories* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Linda Day, "Rhetoric and Domestic Violence in Ezekiel 16," *BibInt* 8, no. 3 (2000): 205-30, doi:10.1163/156851500750096327; Cheryl B. Anderson, *Women, Ideology, and Violence Critical Theory and the Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and the Deuteronomic Law* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004); Gale A. Yee, *Poor Banished Children of Eve: Woman as Evil in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Refiner's Fire: A Religious Engagement with Violence* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Violence and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2006).

exposed only for their violent dreadfulness, must be vigilantly examined for any liberating value they might hold. For these texts are numerous, and, in the pursuit of ethical biblical scholarship, their substantial textual capacity to overtly and covertly provoke further gendered violence must be determinedly and thoroughly thwarted. If it is possible to read these texts in a way that effectually subverts the violence within them, such readings must be sought and disseminated. If it is possible, liberating features and functions operative in these texts must be drawn out from the androcentric language and characteristics that have masked them. Given the difficulty of redeeming these texts, other conceptual categories must be found that not only "restore the visibility of women"[138] to biblical texts but do so in a manner that both witnesses to their victimhood while at once undermining the androcentric violence within them.

In light of the above discussion, it seems that much more might be discerned as to how the Bible represents and reveals the distinctive peculiarities of gendered violence. The Bible's testament to victimised women is blatantly evident within multiple texts, regardless of their androcentric character and the traditional male-dominant exegetical history and interpretive practices that have denied them appropriate, serious, and sensitive treatment. What is more, as numerous scholars have shown, for example Trible,[139] Caroline Blyth,[140] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld,[141] and Jayne Scott,[142] there is striking commonality with women's enduring experience of men's violence. This quality intimates the potential for

[138] Anthony C. Thiselton, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2009), 304.
[139] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 1984.
[140] Caroline Blyth, "Terrible Silence, Eternal Silence: A Feminist Re-Reading of Dinah's Voicelessness in Genesis 34," *BibInt* 17, no. 5 (2009): 483-506, doi:10.1163/156851508X401150.
[141] Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, *Just Wives? Stories of Power and Survival in the Old Testament & Today* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003).
[142] Jayne Scott, "The One that Got Away," in *Ciphers in the Sand: Interpretations of The Woman Taken in Adultery (John 7.53-8.11)*, ed. Larry J. Kreitzer and Deborah W. Rooke (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 214-239.

female biblical victims to disclose deeper insights into the complexities of women's victimhood as it continues to be constructed and experienced within androcentric societies.

This locale of shared affinity is manifest in numerous biblical texts that witness to women's experiences of economic, psychological, sexual, and physical violence. Biblical texts and their female characters frequently show women rendered dependent on men, as men control the assets and women figure as their property. Readers learn of inheritances falling first to sons (Num 27:1-11). We perceive the distinctive vulnerability of Naomi and Ruth because they are widowed women (Ruth 1:1-22). We hear of men's trade in daughters, and men's capacity to gift wives to other men (Gen 29:15-30; Ex 21:4-7). We witness the struggles of women in households where a single man possesses multiple wives as well as concubines/handmaids: Sarah and Hagar (Gen 16), Hannah and Peninnah (1Sam 1:2-20), Leah and Rachel (Gen 29:15-30). We perceive aspects of psychological violence as women live within climates that maintain and threaten segregation and stigmatisation associated with menses and blood (Lev 15:25-30; Mark 5:25-34; Matt 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48). We see women living in contexts that threaten to blame and brand them with shame and dishonor, and to justify violence against them, should they sexually offend their fathers or husbands (Deut 22:13-21). This climate of threat is acutely evident in the accusations of adultery leveled at the unnamed woman of John 8:1-11.

Women's experience of sexual and physical violence is palpable in Shechem's rape of Dinah (Gen 34), and the incest rape of Tamar (2 Sam 13). We learn of the precarious place of women in the enactments of power and exchange between men. Abram gives his wife, Sarai, to Pharaoh to entertain his pleasures (Gen 12:10-20), and Lot offers his daughters to a mob for gang rape (Gen 19:6-8). This latter horror is actualised in the narrative that recounts the assault of the Levite's wife by manifold men (Judg 19). We learn of the plight of wartime women as they become the victors' plunder (Deut 20:14; Judg 21). Then there

are the women who are disappeared - Queen Vashti of the Book of Esther, ‘deposed’ for refusing to be paraded before gawking men; and the slain – Cozbi the Midianite (Num 25:6-9), Jephthah’s daughter (Judg 11), Samson’s first wife (Judg 15:6), the Levite’s wife (Judg 19), and Jezebel (2 Kgs 9:30-37).

The Bible clearly does not hide the horror of men’s violence perpetrated upon girls and women, which persists in androcentric cultures. On the contrary, multiple texts are frank in their witness to the suffering and violent persecution of women, as well as their cultural subsidiary location and experiences of isolation, silencing, and blame that underlie their maltreatment. While we may not be able to ascribe to the authors any conscious principled purpose behind this testimony, there is a manifestation of truthfulness about men’s performance of violence within their accounts which is nevertheless palpable.

Texts of extreme violence against women consequently necessitate detailed examination of this distinctive witness to women’s victimhood within androcentric cultures, because as yet, they have never had an interpretive model to mine them for their intricate representation of gendered patterns of violence and victimhood. They have never been examined to see how their androcentricity might actually be working against itself. That is to say, it is possible their explicit witness to gendered violence might also hold disclosing and destabilising dimensions that suffice to undermine the androcentric structures that mystify, obscure, and thus sustain violence against women in androcentric societies. This is an orientation to interpretation that suggests analysing these texts of horrific violence through a framework centred on gendered victimhood, might unearth readings that support stemming gendered violence.

Devising a new interpretive model capable of scrutinising the biblical representation of gendered violence may hold significant liberatory potential and meaning for women (and

men) going forward. Female biblical victims, as they are explicitly rendered in the text, may be perceptible as more than the sum of their suffering. They may be discernible as characters that illuminate women's experience of men's violence in ways that demystify, and thus invalidate, the underlying androcentric patterns and processes that continue to shape, obscure, and sustain this form of violence. These female victim characters may further illuminate not only *how* this form of violence operates, but *why* it functions as it does, even in contemporary societies where there has been some sincere political efforts to alleviate it.[143] Accordingly, it is possible these female biblical victims effect a transforming role within masculine discourse at large, as they function within the androcentricity of the text in ways that displace and explode it from within.[144] Significantly, if such readings are possible, these violent narratives and their female victims may undermine the pressing of biblical content into the service of sustaining violence against women, as they suffice to move human consciousness beyond its gendered victimising patterns and processes.

Chapter Summary

This survey of literature has highlighted men's victimisation of women as a distinctive, historical, and enduring form of violence, and a form of violence that is mystified and obscured in accordance with androcentric cultural and social norms. Discussion further established how androcentric biblical content and dissemination become complicit in this form of violence as contributors to the socialisation of girls and women as subsidiary and susceptible to maltreatment. Biblical texts depicting men's extreme violence against women were further emphasised as particularly problematic in their preservation of masculine ideology and capacity to propagate men's violence against women. This survey,

[143] UNICEF, "Domestic Violence," 10-11.
[144] McKay, "On the Future of Feminist Biblical Criticism," 78.

however, has stressed the correlation between contemporary and biblical women's experiences of men's violence, and a need for greater exploration of this biblical witness to gendered violence. Developing and applying an interpretive model capable of analysing the biblical representation of women's victimhood may yield liberating insights into the clandestine structures and processes that shape, obscure and sustain women's experiences of men's violence. In light of the determinations of this survey, I move now to establish over the course of Chapters 2 and 3 an interpretive method and theoretical framework capable of such an undertaking.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: MIMETIC THEORY

Situating Mimetic Theory

Over the next two chapters, I set out the theoretical foundation and conceptual framework of an interpretive model for examining the biblical representation of gendered violence in its anthropological and literary dimensions. Mimetic theory and feminist theory are established as interrelating dialogical partners that facilitate comprehensive conceptualisation and analysis of violence and victimhood in texts and contexts of persecution. Analytical concepts drawn from these fields are shown to enable detailed investigation of gendered patterns and processes of violence in texts portraying men's victimisation of women. They are also substantiated as applicable to discerning the capacity of violent biblical narratives and their female victims to demystify, and thus subvert, the enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence.

Initially, in this chapter, I introduce the constituent mimetic theory and feminist theory analytical tools of the interpretive model (see figure 1 below). I then provide a detailed overview of French philosopher René Girard's mimetic theory and the central analytical concepts that pertain to the interpretive objectives of this dissertation. This discussion illustrates that mimetic theory is an anthropological and literary conceptual framework that deconstructs patterns and processes of human violence in texts of persecution, including those within the Bible. Mimetic theory's place within the field of biblical scholarship is then discussed in association with consideration of critiques of the theory. The chapter then addresses critiques of mimetic theory in relation to gender, and outlines both the strengths and limitations of mimetic theory for feminist interpretive approaches. While mimetic theory is shown to be a significant lens for feminist biblical scholarship, the chapter

concludes that a feminist lens is necessary to collaborate with mimetic theory in determining the gendered intricacies of patterns and processes of violence. Establishing this feminist lens and substantiating how mimetic and feminist theory combine to form a comprehensive dialogical interpretive model for examining the biblical representation of gendered violence, is the focus of Chapter 3.

Introducing the Interpretive Model

The diagram below (figure 1), illustrates the central analytical concepts from mimetic and feminist theory, and their combined capacity to differentiate and examine women's and men's experience of victimhood.

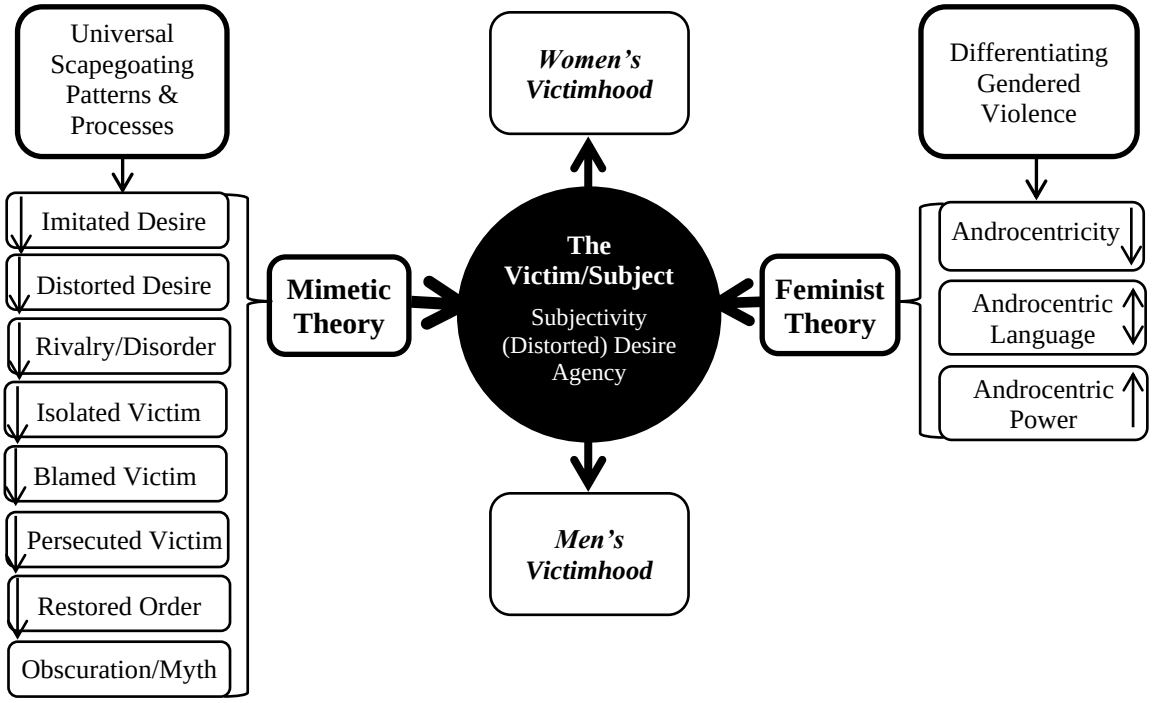

Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram

Basic to this interpretive model is mimetic and feminist theory's orientation to conceptualising and deconstructing human victimhood. That is, they are oriented to perceive how victims are made subject to violence, and how desire and agency is influenced in ways that shape their experience of victimisation. Mimetic theory presents a

framework for understanding anthropological patterns of human violence and the correlating social processes that subject victims to violence as scapegoats. As will be established below, mimetic theory provides for systematic analysis of victimhood within society and within texts of persecution, as it identifies the clandestine patterns and processes by which subjection to scapegoating occurs. Furthermore, mimetic theory facilitates examining the degree to which texts and contexts of persecution *mystify* and obscure victimisation or *demystify* and expose it.

The significance of mimetic theory is that it offers analytical concepts whereby contexts and texts of persecution can be examined for their depiction of the principles and practices of scapegoating. Contexts and texts may be analysed for their representation of *imitated and distorted desire* that generates *rivalry* and *social disorder,* which in turn leads to the *isolation* of a victim who is collectively *blamed* and *persecuted* with the effect of *restoring order* to society. In accordance with examining contexts and texts of persecution for these features of scapegoating, mimetic theory also provides for determining the extent to which victimisation is hidden through *obscuration/myth* – that is, through features and discourses that serve to validate persecution while concealing the truth of the unjust victimisation of a scapegoat. As this chapter will show, mimetic theory provides a developed framework and analytical tools for analysing texts of persecution. However, mimetic theory's tendency to universal conceptualisation of the patterns and processes of violence has meant insufficient consideration as to how these patterns and processes are co-constructed in gendered ways and thus distinctively experienced by women and men.

Feminist theory, then, provides a necessary qualifying lens through its discernment that a victim's subjection to violence is also shaped by constructs of gender that influence women's and men's subjectivity, desire, and agency in different ways. In other words, women's and men's experiences of violence and victimhood are highly distinctive from

each other due to respective enculturation into *androcentricity*, *androcentric language* and *androcentric power*. Also examining biblical texts of persecution through these feminist analytical concepts, enables women's and men's experiences of victimhood to be drawn out from generic, universal consideration and to be differentiated from one another. Accordingly, the feminist lens facilitates conceptualising the distinctive patterns and processes of women's victimhood from men's victimhood as they are represented in androcentric biblical texts. In sum, an interpretive model that combines the analytical categories of mimetic and feminist theory allows for examination of female biblical victims and their subsequent potential witness to the clandestine patterns and processes of gendered violence within androcentric contexts. I move now to address in detail the theoretical underpinnings and concepts of mimetic theory.

Mimetic Theory

The following discussion outlines René Girard's mimetic theory and its conceptualisation of victimhood according to three primary insights which will be applied to the biblical passages analysed in this dissertation.[1] The first major insight underpinning mimetic theory

[1] Extended literature is available on the development and philosophical intricacies of René Girard's mimetic theory. For detailed material on mimetic theory issuing from its originator see: René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965); *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. S. Bann and M. Metteer (London: Athlone, 1987); *Job: The Victim of his People*, trans. Y. Freccero (London: Athlone, 1987); *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001).
For detailed introductions and discussion of Girard's work see, Rebecca Adams and René Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice: A Conversation with René Girard," *Religion & Literature* 25, no. 2 (1993): 9-33, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40059554; René Girard, *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 1996); Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads* (New York: Crossroad, 1995); Sandor Goodhart and Ann Astell, eds., *Sacrifice, Scripture, and Substitution: Reading in Ancient Judaism and Christianity* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001); Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004); Michael Kirwan, *Girard and Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2009); Chris Fleming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004); Mack Stirling and Scott Burton, "Scandals, Scapegoats, and the Cross: An Interview with René Girard," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 43, no. 1 (2010): 107-134, https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content /uploads/.../Dialogue_V43N01_113.pdf; René Girard, Pierpaolo Antonello, and João Cezar De Castro Rocha, *Evolution and Conversion: Dialogues on the Origins of Culture* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), doi:10.5040/9781350018266.

- **mimetic desire** - perceives that desire is derived through imitation of another. This aspect is discussed in relation to the concepts of *imitation*, *distorted desire*, *rivalry*, and *social disorder*.[2] The second major insight - **the scapegoat mechanism** - is explained via the key features of collective violence and victimhood: an *isolated*, *blamed*, and *persecuted victim*, and the ensuing *restored order*. The functions of *obscuration/myth*, which suffice to both validate and conceal the unjust nature of the persecution, are also discussed. The third major insight – that **biblical texts demystify and subvert patterns and processes of scapegoating by showing the innocence of their victims -** is then explained. Mimetic theory is subsequently shown to provide an anthropological and literary framework for examining and evaluating the extent to which biblical texts witness to, demystify, and disrupt the patterns and processes that subject people to violence.

Mimetic Desire, Rivalry, and Social Disorder

Foundational to mimetic theory is recognition that humanity's highly imitative behaviour includes acquiring desires through imitating the desires of another – what Girard calls "desire according to the Other".[3] In other words, human subjects come to desire an object when desire for that object is modelled by another. Desire is thus conceived of as triangular as it is structured on the relationship *between* a **subject** and a **model** *to* an **object**.[4] Human desire, understood as the infinitely varied mass of wants beyond instinctive biological needs and appetites, is thus *mimetic*,[5] not autonomously determined.[6]

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[2] Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*, 5.
[3] Ibid. For discussion of Girard's conceptualisation of the imitative nature of humans and desire alongside other historical thinkers who have made similar assertions see Wolfgang Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory* (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2013), 133-134.
[4] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, 1-52.
[5] James Williams notes that Girard employs the Greek derived terms 'mimetic' and 'mimesis' instead of 'imitation', to denote the capacity for desire to escalate beyond mere copying to the point of eliminating a rival deemed to have the desired element. *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1991), 8.
[6] This thesis surfaced from Girard's systematic comparison of the authors and literary works of Cervantes, Flaubert, Stendhal, Proust and Dostoyevsky, and formed the primary argument of his 1965 publication, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*. Girard understands that it is this disclosure of human relations as perilously

While mimetic desire enables complex forms of relationship and learning, the imitated quality of human desire also renders it unstable and consequently volatile. The triangular relationship that stimulates desire has the capacity to degenerate and distort into open rivalry and conflict when desire for an object is held in common and the subject is in close proximity to the model.[7] In mimetic theory terms, the triangular relationship may be one of '*external mediation*', and therefore harmless, even good, as the model and subject are so far separated from each other that there is no possibility of hostile competition developing. Healthy forms of positive and creative mimesis certainly abound, such as that between a parent and a child, or a teacher and a student, which generate effective modes of loving, learning and formation. However, the triangular relationship may become one of '*internal mediation*', and therefore dangerous, as a subject's real-life nearness to their model means violent rivalry can eventuate if objects are not shared or attainable.[8]

Mimetic theory further distinguishes between two different expressions of imitated/mimetic desire - *acquisitive/physical mimesis* and *metaphysical mimesis*. Acquisitive desire denotes desire that has become distorted as the subject seeks to grasp at, or take, so as to acquire, a precise object from the model or mediator. Furthermore, underlying forms of mimetic desire is metaphysical desire, that is the yearning or search for greater, more integral being. Consequently, from a sense of one's own lack of being, a subject's acquisitive desire is intertwined with a want to attain the metaphysical qualities a mediator appears to have, such as autonomy, status, power, and uniqueness.[9] Such metaphysical acquisitions seem to promise the subject the very fullness of being they perceive in the other. Put another way, desiring the other's objects is to desire the other's

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mimetic that is the constituent of the great texts of Western literature. He substantiates this position further in his extensive treatment of Shakespeare's plays in *A Theatre of Envy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[7] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 16.

[8] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, 9.

[9] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, 53; Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 22.

being which encompasses their choice of objects. Richard Doran conveys the interrelationship between these two expressions of mimetic desire as follows:

> Imitative desire, wherever it occurs, is always a desire to be Another because of a profound sense of the radical insufficiency of one's own very being. To covet what the other desires is to covet the other's essence… the subject really wants not only what the mediator wants or perhaps has, but even what the mediator is…[10]

These two dimensions of desire are interconnected and there is fluidity in their interconnection. This is evident in situations where rivalries intensify to the point that the original object of contention is forgotten. Girard notes: "As the role of the *metaphysical* grows greater in desire, that of the *physical* diminishes in importance. As the mediator draws nearer, passion becomes more intense and the object is emptied of its concrete value."[11] Thus, while conflict may develop in relation to a coveted object, inwardly antagonism generates in relation to metaphysical concerns. The imitated model senses their unique identity is threatened and so moves to protect it; in turn the imitator generates contempt for the model and reciprocally claims their distinctiveness, opposing also any conception of mediated desires on their part.[12] From their perspective "it is the mediator who is responsible for the rivalry."[13] These two dimensions of acquisitive and metaphysical desire lend to the volatile nature and potential of human desire to engender hostile rivalry depending on the proximity of the subject to their mediator. Desire thus has

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[10] Robert M. Doran, "Imitating the Divine Relations: A Theological Contribution to Mimetic Theory," *Method: Journal of Lonergan Studies* 23 (2005): 176, https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/article/235222.
[11] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, 85.
[12] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146-148; Girard, *I See Satan*, 15-16, 22; Girard, *Things Hidden*, 290.
[13] Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, 11.

the potential to become distorted and monstrous as it turns envious, jealous, and aggressive.[14]

Further to the dynamics of distorted desire, as rivalry escalates between a subject and their model, the subject and model increasingly come to resemble each other. Within mimetic theory the terms '*reciprocity*' and *'mirroring'* encapsulate this interplay between rivals as they come to imitate one another's aggression. As noted above, though the rivals themselves retain an illusory perspective of being different from one another, in actuality the escalation of their reciprocal hostilities has made them into copies of each other. As mimetic rivalry intensifies a process of 'undifferentiation' takes place between the subject and the model - a process also termed as '*doubling'* or becoming '*mimetic/monstrous doubles'*.[15] In contexts where neighbouring groups or countries have fallen into competitive, aggressive rivalry with one another, the quality of mirroring each other's hostilities can escalate to the extremes of open war.[16]

The intensification of rivalry has the capacity to spread as a contagion and cause widespread conflict, crisis, and social disorder. The escalation of rivalry and aggression ignites the volatile tinder of other mimetic rivalries. As Girard explains: "The rivalries of desires tend to become exasperated, and as they do, they tend to contaminate third parties who are just as addicted as we are to the entanglements of mimetic rivalries."[17] Violence can therefore spread like a disease with rampant velocity. As people encounter obstructions and obstacles, scandals and stumbling blocks, in their rivalries, which prevent them from securing their acquisitive or metaphysical desires, pent-up frustrations eventually boil over. As Girard describes: "little scandals have a tendency to dissolve into larger ones, and

[14] Girard, *I See Satan*, 10; Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 23.
[15] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 158-161.
[16] René Girard, *Battling to the End: Conversations with Benoît Chantre*, trans. M. Baker (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 1-25.
[17] Girard, *I See Satan*, 11.

larger ones in turn go on to contaminate one another until the strongest of these absorb the weaker ones."[18] The social effects of this dynamic can be dire as the structures that sustain differentiation and order breakdown in the proliferating course of 'undifferentiation'. In this way a community can be thrust into violent social disorder and crisis. As Girard observes to be a fundamental truth: "if left unappeased, violence will accumulate until it overflows its confines and floods the surrounding area."[19]

Scapegoating: Blame, Persecution, and Myth

In mimetic theory the conceptualisation of victimhood identifies that social order which has collapsed into mimetic conflict and crisis, is restored through the processes of scapegoating. That is, the social disorder caused by rampant mimetic conflict reaches a point where the fractured community morphs into a mob that subjects a vulnerable other to isolation and vilification as the sole cause of the unrest, and subsequently persecutes them. As Girard explains this process: "There is a mimetic competition of scandals, which continues until the moment when the most polarising scandal remains alone on the stage. This is when the whole community is mobilised against one and the same individual."[20] In effect, a new form of mimesis takes place as individual mimesis transforms into collective, accusatory mimesis. The fragmented community modifies and regroups through imitating the violent accusations and persecutory actions levelled against a single figure (or group) within the crisis.[21] In this way the community manifests and exerts a combined and total agency over the figure who has been made subject to their vilification. This scapegoat is key to the restoration of social order as a figure made to absorb the community's violence that is cathartically channelled upon them.

[18] Ibid., 23.
[19] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 10.
[20] Girard, *I See Satan*, 23.
[21] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 48.

Girard identifies further dynamics at work in the selection and subjection of a lone figure to victimisation. In one sense the selection of the victim happens spontaneously and invisibly at the apex of the mimetic escalation of tensions to crisis point.[22] The designated victim is arbitrarily substituted for all the other potential victims that could have been selected. However, selection of victims also typically orients around figures deemed distinctive in some way. The victim may have a mental or physical disability or a presumed defect; they might be particularly attractive, or intelligent; they may be a vulnerable 'other' of an ethnic minority, a child, an elderly person, or a woman; or they may occupy the social place of a foreigner, or vagabond, or even a distinguished elite.[23] Girard notes the distinctiveness of victims in literary and historical contexts. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, Oedipus possesses multiple characteristics that render him distinct and vulnerable to victimisation, such as his kingship, foreign identity and physically deformed leg. This vulnerability is exploited as he is determined responsible for the plague infecting Thebes.[24] In the context of the great panics of the medieval period such as the black plague, "the victims then were Jews, lepers, foreigners, the disabled, the marginal people of every kind."[25]

The arbitrary selection and obscured innocence of the victim are intrinsic to the processes of scapegoating. As the scapegoat is constructed by the riled mob as blameworthy for causing the social crisis, so the mob's collective agency and punitive violence against the victim appears justified. Blaming the victim disguises their maltreatment and conceals the truth of their unjust violent persecution. This victimising process suffices to psychosocially re-establish stabilising lines of social division that had otherwise collapsed. As the mob

[22] Girard, *I See Satan*, 24-25.
[23] Vulnerability to substitute victimhood includes the exalted. Kings, queens and prophets, for example, are also isolated figures within a community and make easy targets for a mimetically charged crowd. Girard, *I See Satan*, 26, 72; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 103-10; Girard, *Scapegoat*, 12-23.
[24] Fleming, *René Girard*, 90-92; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 74-77.
[25] Girard, *I See Satan*, 72.

differentiates itself from the victim, social differences and associated order are reinstated.[26] Social stability is thus restored within the populace as its mimetic aggression is collectively and cathartically channelled onto the victim, within a consciousness that the one determined responsible has been finally expelled or exterminated.[27] As Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* illustrates further, order is restored to Thebes when Oedipus, deemed responsible for the 'plague', is expelled. These processes of scapegoating, as they isolate, blame, and persecute a victim while obscuring the truth of the unjust violence perpetrated, enable the restoration of social order and successful mitigation of aggressive mimetic energies within the group. Scapegoating consequently has the pretence of a moral act as it allows the group to survive and manage its own violence, but in actuality, it is a mimetic act of violence. While the victim may not be entirely innocent of some kind of wrongdoing, they are structurally innocent because the violence done to them is motivated by the mimetic tensions that the group needs to expiate.

This 'scapegoat mechanism', as it is termed within mimetic theory, is also perceived as a process that has been critical to the survival of humanity and generative of religion and culture. Fundamentally orientated to peace and order, this process has guarded against and controlled potentially annihilative social conflict that stems from mimetic desire and rivalry. While human societies, from nascent origins through to contemporary formations, have come to develop ever more sophisticated means of controlling rivalry and violence (for example through law and ritual), Girard contends that human cultures and their institutions are ultimately founded upon scapegoating and the restorative differentiation and order it generates.[28]

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[26] Ibid., 30.
[27] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 20-25, 101-103, 306.
[28] For discussion on contemporary institutions originating from sacrificial contexts see Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 299-300, and *I See Satan*, 88-94.

Girard argues that the development of human language, culture, and religion initiated and developed from a founding collective act of murder.[29] This stabilising murder eventually came to be ritually re-enacted with surrogate victims.[30] The cathartic release and the restored harmony that came with the victimised body instigated a sense of the sacred at work within the group. As a consequence, the accused victim came to be sacralised and deified.[31] This process of divinisation, termed '*double transference*', signifies how primitive religion formed around the murdered victim. The mob projected sacred status onto the victims as they aligned them with the cause and cure of disorder. Though innocent relative to the group, the victim attained sacred status as both an instigator and ameliorator of the violent disorder.[32] In Girard's words:

> The spontaneous lynching is what re-establishes peace and, with the victim as intermediary, gives this peace a religious, a divine, meaning… The victim is thus transfigured twice: the first time in a negative, evil fashion; the second in a positive, beneficial fashion. Everyone thought this victim had perished, but it turns out he or she must be alive since this very one reconstructs the community immediately after destroying it. He or she is clearly immortal and thus divine.[33]

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[29] Girard discusses the process of hominization, in *Things Hidden* (84-104). He argues that as mimetic rivalry intensified with the increasing brain size of hominids, patterns of dominance that sustained order in the group diminished. Girard notes that: "Beyond a certain threshold of mimetic power, animal societies become impossible. This threshold corresponds to the appearance of the victimage mechanism and would thus be the threshold of hominization" (ibid., 95). The first cadaver which ended the original crisis, became the focal point of the first non-instinctual attention. This prompted a new consciousness in the nascent human community. It follows, for Girard, that the eventual substitution of a sacrificial victim for the original becomes the first symbolic sign - the transcendental signifier. This substitution is the first instance of one thing representing another and is thus the origin of language and the differentiating system that underlies ritual/culture.

[30] Girard explains in *Violence and the Sacred* (101), that the 'surrogate victim' denotes the ritual victim who "serves as a substitute for all the members of the community".

[31] Girard, *I See Satan*, 65-66.

[32] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 39. Girard also notes this phenomenon of double transference is his discussion of the term *pharmakos* in classical Greek sacrificial ritual practices. Ritual victims who were beaten, expelled and murdered, were labelled '*pharmakos'*, a term derivative of '*pharmakon'* meaning both "poison and antidote for poison, sickness and cure". Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 95.

[33] Girard, *I See Satan*, 65-66.

This sense of the sacred, with its underlying dual construction of a demonised and divinised victim, is a common feature evident within the deities of ancient myths. As Girard notes: "Dionysus is at one and the same time the 'most terrible' and the 'most gentle' of the gods. There is a Zeus who hurls thunderbolts and a Zeus 'as sweet as honey.' In fact, there is no ancient divinity who does not have a double face."[34] Double-faced deities within mythology subsequently indicate the dynamics of double transference that are ultimately anchored upon the reality of scapegoating. Thus, such double-faced deities signify to modern audiences the sacrificial economy of ancient religions where "violence is the heart and secret soul of the sacred."[35]

Girard identifies that three key religious and cultural institutions of primitive communities - prohibitions, rituals, and myths - arose from scapegoating. Prohibitions and taboos developed to serve as regulatory methods for restricting and channelling the escalation of mimetic violence. Ritual processes sanctioned controlled re-enactment of scapegoating, especially in sacrificial rituals, in order to channel and alleviate mimetic tensions.[36] Myths provided the narrative framework to justify prohibitions and ritualised scapegoating while also obscuring the truth of the murder intrinsic to it.[37] Myths therefore functioned to both legitimise the ritual re-enactment of scapegoating, while constructing a collective consciousness impervious to realising the unjust nature of the victimisation enacted.[38] As James Williams conveys: "Myth establishes prohibition and ritual but is not temporally

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[34] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 251. Girard further explains that deities with dual countenances - both warlike and peaceful - came to symbolise another configuration of sacrificial violence, foreign war. Girard remarks that foreign wars enabled communities to channel potentially devastating mimetic aggressions from within the group to the outside. Thus, "Inversely, there is a reason to believe that the wars described as 'foreign wars' in the mythic narratives were in fact formerly civil strifes." *Violence and the Sacred*, 249. Mimetic theory further explains that perceptions of divine judgement and providence at work in contexts of conflict and warfare, are derivative of the phenomenon of double transference and the consciousness that deities cause and cure crises. Wolfgang Palaver, "War and Politics: Clausewitz and Schmitt in the Light of Girard's Mimetic Theory," *Contagion* 24 (2017): 109, doi:10.14321/contagion.24.1.0101.
[35] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 31.
[36] Girard, *I See Satan*, 94.
[37] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 33-36, 101-103.
[38] Ibid., 258-259.

prior. Myth represents that stage of language in which the community achieves an explanation of and obscuring of violence by covering it over with narrative transformations…. It simultaneously reveals and conceals its own basis."[39]

Girard's extensive examination of a range of archaic myths has emphasised that real human violence and scapegoating lies behind mythical texts. This finding is particularly validated in archaic myths that exemplify the same textual patterns of other persecutory texts that have clearly known victims.[40] These common textual patterns comprise: 1) an initial situation of disorder or undifferentiation, inclusive of conflict and crisis;[41] 2) an isolated individual (or group) accused of committing a transgression thereby triggering the state of disorder and crisis; 3) identification of the isolated individual with features that mark him or her out for victimisation, followed by their expulsion or extermination; and 4) the restoration of order issuing from the act of collective violence. Texts of persecution also characteristically comprise supernatural, fantastical elements, including double-faced deities involved in causing and curing crises.[42]

It follows then that myths, such as the Babylonian creation myth, *Enuma Elish*, which exhibits these patterns,[43] can be determined as founded upon scapegoating. For these same textual patterns are evident within medieval persecution contexts[44] and the witchcraft trials

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[39] Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred,* 11.
[40] Girard, *Scapegoat,* 26-27; Fleming, *René Girard*, 80.
[41] The state of disorder and social crisis is often conveyed through symbolic forces of destruction such as plagues, tempests, fires, floods, and earthquakes. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred,* 31.
[42] Girard, *Scapegoat,* 24-27, 49-50. Girard refutes the critical literacy precept that "no text can be more reliable than the least reliable of its components." Girard, *Girard Reader,* 121. Girard substantiates that the presence of fantastical features points to real persecution. As in the examples of medieval crises historians realise actual massacres eventuated alongside the superstitious or illogical nature of the accusations. The paradoxical combination of both fiction and fact in texts of persecution gives certainty to the reality of the violence, as it stems from the overstimulated climate where the persecutors truly believe the incredible and magical as they seek to legitimise their persecution (ibid., 118-129).
[43] The patterns of persecutory texts in this myth are evident in 1) a context of undifferentiation and chaos, 2) a causal agent of the chaos, the goddess Tiamat, 3) demarcation and vilification of the causal agent as a monster, and 4) order established when the god Marduk (supported by other gods) slaughters Tiamat and creates the landscape from her mutilated body.
[44] For further discussion see Girard's discussion of Guillaume de Machaut's *Judgement of the King of Navarre*. This medieval poem aligns with anti-Semitic persecutions during the devastation of the black

- though historians are in no doubt that real massacres and murders of isolated others lie behind these features.[45] With regards to archaic myths, Girard subsequently reasons that "the reality of the victims behind the text can be ascertained from inside the text, for the same interpretive reasons and with the same certainty as can be the reality of the persecuted witch behind the account of a witch trial in the fifteenth century."[46] Based on this schema and logic Girard affirms that real human victims are intrinsic to myths that illustrate two or more of these textual patterns.[47]

Biblical Disclosure of Scapegoating

Integral to Girard's conceptualisation of human patterns and processes of violence and victimhood is determining that the Bible is distinctive from other ancient mythical texts in its treatment of scapegoating. Though standard textual patterns of persecutory/sacrificial myths that conceal victims are evident in the Bible, Girard identifies that they come to be inverted by the Bible's blatant attention to, and concern for, the victim. As biblical narratives emphasise the victim, they also varyingly illuminate the patterns and processes of human violence and victimhood underlying the victimisation. Aspects of distorted desire, rivalry, and social disorder, which lead to the isolation, blame, and persecution of the victim become discernible within the narratives. Significantly, the textual witness to this victimhood subverts the usual means by which this victimisation is justified and obscured in sacrificial myths. As the truth of the expulsion or murder of an innocent victim is made clear the obscuring faculty of myth is thwarted, and the scapegoat mechanism in its entirety is undermined. In this way, mimetic theory highlights that the Bible is permeated by a diagnostic and remedial dynamic that draws out the clandestine

plague. It recounts, via fantastical elements, that the wickedness of the Jews was responsible for manifold deaths, thus they were justifiably exterminated. Girard, *Scapegoat,* 1-3.

[45] Girard, *Scapegoat,* 10-11.

[46] Adams and Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice," 17.

[47] Ibid., 24.

anthropological patterns and processes of violence and victimhood so human experience might move beyond them.[48]

Mimetic theory draws attention to the similarities that abound between biblical myths and those of wider world mythology. The same motifs in other mythology are also evident in the Hebrew Bible – rivalry, dissolution of ordered difference, conflict, crisis, the phenomenon of all against one, and the instalment of stabilising differentiation, prohibition, ritual, and sacrifice. So too, is the presence of a transcendent deity who is involved in these violent processes in ways that effect and resolve crisis. Girard confirms that: "In every one of the great scenes of Genesis and Exodus there exists a theme or quasi-theme of the founding murder or expulsion."[49] This is perceptible in the context of the Garden of Eden. Crisis occurs between Adam, Eve, and God;[50] however, "God takes the violence upon himself and founds humanity by driving Adam and Eve far away from him."[51] The motif of disorder and crisis continues in the narratives of the Tower of Babel, Noah and the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah.[52] In the latter two narratives Girard highlights the metaphor of single victimhood in association with characteristics of founding texts:

> Since the single victim brings reconciliation and safety by restoring life to the community, it is not difficult to appreciate that a sole survivor in a world where all others perish can, thematically, amount to the same thing as a single victim extracted from a group in which no one, save the victim, perishes. Noah's Ark,

[48] Girard, *I See Satan,* 103-136.
[49] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 142.
[50] Girard, *Things Hidden,* 142, 223, 275; Girard, *I See Satan,* 7.
[51] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 142. See also Gil Bailie's interpretation of this narrative in *Violence Unveiled* (137-138). He highlights further this narrative's disclosure of the problem of distorted human desires. He notes the text "is about how humans fall into alien and duplicitous relationship with God and one another because of an inability to be in the presence of the "other" – whether a human other or a divine Other – without succumbing to envy, resentment, guile and dissembling" (ibid., 138).
[52] Girard, *Things Hidden,* 143, 148.

> which alone is spared by the Flood, guarantees that the world will begin all over again. It is Lot and his family who are the sole survivors of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot's wife, who is changed into a pillar of salt, brings back into this story the motif of the single victim.[53]

Further to the motifs of rivalry, conflict, crisis and restorative violence is the prevalent theme of warring brothers: Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his eleven brothers, for example. Girard notes: "It is always by violence, by the expulsion of one of the brothers, that the crisis is resolved, and differentiation returns once again."[54] Frequently apparent too, is the motif that signifies the ensuing establishment of prohibition and a ritualised sacrificial economy in association with transcendent authority. This motif is observed in aspects such as the instigation of circumcision, covenantal obligations, altar building requirements, and the institution of animal sacrifice.[55]

Yet, beyond such textual similarities with other myths, Girard illustrates the Bible's distinctive witness to the victim and victimising processes - its demystifying and demythologising orientation - through comparative examination of multiple texts. This demystifying orientation is evident in the comparison of two myths of founding civilisations and rival brothers, namely Romulus and Remus, and Cain and Abel. While Romulus' slaying of Remus is rendered by the myth as crucial and justified given its beneficial effects that lead to the founding of Rome, Abel's death conversely is patently pronounced as fratricide.[56] Far from being portrayed as justified in his actions, Cain is exposed as a "vulgar murderer".[57] Additionally, the biblical text accentuates the blatant curtailment of the contagion of violence. God responds to this founding murder by

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[53] Ibid., 143.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 82.
[57] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 147.

stressing the law against homicide, and by marking Cain so as to protect him from any retributive violence.[58]

Similarly, the biblical orientation to demystify victimhood is evident in the comparison of the narrative of Joseph and his brothers with the Greek story of King Oedipus. Girard emphasises the parallels between these narratives. Both texts depict a son who threatens his family. Oedipus is predicted to murder his father and wed his mother; Joseph voices his dreams that portend he will rule his brothers. Both Oedipus and Joseph are expelled from their families and identify as foreigners in their proceeding contexts. Both are accused of sexual offences. Oedipus is charged with incest, and Joseph with raping Potiphar's wife (a crime with incestuous overtones as Potiphar has been like a father to him). Oedipus and Joseph both come to be respectively associated with the catastrophes of plague and famine.[59] The textual similarities diverge in their conclusions, however. The Greek tragedy ultimately represents Oedipus as fully culpable; his unjust victimisation is obscured as the text has Oedipus admit to the crimes he is accused of and thus for causing the plague. [60] By contrast, the biblical text overtly depicts Joseph's thorough innocence and scapegoating. He is shown to be unjustly victimised by his brothers, falsely accused of rape, wrongly imprisoned by the Egyptians, and definitively not responsible for the famine.[61] Girard

[58] Ibid., 144-149.
[59] René Girard, *Studies in Violence, Mimesis, and Culture: When These Things Begin: Conversations with Michel Treguer,* trans. Trevor Cribben Merrill (Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2014), 28. Girard, *I See Satan,* 106-115, 118-120.
[60] Fleming, *René Girard*, 90-92; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 74-77; Girard, *Studies in Violence*, 29. For discussion of this same element of final refrain from exposing the innocence of the scapegoat in Euripides' *The Bacchae* see René Girard, "Violence in Biblical Narrative," *Philosophy and Literature* 23, no. 2 (1999): 387-392, doi:10.1353/phl.1999.0038; Richard Golsan, *René Girard and Myth: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 45.
[61] Girard, *I See Satan,* 106-115, 118-120; Girard, *Studies in Violence,* 28-29.

concludes: "Where the myth sees the scapegoat as 'the true culprit,' the story of Joseph sees an innocent party wrongly convicted."[62]

Girard has emphasised scapegoating mechanics, and their disclosure, within numerous other biblical texts. By way of brief allusion to Girard's body of work, Moses and his companions indicate scapegoating processes as they are expelled from Egypt in connection to resolving the social disorder signalled in the plagues.[63] The Ten Commandments and devising of intricate legal directives further signify the primary concern to proscribe and control distorted desire,[64] and to sustain social differentiation and order over against the chaos of undifferentiation that ultimately leads to scapegoating.[65] Girard has also perceived that the biblical witness to victims and scapegoat violence becomes increasingly pronounced in the Prophets, particularly the Suffering Servant of Isaiah,[66] and in the Psalms.[67]

The demystifying phenomenon of the voice of the victim has been strongly evidenced in Girard's study of the Book of Job. Job may be singled out from his community and relentlessly pressed via his three 'friends' to find himself blameworthy and deserving of his misfortunes. However, the text represents Job as refusing to succumb to these scapegoating forces as Oedipus had. "Job clearly articulates the cause of his suffering – the fact that he is ostracised and persecuted by the people around him. He had done no harm, yet everyone turns away from him and is dead set against him. He is the scapegoat of the community."[68]

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[62] Girard, *Studies in Violence*, 28. For yet another comparative example, see Girard's discussion of Philostratus' account of the miracle of Apollonius of Tyana with the pericope popularly known as 'the woman caught in adultery' of John 8:1-11. Girard, *I See Satan*, 49-61; Girard, *Studies in Violence*, 123.
[63] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 153-154; Girard, *I See Satan*, xx.
[64] Girard, *I See Satan*, x-xi, 7-12.
[65] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 154.
[66] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 154-157; Girard, *I See Satan*, 28-30.
[67] Girard, *I See Satan*, xviii, 116-117, 127-128; Girard, "Violence in Biblical Narrative," 387-392.
[68] Girard, *Job*, 4.

Girard further emphasises that the biblical orientation to expose and demystify human patterns and processes of violence includes disrupting typical conceptualisations of violent, double-faced deities that sacrificial myths represent. The Book of Job, for example, confronts two conceptions of God: 1) the 'god' of persecution, the 'violent sacred' of sacrificial myths, (which is really the embodied, hostile will of the community); and 2) the God of victims. As Girard notes of this biblical inversion of sacrificial myth: "Job not only resists totalitarian contagion but wrests the deity out of the process of persecution to envision him as the God of victims, not of persecutors."[69] Accordingly, discerning the impetus in biblical narratives to demystify human structures of violence and victimhood necessitates careful attention to perceiving how the narratives also disrupt and expose the 'violent deity' as a construction of human acts of persecution.

From such examination of biblical narratives Girard determines that a distinctive process of demystifying and demythologising of violence is operative within the Bible. "Throughout the Old Testament, a work of exegesis is in progress, operating in precisely the opposite direction of the usual dynamics of mythology and culture."[70] Girard qualifies, however, that the Old Testament has not totally completed the process of conceptualising the deity, Yahweh, as "entirely free from violence".[71] Rather, they are "texts in travail",[72] texts that reflect "humanity's struggle to extricate itself from primitive religion and blood sacrifice and to renounce its dependence on the structures of sacred violence."[73]

For Girard, this conceptualisation reaches its ultimate disclosure in the passion narratives of the Gospels. Though the passion narratives too may at first seem to reflect typical

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[69] Girard, *I See Satan*, 117. See also Girard, *Job*, 138-145.
[70] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 157.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 141.
[73] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 136.

mythical patterns resulting in a divinised victim, they explicitly attest to the unmitigated innocence of Jesus, and the injustice of the persecuting mob. The resurrection signifies a God that neither causes violent disorder, nor requires bloody sacrifices. The God of the crucified-and-risen Jesus is a God of victims who has forgiven and overturned the human violence of scapegoating which culminated at Calvary. Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus undermines the scapegoat mechanism on a cultural level through the edification of its human workings, and so Jesus inaugurates an alternative form of pacific mimetic community.[74]

For Girard, the passion narratives finalise what has been perceptibly at work within the Hebrew Bible texts. That is, the demythologising of the violent sacred and the debunking of the apparatus of myths that function to obscure and sustain human violence and scapegoat victimhood.[75] On the basis of his anthropological and literature analysis, Girard perceives there is a transcendental quality to this revelation, an 'in-breaking' of a loving God into the human history of violent patterns, so humanity might work free from them.[76] This is a revelation that draws out and distinguishes the human and violent identity of the *sacred*, from the *holy*, pacific and loving True God.[77] Girard affirms this revelation on the basis of his anthropological and literature analyses, not because of a faith lens. As Williams further explains:

> *Revelation* is a key term, for Girard finds in the Bible the revelation or disclosure of a God who does not want victims, a God who is disclosed in the action of those who take the side of victims. As revelation is represented in the biblical texts, it

[74] Girard, *I See Satan*, 121-153.
[75] Ibid., 122-123.
[76] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 95.
[77] Girard, *Battling to the End*, xi, 120-130.

> means, for Girard, the tendency of many narrators to side with the innocent victim rather than with the persecuting figure or community.[78]

Further to Girard's theorising, this Judaeo-Christian demystification of the structures of human violence has brought about a particular psychosocial shift. Victimising according to the patterns and processes of scapegoating is of course still present in contemporary society, though it exists in degenerate forms due to the Judaeo-Christian revelation and its counter-mythical thrust.[79] Contemporary scapegoating has been desacralized; it no longer functions in accordance with notions of divinised victims. Most cultures are no longer inept at recognising the unjust blame and persecution of scapegoats.[80] Such awareness frustrates the capacity for scapegoating to work as "a scapegoat remains effective as long as we believe in its guilt. Having a scapegoat means not knowing that we have one. Learning that we have a scapegoat is to lose it forever."[81] Mimetic theory thus emphasises a significant interrelationship between the biblical representation of violence and victimhood and its relevance to ongoing issues of contemporary human violence. Not least, this theoretical framework calls us to consider where and how the patterns and processes of violence and victimhood continue to be operative today; and critically, to ascertain and demystify the myths that sustain a social consciousness that permits and conceals victimisation.

Mimetic Theory in Summary

The above discussion has established that mimetic theory provides a comprehensive understanding of anthropological patterns and processes of human violence and victimhood, and how texts of persecution, especially biblical texts, evidence those patterns

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[78] Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred,* 12.
[79] Girard, *Girard Reader*, 15-18.
[80] Girard, "Mimesis and Violence," 16-18.
[81] Girard, *Battling to the End,* xiv.

and processes. Mimetic theory provides a theoretical framework and conceptual tools that enable biblical texts to be examined for their representation and demystification of victimhood. That is, they may be examined for their representation of *imitated/distorted desire*, *rivalry,* and *social disorder,* and the subsequent *isolation* of a victim who is *blamed* and *persecuted* with the effect of *restoring order* to society. Biblical texts of persecution can also be examined for the degree to which they demystify and expose the patterns and processes human violence and victimhood, as they invert the functions of *obscuration/myth* which have typically validated and concealed the persecution of innocent victims.

Criticisms and Responses

Mimetic theory has incurred a variety of criticisms challenging its validity as an anthropological, scientific theory, and as an applicable interpretive lens for biblical analysis.[82] The following section sets out key lines of critique within these areas. Discussion further verifies, via recourse to responses to these criticisms, the veracity of mimetic theory as an appropriate and rigorous lens for conceptualising and analysing human structures of violence and biblical texts of persecution; though discussion notes mimetic theory's limitation regarding conceptualisation of gendered violence.

One vein of criticism opposes mimetic theory for failing to meet the characteristics of a scientific theory, especially because of its perspective regarding the biblical tradition. Grant Kaplan summarises the standpoint of this critical faction: "By reading biblical revelation as a Rosetta Stone for interpreting the origins of culture, Girard's methodology exceeds the boundaries of modern social science. Since he is doing theology, argue modern

[82] For extended discussion on criticisms of mimetic theory, and responses to these criticisms see: Grant Kaplan, *René Girard, Unlikely Apologist: Mimetic Theory and Fundamental Theology* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2016), 43-68, ProQuest Ebook Central; Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 87-111; Robert North, "Violence and the Bible: The Girard Connection," *CBQ* 47, no. 1 (1985): 1-27, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/43719151.

anthropologists, there is no reason to reckon with it as anthropology."[83] Scholars such as Hayden White,[84] Markwart Herzog,[85] Robert North,[86] and Bruce Chilton[87] have similarly determined mimetic theory as insufficiently scientific. North contends that mimetic theory's conceptualisation of the concealing nature of myth places it beyond falsifiable testing: "Whatever we *can* know that *fits* the theory is triumphantly adduced as proof of it. Whatever we can point to as *contradicting* his theory is equally acclaimed as a proof of the built-in unawareness, and thus as a justification of his system as a whole."[88] Others have questioned where the actual evidence is to substantiate Girard's universal hypothesis. Chilton, for example, challenges the assessment that the scapegoating mechanism "was played out in each and every society that has ever existed, when there is no direct evidence to that effect."[89] Mimetic theory has accordingly been regarded by some as presumptuously overreaching in its grand explanation of sacrifice and the origins of religion and culture.

Mimetic theory's designation as a scientific theory is, however, reasonable. As Raymund Schwager, Girard's foremost colleague, collaborator, and critical commentator on mimetic theory, expresses: "Girard is right in demanding a notion of science that is open to all reality. He first presents his theory as a hypothesis and then proceeds to measure its truth according to its ability to explain phenomena that were hitherto unexplainable."[90] Hamerton-Kelly further explains that mimetic theory's prudent postulation of the existence

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[83] Kaplan, *René Girard,* 48.
[84] Hayden White, "Ethnological 'Lie' and Mythical 'Truth,'" *Diacritics* 8, no. 1 (1978): 7, doi:10.2307/464815.
[85] Markwart Herzog, "Religionstheorie und Theologie René Girards," *KD* 38, no. 2 (1992): 131– 133, http://www.v-r.de/en/magazine-0-0/kerygma_und_dogma-500016/.
[86] North, *Violence and the Bible,* 22.
[87] See for discussion of Chilton's critique Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart, "Substitutive Reading: An Introduction to Girardian Thinking, Its Reception in Biblical Studies, and This Volume," in *Sacrifice, Scripture and Substitution: Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 19.
[88] North, *Violence and the Bible,* 22.
[89] Quoted in Astell and Goodhart, "Substitutive Reading," 19.
[90] Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?*, 32.

of that which is not directly observable, falls within the rationality of 'scientific realism' and philosophical scientific debate. Observable entities/effects may, via abductive or retroductive processes, reasonably allow for the positing of unobservable entities/causes.[91]

Criticisms of a lack of evidence are subsequently also misplaced. Hamerton-Kelly notes, for example, in relation to Girard's interpretive method that while "texts attest the theory and the theory in turn interprets the texts", there is no hermeneutical circularity here; for "the theory is not derived from the texts by induction. The texts are merely one kind of evidence among others – from psychology, ethology and ethnology – which warrant the positing of the theory."[92] To charges of insufficient 'proper' evidence, Girard has also explained: "I am not trying to make up that missing historical information through some fanciful story… My thesis is based entirely on structural inferences and it becomes compelling through the sheer number and variety of examples that can be exhibited."[93]

Furthermore, Girard's universal theorising, grand though it is, cannot be dismissed simply upon those grounds. For grand narratives, which have unearthed new patterns that lie beyond 'scientific falsifying' have been shown to have significant credence, as Newton's theory of gravity and Darwin's evolutionary theory attest.[94] Girard's explanation of sacrifice and the origins of religion and culture has been rigorously evaluated and found creditable for its explanatory reach. Scholars have highlighted mimetic theory's capacity to draw out and logically account for the intricate and subterranean dynamics of human violence associated with sacrifice, religion and culture. Biblical scholar, James Williams, for example, has tested the veracity of Girard's hermeneutic against other anthropological

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[91] Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 44. Hamerton-Kelly's position holds affinity with the epistemology of Charles Peirce, who also theorises abductive reasoning as a pathway to discerning unobservable phenomena within human experience. Charles Sanders Peirce, *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol. 5, ed. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press Harvard University, 1958-66), 171-174.
[92] Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*, 41.
[93] René Girard, "Interview: René Girard," *Diacritics* 8, no. 1 (1978): 37, doi:10.2307/464818.
[94] Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 20. Kaplan, *René Girard*, 51, 52, 55.

theorists, such as Frazer, Durkheim, Hubert, Mauss, Levi-Strauss, and Vernant, who have also sought to explain the phenomenon of ritual sacrifice. Yet, as Williams determines, mimetic theory surpasses these other approaches in providing comprehensive and compelling lucidity and logic into the causal human peculiarities behind it.[95]

For some, Girard's adjoining of Christian biblical/religious sentiments with the conception that his theory is also socially scientific will remain an insurmountable mismatch of contradictory vantage points.[96] However, for others, there is no fundamental difficulty in holding these two positions together. The major religious traditions have in principle upheld the interchange between faith, reason, and science as critically indispensable.[97] For some scholars who work within this context, Girard's theory is valued for the breadth of its capacity to encompass human experience. As Joel Hodge expresses: "Importantly, as a practice, Girard advocates that scientific inquiry be open to all reality, including the transcendent dimensions of human experience, in order to develop a sound understanding of human being and culture."[98]

When it comes to biblical scholarship, Girard's examination of biblical texts has been criticised for falling short of adequate and acceptable interpretive approaches. His style of analysis is faulted for comprising sweeping "casualness and generalization", rather than "real exegesis".[99] Certainly, Girard is not a biblical exegete in the conventional sense. He is the first to acknowledge that: "It is essential that [mimetic theory] be tested by biblical

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[95] Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, 14-20.
[96] Kaplan, *René Girard*, 46. Girard keeps a careful division between faith statements and his scientific methodology in constructing and testing his anthropological theory and reading Christianity. Methodologically, Girard is first and foremost using a scientific method – which he emphasises in *Evolution and Conversion*, 113-140.
[97] Kaplan, *René Girard*, 50; North, *Violence and the Bible*, 23.
[98] Joel Hodge, *Resisting Violence and Victimisation: Christian Faith and Solidarity in East Timor* (Abingdon: Taylor and Francis, 2012), 15.
[99] North, *Violence and the Bible*, 11.

scholars, working on the original languages of Jewish and Christian scripture."[100] Yet, Girard's treatment of biblical texts is not without critical precedence. Fundamentally, Girard's work emerges out of literary criticism as a critical and valid way to engage with ancient and modern texts.[101] Like other literary methodologies in biblical scholarship, mimetic theory offers an analytical, scientific theory to examine and deconstruct the text with new insight. In keeping with other methodological approaches, Girard is conscious of the historical dimension of the biblical texts both in terms of their content as well as their potential referents. Similar to other critical theories, such as feminism, he brings a distinctive analytical perspective that highlights historic practices of oppression that have universal implications and require reckoning with in any text. Moreover, mimetic theory, like other critical and literary orientations, is grounded in a modern hermeneutic of suspicion that operates in tandem with evaluative practice and careful attention to the features and limits of the text. As is commonplace within the field of biblical scholarship, Girard demonstrates and tests his hypothesis according to its effective illumination of texts. Only in providing plausible readings of a text, particularly its most unusual features, does Girard see his theory as having validity.

Additionally, mimetic theory brings a particular strength to biblical scholarship through its capacity to analyse the pervasive biblical and human theme of violence. It does this, not only in its literary and historical contexts, but also in relation to anthropology and contemporary human experiences of violence and victimhood. This is fertile and important ground as Schwager comments: "in spite of many very clear biblical statements about human universal entanglement in resentment against God and in the will to kill, the major

[100] René Girard, foreword to Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, vii.
[101] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 119-123; James Alison, *Faith Beyond Resentment*: *Fragments Catholic and Gay* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2001), 162-169.

theological traditions have scarcely ever analysed them systematically."[102] In a similar vein, Hamerton-Kelly upholds mimetic theory as a valuable biblical hermeneutic: "I believe the overriding fact of our time is violence; therefore a theory that attempts to make sense of violence is more likely to orient us to the points in the field that are salient for our time…there is a congruence between our times, our texts, and our tradition that makes for a powerful interpretive constellation."[103]

Other scholars have criticised Girard's theory on theological grounds. John Milbank and Sarah Coakley, for example, take issue with mimetic theory's seeming counter-biblical promotion of an ontology of humans as fundamentally violent.[104] For Coakley, mimetic theory is highly deleterious as she perceives it to be without an undergirding metaphysic of hope, and void of a conceptualisation of humans as an originally good creation.[105] Coakley further reproaches Girard for promulgating a disparaging view of sacrifice as intrinsically violent. Others have found Girard's perception of human desire as wholly mimetic to be philosophically and theologically problematic. For Neil Ormerod, perceiving desire as only mimetic does not leave adequate scope for conceptualising autonomous, authentic personhood.[106]

When it comes to charges of promoting an ontology of humans as intrinsically violent it seems the finer nuances of Girard's theorising can alleviate concerns. Though Girard tends to focus intently upon the capacity of desire to distort into rivalry and violence, he does not

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[102] Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?*, 231.
[103] Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence: Paul's Hermeneutic of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 5.
[104] John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory; Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); John Milbank, "Stories of Sacrifice," *Modern Theology* 12, no. 1 (1996): 27-56, doi:0.1111/j.1468-0025.1996. tb00079.x.
[105] Sarah Coakley, *Sacrifice Regained: Reconsidering the Rationality of Religious Belief* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[106] Neil Ormerod, "Is all Desire Mimetic? Lonergan and Girard on the Nature of Desire and Authenticity," in *Violence, Desire and the Sacred: Girard's Mimetic Theory Across the Disciplines*, ed. Scott Cowdell, Joel Hodge, and Chris Fleming (New York: Continuum, 2012), 251-262.

attribute a naturally violent instinct to human beings. As Girard has expressed, to "escape from mimetic entanglement is not at all synonymous with a denial of human nature."[107] Girard and other mimetic theory scholars with him, have increasingly affirmed that mimetic desire is fundamentally good and generative of that which is positive and constructive.[108] Intrinsic to mimetic theory is the understanding that desire can *become* distorted, which is a perspective that presumes a prior non-distorted state. Further to this, Scott Garrels finds, from drawing upon research in developmental psychology and neuroscience, that imitation can lead to distortion, disillusionment, and violence, but it is also the building blocks of relatedness, mindfulness, and meaningfulness.[109]

Additionally, mimetic theory's conceptualising of the human entanglement in mimesis is not without an undergirding metaphysic of hope. Girard emphatically expresses an underlying orientation of hope in relation to the biblical demystification of patterns and processes of violence that he understands works to liberate humanity from mimetic structures of violence. This biblical momentum moves humans to cultivate their fundamentally good desire in (mimetic) relationship with a loving, non-violent God.[110] Furthermore, although Girard concentrates on human desire as mimetic, he does not definitively close conceptualisation of desire off from other considerations, such as bodily appetites and freedom.[111] Importantly, mimetic theory's perception of the biblical

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[107] Kirwan, *Girard and Theology,* 40.
[108] Adams and Girard, "Violence, Difference, Sacrifice," 9-33; Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?,* 46.
[109] Scott Garrels noted in Robert J. Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 215- 216. See also Scott Garrels, "Scientific Evidence for the Foundational Role of Psychological Mimesis," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Mimetic Theory and Religion,* ed. James Alison and Wolfgang Palaver (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 431-438.
[110] Rebecca Adams and René Girard, "The Goodness of Mimetic Desire," in *The Girard Reader,* ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 63.
[111] In the recently published correspondence between Girard and Schwager, Girard expresses: "To people who say 'is there only mimetic desire?' I reply that the answer is probably (sans doute) 'no'… What interests me are the consequences of mimetic desire for the linking (sur les rapports) of individuals and societies." *René Girard and Raymund Schwager: Correspondence 1974–1991. Violence, Desire, and the Sacred,* ed. Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, Joel Hodge, and Mathias Moosbrugger, trans. Chris Fleming and Sheelah Treflé Hidden (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 109.

momentum that seeks to free humanity from structures of distorted desire and violence, encompasses conceptualisation of liberated consciousness and autonomous, authentic personhood, including the freedom to choose mimetic models that promote personal and social flourishing.

Certainly, Girard has been extremely wary of sacrificial language within contemporary religious contexts because of its troubling ambiguity and connotations of violent sacrificial structures. However, in the course of developing mimetic theory, Girard moved to understanding sacrifice in a double sense: the negative violent sacrifice of scapegoats, and the positive 'self-giving' sacrifice in love for God and others.[112] Mimetic theory does give cautious room to positive forms of sacrifice, in awareness that following the biblical disclosure of a non-violent God, and moving away from patterns of human violence, entails vulnerability to persecution in its counter-cultural quality that is also self-giving. However, this self-giving is finally and importantly directed towards transforming human consciousness and experience away from distorted mimesis and violent victimising practices.[113] Significantly, as mimetic theory pays vigilant heed to the pervasive biblical witness to violence and victimhood, it puts forward a vital cautionary measure that checks the perils of the 'positive sacrifice paradigm,' - particularly one that only encourages endurance in suffering rather than resisting violence and seeking to transform it.

In light of the above discussion, mimetic theory presents a theoretical framework and methodological approach to conceptualising victimhood and interpreting biblical texts, which has been taken up by a number of biblical and theological scholars. As a form of anthropological and literary criticism mimetic theory is respected for its rigour and ability to analyse biblical texts of persecution in terms of their central anthropological themes,

[112] Kirwan, *Girard and Theology*, 76, 78.
[113] Ibid., 80.

while exceeding the literary deconstructionist tendency towards insular treatment of texts. As Gil Bailie suggests, Girard frames the text once more in its historical reality, and draws out its spiritual and anthropological significance.[114] Presently, mimetic theory has been tested and constructively applied by biblical scholars such as Drasko Dizdar,[115] Sandor Goodhart,[116] Robert Hamerton-Kelly,[117] Hans Jensen,[118] Raymund Schwager,[119] and James Williams;[120] and by theologians conducting detailed examination of biblical texts such as James Alison,[121] Ann Astell,[122] Gil Bailie,[123] Robert Daly,[124] and Joel Hodge.[125] Mimetic theory has been constructively employed and evaluated across an array of disciplines as is

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[114] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 8.
[115] Drasko Dizdar, "'With a Rod or in the Spirit of Love and Gentleness?': Paul and the Rhetoric of Expulsion in 1 Corinthians 5," *Contagion* 11, no. 1 (2004): 161-80, doi:10.1353/ctn.2004.0009.
[116] Sandor Goodhart, "Prophecy, Sacrifice and Repentance in the Story of Jonah," *Semeia* 33 (1985): 43-63; Sandor Goodhart, "'I am Joseph': René Girard and the Prophetic Law," in *Violence and Truth: On the Work of René Girard*, ed. Paul Dumouchel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 53-74; Sandor Goodhart, "From Sacrificial Violence to Responsibility: The Education of Moses in Exodus 2-4," *Contagion* 6, no. 1 (1999): 12-31, doi:10.1353/ctn.1999.0010; Sandor Goodhart, "The End of Sacrifice: Reading René Girard and the Hebrew Bible," *Contagion* 14, no. 1 (2008): 59-78, https://muse-jhu-edu.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/article/235223.
[117] Hamerton-Kelly, *Sacred Violence*; Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).
[118] Hans J.L. Jensen, "Desire, Rivalry and Collective Violence in the 'Succession Narrative,'" *JSOT* 55 (1992): 39-59, doi:10.1177/030908929201705504; Hans J.L. Jensen, "The Bible Is (Also) a Myth: Lévi-Strauss, Girard, and the Story of Joseph," *Contagion* 14 (2007): 39-57, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/41917667; Hans J.L. Jensen, "An 'Oedipus Pattern' in the Old Testament?," *Religion* 37, no. 1 (2007): 39-52, doi:10.1016/j.religion.2007.01.003.
[119] Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?*, 46; Raymund Schwager, *Banished from Eden: Original Sin and Evolutionary Theory in the Drama of Salvation* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2006).
[120] Williams, *Bible, Violence and the Sacred*, 1991; James G. Williams, "Sacrifice and the Beginning of Kingship," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 73-92.
[121] James Alison, *Knowing Jesus* (London, SPCK, 1988); James Alison, *Raising Abel: The Recovery of Eschatological Imagination* (New York: Crossroad, 1996); James Alison, *The Joy of Being Wrong: Original Sin through Easter Eyes* (New York: Crossroad, 1998); James Alison, *Jesus the Forgiving Victim: Listening for the Unheard Voice* (Glenview: Doers Publishing, 2013).
[122] Ann W. Astell, "'Exilic' Identities, the Samaritans, and the 'Satan' of John," in *Sacrifice, Scripture and Substitution: Readings in Ancient Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Ann W. Astell and Sandor Goodhart (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 397-407.
[123] Bailie, *Violence Unveiled*, 2001; Gil Bailie, *God's Gamble: The Gravitational Power of Crucified Love* (Kettering: Angelico, 2016).
[124] Robert J. Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).
[125] Joel Hodge, "'Dead or Banished': A Comparative Reading of the Stories of King Oedipus and King David," *SJOT* 20, no. 2 (2006): 189-215, doi:10.1080/09018320601049458.

evident in numerous publications including the *Violence, Desire and the Sacred Series*,[126] and the official journal of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, *Contagion*.

Mimetic Theory and Gender

When it comes to the domain of feminist scholarship, mimetic theory has also received mixed responses.[127] Girard has been criticised for a lack of attention to issues of sexual difference and gender; and mimetic theory has been deemed as reflecting patriarchal and sexist attitudes due to employing universal notions of humanity, desire, and violence, and concentrating on male authors and characters.[128] While this dissertation also speaks from within this area of critique, it contends, however, that an accurate understanding of Girard's treatment of the category of women scapegoats is often missing from feminist criticism. This omission tends to prevent mimetic theory's applicability to the topic of sexual difference and gender from being more successfully mobilised and explored. Thus, while Morny Joy's judgement that Girard's theories "exhibit a distinct bias in favour of male behaviour" is accurate to some degree, her ensuing comment illustrates the type of erroneous estimations that dismiss mimetic theory from more constructive consideration: "Not once does Girard refer to women's participation, or lack of it, in this ritual of

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[126] Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, and Joel Hodge, eds., *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred, Vol 1: Girard's Mimetic Theory Across the Disciplines* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2013); Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, and Joel Hodge, eds., *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred, Vol 2: René Girard and Sacrifice in Life, Love and Literature* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2014); Scott Cowdell, Chris Fleming, and Joel Hodge, eds., *Violence, Desire, and the Sacred, Vol 3: Mimesis, Movies, and the Media* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic & Professional, 2015). See also Mark I. Wallace and Theophus H. Smith, eds., *Curing Violence* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994).

[127] For discussion of the diverse feminist responses to Girard's mimetic theory see, Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 110-111; Jennifer L. Rike, "The Cycle of Violence and Feminist Constructions of Selfhood," *Contagion* 3 (1996): 21-42, doi:10.1353/ctn.1996.0008; Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism," *Contagion* 1 (1994): 19-29, doi:10.1353/ctn.1994.0000; Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 297- 298.

[128] For gender critics dismissive of Girard's work see, Toril Moi, "The Missing Mother: The Oedipal Rivalries of René Girard," *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 12, no. 2 (1982): 21-31, doi:10.2307/464676; Sarah Kofman, "The Narcissistic Woman: Freud and Girard," in *French Feminist Thought: A Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1995), 210-226; Nancy B. Jay, *Throughout Your Generations Forever: Sacrifice, Religion, and Paternity* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), 130-132.

immolation – except for a casual, even dismissive reference to ecstatic and murderous Dionysian maenads. This reference is featured simply as an aside that serves to reinforce the need to restrain women."[129]

Girard has, in fact, made a number of references to the propensity for women to be scapegoated within androcentric societies. He notes, for example, the weight of prohibitions falling heavily upon women because they figure as objects of men's rivalry.[130] The primitive and prevalent taboo of menstrual blood, typically regarded as the most impure of impurities, has also been emphasised as particularly ill-disposed to women.[131] Girard conveys how the psychological and symbolic association of menstrual blood with physical violence aligns with a social psyche that sustains violence against women: "We ought, however, to go further: to inquire whether this process of symbolization does not respond to some half-suppressed desire to place the blame for all forms of violence on women. By means of this taboo a transfer of violence has been effected and a monopoly established that is clearly detrimental to the female sex."[132]

Girard's attention to women's marginal social location and limited involvement in primitive ritual is further constructive for its insights into gendered violence against females. Girard has stressed that women played a lesser role "in the religious and cultural structure of a society" that served to manage men's mimetic aggression. Women's primary location is that of peripheral "passive spectators" of men's rituals.[133] Girard further notes that women qualified as victims of primitive sacrifice "by reason of her weakness and relatively marginal social status. That is why she can be viewed as a quasi-sacred figure,

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[129] Morny Joy, "Women, Sacrifice, and Transcendence," in *Woman and the Divine: Touching Transcendence*, ed. Gillian Howie and J'annine Jobling (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 106-107.
[130] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 219.
[131] Ibid., 33-35.
[132] Ibid., 36.
[133] Ibid., 140.

both desired and disdained, alternately elevated and abused."[134] For Girard, the proclivity for sacrificing women is abundantly apparent in the evidence that shows goddesses outnumbered gods in archaic religions – a phenomenon that reflects the psychological scapegoat process of deifying women victims.[135] Girard has also repeatedly acknowledged that myths frequently indicate scapegoated women and their unmerited vilification. He emphasises this aspect at work in a Dogrib Indian myth, which tells of an isolated woman accused of taboo behaviour who is expelled by her tribe for causing a crisis. Girard stresses: "The fact that she is a woman is the stereotypical victim's sign."[136]

Certainly, Girard draws attention to the murderous Dionysian maenads of Thebes, however, his discussion is the antithesis of any reinforcement of the ideology within the text that women need to be restrained. He identifies that the social crisis in Thebes is aligned with the confusion of switched gender roles that see the *female* maenads perform indiscriminate *masculine* violence against men and animals alike.[137] Subsequently, he draws out the myth's concern with upholding differentiated/hierarchical gender roles as instrumental to sustaining androcentric social stability. Significantly, Girard accentuates the myth's coercive function that serves to redirect blame for real male violence onto women:

> The violence directed against the surrogate victim cannot be limited strictly to the women. We may therefore wonder whether the preponderance of women does not constitute a secondary mythological displacement, an effort to exonerate from the accusation of violence, not mankind as a whole, but adult males, who have the greatest need to forget their role in the crisis because, in fact, they have been

[134] Ibid., 141-2.
[135] Palaver, "Mimetic Theory and Gender," 305.
[136] Girard, *Scapegoat*, 49; Girard, Antonello, and De Castro Rocha, *Evolution and Conversion*, 115.
[137] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 127, 140, 141.

> largely responsible for it. They alone risk plunging the community into the chaos of reciprocal violence. We can therefore postulate a mythological substitution of women for men in regard to violence.[138]

Similarly, attention has been drawn to the category of women scapegoats in other historical and contemporary contexts. Girard notes being a woman was a primary victim category of the Inquisition processes alongside that of being Jewish,[139] a topic that has been given extensive treatment by Martha Reineke.[140] He also observes that, with the destabilising of the scapegoat mechanism in our own time, victimising has become more veiled and easy to camouflage such as that of domestic violence which habitually targets women and children.[141] Thus, while Girard maintains that the social status and identity of scapegoats is diverse and selection is in one sense arbitrary, he distinctly highlights that victims are often marginal, vulnerable figures, and consequently girls and women have historically configured as a primary category of victims.[142]

In such ways, Girard has clearly acknowledged the distinctive and vulnerable location of women within androcentric cultures, whose victimisation serves to relieve masculine mimetic aggressions and sustain the androcentric social order.[143] But, more than this, Girard has stressed that the category of women scapegoats has enabled the mythical/cultural attribution of blame for violence to fall heavily upon women. As

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[138] Ibid., 139.
[139] Girard, *I See Satan*, 75. Girard further notes, in relation to the Dogrib Indian myth, that the depiction of a Jewish woman who has given birth to pigs in Johann Fischart's illustrated *Wunderzeitung* (1575), also indicates the scapegoat mechanism historically operative in relation to antisemitism, women, and their persecution for witchcraft. Girard, *Scapegoat*, 48-50.
[140] Martha Reineke models a feminist appropriation of mimetic theory to illustrate that studies of the Inquisition have neglected to understand the fundamental obscuring qualities of myth. Scholarship has thus failed to properly appreciate the structures of the persecution and have thereby contributed to the continuing victimisation of these women. Martha Reineke, "The Devils are Come Down Upon Us: Myth, History, and the Witch as Scapegoat," *USQR* 44 (1990): 55-83.
[141] Girard, *I See Satan*, 156.
[142] René Girard, "Python and His Two Wives: An Exemplary Scapegoat Myth," in *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (New York: Crossroad, 2004), 119.
[143] Palaver, "Mimetic Theory and Gender," 306-307.

Wolfgang Palaver elaborates: "Extensions of this mythical thinking reach into the societies of the present day."[144] Significant also is Girard's appreciation that women's marginal and vulnerable social location affords to them a particular vantage point from where they might realise, so as to expose and transform, the consciousness that sustains scapegoat violence.[145] Given the above, some scholars dedicated to unearthing and reclaiming a more empowered past for women may take issue with such a perception of women's historical victimhood. For others concerned with conceptualising the locale of women as primordial scapegoats within androcentric cultures, mimetic theory has much within its range and logic that is compatible.

Limitations of Mimetic Theory

Granted Girard has identified women as a category of scapegoat within androcentric societies, criticism of a lack of attention to the intricacies of gender in his work nevertheless remains.[146] His discussion of mimetic desire and violence is, on balance, conceived and articulated in universal/masculine terms. Foundational to this charge is Girard's resolute conviction that desire is the same in its mimetic nature for both females and males.[147] Though he has gainfully refuted Freud's misogynistic views of two types of sexual desire in females and males, ultimately Girard rejects any such specificity in the nature of desire.[148] Subsequently, females and males are perceived as prone to the same rudimentary entanglement in mimetic patterns of desire, rivalry, and violence. As Martha Reineke has summarised: "[Girard] is open to considering ways in which sexual difference

[144] Ibid., 307.
[145] Palaver, *René Girard's Mimetic Theory*, 307.
[146] Nowak, "Girardian Theory and Feminism," 24-25.
[147] Palaver, "Mimetic Theory and Gender," 298-305; Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 110.
[148] See for further discussion of this perspective, Palaver, "Mimetic Theory and Gender," 229-300.

is associated with the victimage mechanism. However, he is doubtful about positing any substantive links between the two."[149]

It is evidently true that desire can in one sense be perceived as the same dynamism in men and women, as they are similarly caught up in mimetic entanglement. However, this point is typically made at the expense of any comprehensive consideration of how desire, mimesis, and experiences of violence are also intrinsically and distinctively shaped by sexual difference and hierarchical gendered enculturation into androcentric societies.[150] Inadequate weight is given to the pervasive power of the androcentric discourse and social edifice to shape, mystify, and obscure gendered patterns of violence. As such, Girard, and mimetic theory scholarship more generally, inclines to conflate the diversity and distinctiveness of sexual difference and gendered experiences of desire, rivalry, and violence, under masculine norms.[151] This universalising of mimetic desire and violence is frequently conveyed in association with analysis of texts authored by men, and their configurations of masculine behaviour and desires. As Chris Shea has voiced: "Although [women's] exhaustive experience with persecution in every stage of their lives, in every time, in every place might be imagined to produce insights into the system worthy of note, and although they have produced a considerable body of literature, still Girard devotes a negligible portion of his work to the voice of these victims."[152] Mimetic theory has thus been deemed inadequate "because it neglects a critical examination of the influence which

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[149] Martha J. Reineke, "Sacrifice and Sexual Difference: Insights and Challenges in the Work of René Girard," in *Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture: For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and in Truth*, ed. Sandor Goodhart, Jorgen Jorgensen, and Tom Ryba (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 251, ProQuest Ebrary.
[150] Martha J. Reineke, *Intimate Domain: Desire, Trauma, and Mimetic Theory* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2014), xxi.
[151] Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 24-25; Martha Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*: *Kristeva on Women and Violence* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 87-88.
[152] Chris Shea, "Victims on Violence: 'Different Voices' and Girard," in *Curing Violence*, ed. Mark I. Wallace and Theophus H. Smith (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994), 254.

the concealment of gender has had on the expressions of violence and victimisation, social cohesion and scapegoating, and religious ritualization and community formation."[153]

In accordance with this line of criticism, when it comes to mimetic theory analysis of biblical texts of persecuted women, there is still extensive work to be done. As in other areas of his work, Girard's treatment of biblical texts has not been entirely male focused. He has given some attention to Eve, Lot's wife, the two mothers who seek Solomon's judgement,[154] the woman at risk of stoning in John's gospel,[155] and the women who withstand the mob pressures that conclude in the cross.[156] These examples, however, do not give specific attention to the gendered nature of persecution. Instead, they configure as part of a much broader agenda, alongside extended focus on male characters such as Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Job, and Jesus, that substantiates mimetic theory interpretations of the Bible and humanity. While there has been some analysis of the biblical representation of female victims through mimetic theory frameworks,[157] the

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[153] Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 25.
[154] Girard, *Things Hidden*, 142, 237-43.
[155] Girard, *Studies in Violence*, 123.
[156] Girard, *I See Satan*, 125.
[157] Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 96-107, 119; Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, "Slingshots, Ships and Personal Psychosis," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 37-70; Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan, *Misbegotten Anguish: A Theology and Ethics of Violence* (St Louis: Chalice, 2001); Patricia Klindienst, "Intolerable Language: Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery," in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion*, ed. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (London: Routledge, 1992), 226-237; Peter John Barber, "The Role of the Androgyne in the Biblical Subversion of the Mytho-Sacrificial World Exploring the Early Messianic Lineage as a Series of New Adams," *Contagion* 22 (2015): 203-20, doi: 10.14321/contagion.22.1.0203. For other non-biblical literary examples of fruitful application of mimetic theory concepts see Patricia Klindienst, "Ritual Work on Human Flesh: Livy's Lucretia and the Rape of the Body Politic," *Helios* 17 (1990): 51-70; Christa Wolf, *Medea: A Modern Retelling*, trans. John Cullen (New York: Nan A. Talese, 1998); Anne McTaggart, "What Women Want? Mimesis and Gender in Chaucer's Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale," *Contagion* 19 (2012): 41-67, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/41925333; Rebecca Adams, "Narrative Voice and Unimaginability of the Utopian 'Feminine' in Le Guin's The Left Hand of Darkness and 'The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas,'" *Utopian Studies: Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies* 2, no. 1-2 (1991): 35-47, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/20719024. See also Iwona Janicka, "Queering Girard-De-Freuding Butler: A Theoretical Encounter between Judith Butler's Gender Performativity and René Girard's Mimetic Theory," *Contagion* 22 (2015): 43-64, doi:10.14321/contagion.22.1.0043; Bernadette Waterman Ward, "Abortion as a Sacrament: Mimetic Desire and Sacrifice in Sexual Politics," *Contagion* 7, no. 1 (2000): 18-35, doi:10.1353/ctn.2000.0002.

predominant scholarly focus has centred upon male biblical figures.[158] Extended mimetic theory analysis of female biblical victims remains to be done.

Overall, while Girard has unmistakeably signalled the relationship between sex/gender, marginality, and victimhood, the intricacies of this terrain in mimetic theory biblical scholarship remain underexplored. Furthermore, mimetic theory is limited in its capacity to conceptualise and deconstruct gendered experiences of violence and victimhood, as its theoretical framework does not facilitate adequate conceptualisation of how desire and violence is intrinsically co-constructed in gendered ways via enculturation into androcentric societies. Other accompanying analytical tools are therefore required to investigate how mimetic desire and the dynamics of rivalry and violence are shaped in gendered ways. Accordingly, an augmented lens is necessary to investigate how gendered patterns and processes of violence and victimhood are represented and disclosed within biblical narratives of persecuted women.

Mimetic Theory as Interpretive Lens

Irrespective of its limitations, mimetic theory brings a number of strengths to the field of biblical scholarship. It provides an anthropological conceptualisation of violence and victimhood, which theorises the causes of violence as initiating from imitated and distorted desire. It also identifies the consequent processes which generate victims for the purpose of cathartically channelling that violence and restoring peace/order. Consequently, mimetic theory accounts for *how* and *why* these processes function within societies. Mimetic theory also provides a framework and analytical lens for identifying the distinctive biblical demystification of these patterns and processes of victimhood. As a result, mimetic theory bridges the biblical world and the contemporary world, the world of myths/texts and the

[158] As is also evident in the collection of scholarly titles listed above: see footnotes 115-125 in this chapter.

real world, as it emphasises how violent biblical narratives can be freshly examined for their capacity to demystify and positively transform the enduring structures of human violence.

Mimetic theory also configures as a constructive interpretive framework for feminist biblical scholarship. It holds numerous complementary intersecting elements with feminist interpretive approaches. Mimetic theory shares with feminist approaches a hermeneutic of suspicion and an orientation towards liberating human experience from violent oppressive structures. Mimetic theory deconstructs aspects of biblical narratives in a way consistent with feminist goals of decentring oppressive, violent systems, including the ability for the texts themselves to serve such ends. Mimetic theory's particular capacity to identify the biblical inversion of violent patterns and processes, and thereby invalidate the justification of injurious ideologies that sustain harmful misappropriation of biblical content, holds clear affinity with feminist concerns.[159]

Mimetic theory correlates strongly with feminist approaches that identify a liberating hermeneutical principle at work within the Bible.[160] In this regard mimetic theory stresses that the Bible's self-critique is varyingly manifest in the diverse and violent narratives that reflect the struggle of human consciousness moving beyond the constructs of the violent sacred. This critique is manifest in the narrative exposure of unjust violent processes, and the accompanying rejection of idolatry and religious views that serve persecutory ends. Both mimetic and feminist theories share in common the impetus to establish an ethical hermeneutical paradigm - beyond apolitical detachment, objective literalism[161] and

[159] By inference, mimetic theory's perception that the Bible discloses the non-sacrificial and non-violent 'God of victims', disrupts any masculine hierarchical relationship model grounded upon a theology of God's domineering, punitive rule over a subjugated creation. Malign gender divisions along with their inherent gendered power disparities are implicitly challenged, though this aspect requires greater exploration and articulation within the field of mimetic theory.
[160] Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk,* 22-24.
[161] This term denotes the sense in which biblical texts have been understood to disclose historical facticity.

apparent 'scientific' value-neutrality - that has significant remedial reach.[162] As Paisley Livingston conveys: "Girard never encourages us, in the name of positivist value-neutrality, to treat social facts as mere things. Girard never loses sight of the fact that the ultimate goal of a 'truly human' science is a knowledge that gives the lie to the 'reasons' with which we justify our violence."[163]

Girard's position that biblical texts varyingly highlight the perspective of the victim and expose patterns and processes generative of their victimhood, holds significant importance for feminist concerns. It indicates the value of examining female biblical victims for their disclosure of patterns of violence in association with women's lived experience of victimhood within androcentric cultures. Mimetic theory provides analytical tools that may be appropriated for conceptualising how female biblical victims disclose aspects of *imitated/distorted desire*, *rivalry*, and *social disorder*, which leads to *isolation*, *blame*, *persecution*, *restored order*, and *obscuration/myth* – as they are evident and operative in androcentric contexts.

Mimetic theory also offers a way to address some shortcomings within areas of feminist scholarship. Some feminist approaches have incurred criticism for imitating the injurious binary dynamics they reject, as they assume accusatory, divisive stances. As Susan Nowak has remarked: "The feminist project envisioned as *against* the patriarchal project, ironically, still participates in the patriarchal project."[164] Tina Chanter further explains: "By blaming the enemy – men in general, or the patriarchal way of thinking or the phallocentric system of meaning – feminism is in danger of merely occupying a negative position, one that mimics… a position of bad conscience."[165] Given modern protest

[162] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 114-115.
[163] Paisley Livingston, "Demystification and History in Girard and Durkheim," in *Violence and Truth: On the Work of René Girard*, ed. Paul Dumouchel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 133.
[164] Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 27.
[165] Tina Chanter, *Gender: Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), 111-112.

movements often reiterate the logic of blame and scapegoating, Julia Kristeva also questions: "Does not feminism become a kind of inverted sexism when this logic is followed to its conclusion."[166] Mimetic theory, in this regard, offers a framework that serves more creative, optimistic, collaborative responses beyond those that reproduce blame, enmity, and struggle between the sexes.

Feminist approaches have also been criticised for failing to provide a comprehensive anthropology and account of victimhood. As Schwager conveys, approaches such as those of an ecological, liberation, and feminist kind, though orientated from the perspective of the victim, lack a thoroughly developed theory of the victim like that offered by mimetic theory.[167] Though this criticism requires mitigation in light of mimetic theory's own limitations with regard to considerations of gendered experiences of violence, mimetic theory does offer concepts that can be appropriated by feminist scholars to analyse the psychosocial dynamics of violence and victimhood. Mimetic theory's conceptualisation of the patterns and processes of victimhood provide in one sense, a more complete picture of the causal, functional, and structural dynamics of violence. Thus, this is a framework that facilitates comprehension of the causal, functional, and structural complexities of women's experience of victimhood that play out within androcentric societies.

Though mimetic theory provides analytical tools helpful for identifying and conceptualising aspects of women's experience of violence and victimhood, it does not, as discussion above has established, sufficiently analyse the effects of sexual difference and gender enculturation in mimetic patterns of desire and violence.[168] It too is an androcentric theory insofar as it tends to conflate the diversity of human experience under male

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[166] Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 27, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173503.
[167] Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 107.
[168] Reineke, *Intimate Domain*, xxi.

norms.[169] Given this limitation, mimetic theory on its own cannot provide for comprehensive examination of the biblical representation of female victims. Subsequently, it cannot investigate fully the biblical capacity to demystify the patterns and processes of violence and victimhood in their gendered nature.

Consequently, a more intricate interpretive model is needed. As will be shown in the next chapter, to conceptualise gendered victimhood, it is necessary to perceive how subjection to violence is deeply influenced by cultural androcentric forces that shape women's and men's subjectivity, desire, and agency in distinctive ways. In keeping with other approaches that have productively combined feminist and mimetic theory concepts to analyse women's victimhood,[170] a refined interpretive approach is put forward to facilitate exploring the biblical witness to women's experiences of violence.

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[169] Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 25.

[170] In this regard, Luce Irigrary and Julia Kristeva have been influenced by Girard's theory of sacrifice and violence underlying the formation of human culture. Irigaray, however, stresses that concealed behind Girardian designs of scapegoat sacrifice is a more primordial, latent, and unacknowledged victim, which is woman. Luce Irigaray, "Women, the Sacred and Money," *Paragraph* 8 (1986): 6-18, http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/43151624. Kristeva, like Girard, also perceives that violence lies at the origins of and entry into language and culture. While Girard locates violent tensions in the mimetic desire relationship that occurs between a subject, and a model, over an object, Kristeva (drawing on psychoanalysis) locates violence in subject formation, where an emerging subject desires to imitate 'paternal otherness', and so violently breaks with and expels the maternal body. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay of Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 12-13.
Martha Reineke has explored at length the intersections of Girard and Kristeva's theories, and their compatibility for understanding violence and its proclivity to unleash upon women. Reineke draws out how Kristeva's theory of the abjection of the mother points to the originary form of sacrifice as matricide, and how times of social crisis trigger a harkening back to this violent struggle for identity and differentiation over against the maternal body. In this sense, matricide underpins all social sacrificial processes, and provides the pattern for future murders. For Reineke, this locale explains better than Girard has been able to, the mutilating and homicidal degrees of violence present in humanity. In addition, it accounts for the phenomenon of prevalent macabre and murderous violence against women. As the continuing striving for *being* involves replicating the death-work of the primary matricide, so social bodies also overcome chaos and disorder through enacting the boundary making reminiscent of the first severance from the mother. Reineke's theory of sacrifice, composed from Girardian and Kristevan perspectives, cogently assesses why within patriarchal cultures "sacrificial currents swirl most often around women". *Sacrificed Lives*, 30.
For another example of the combination of mimetic theory with psychoanalytical theory to conceptualise how modes of embodiment and social conditioning effects gendered experiences of violence see Rike, "Cycle of Violence," 21-42.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has set out mimetic theory as a sophisticated anthropological and literary framework, which provides concepts enabling detailed analysis of patterns of violence and victimhood within texts of persecution and society. This is a framework utilised by some biblical scholars, as especially applicable to examining violent biblical texts. The discussion has identified mimetic theory's compatibility with feminist approaches, and the potential, through appropriation of its concepts, for analysing female biblical victims and the biblical representation of gendered violence. However, in light of mimetic theory's limitation to adequately conceptualise and deconstruct the intricacies of gendered experiences of violence and victimhood as they are shaped within androcentric contexts, the necessity of integrating a feminist lens has been confirmed. Chapter 3 turns now to substantiate the theoretical framework and analytical concepts of this second lens.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: FEMINIST THEORY

Situating Feminist Theory

This chapter further explicates the theoretical foundation of the dialogical interpretive model introduced in Chapter 2 (see figure 1, page 56). As ensuing discussion will show, given the historical predominance of androcentricity, appropriation of a feminist lens is necessary to analyse biblical texts of violence for their depiction and disclosure of gendered patterns of violence. This additional lens is shown to positively combine with mimetic theory concepts through facilitating analysis of the cultural forces that shape persons and their experiences of victimhood in gendered ways.

In particular, this chapter draws on French feminist theory[1] and the theorising of sexual difference, as it sets out the key concepts of *androcentricity*, *androcentric language* and *androcentric power* as valid interpretive tools. These concepts enable interrogating how enculturation into androcentric societies shapes subjectivity, desire, and agency, and thus experiences of violence and victimhood, in distinctive ways for women and men. I then present the interrelating nature of mimetic and feminist theories via recourse to the conceptual model represented in figure 2 below (page 133). Here the respective mimetic and feminist theory analytical concepts are shown to form a comprehensive dialogical interpretive approach that enables examination of violent biblical texts of persecuted women and their capacity to demystify enduring patterns of gendered violence.

[1] I use here the Anglophone label frequently applied to chiefly encompass the scholarship of Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva. For detailed discussion on the fraught nature of the term 'French feminism' see Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady, and Judith L. Poxon, eds., "Introduction: French Feminisms and Religion," in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 2002), 1-8.

Differentiating Gendered Experiences of Violence

The following discussion conceptualises how gendered socialisation into androcentric societies shapes women's victimhood in distinct ways. This discussion does not mean to suggest that all girls and women are victims and lacking in agency, as that is clearly not the case. (Indeed, as feminist debate attests, determining women's exercising of autonomous agency within androcentricity is far from straight forward.)[2] Neither does the discussion mean to imply that women are beyond enacting patterns of distorted desire, rivalry, and aggression that lead to exertions of violence against others, as of course they do. Nor does it mean to intimate that all men are perpetrators of violence, for that is also obviously untrue.

Nevertheless, as Chapter 1 has shown, human societies are significantly androcentric in ways that heavily impact upon women's agency, and they entail an inordinate degree of violence performed by men that is inflicted upon girls and women.[3] As Michael Kimmel and Alan Johnson respectively note: "violence is the only behavioral variable for which there are intractable and overwhelmingly skewed results showing gender differences"[4] and the "overwhelming majority of violence is perpetrated by men".[5] The following discussion,

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[2] As Diana Tietjens Meyers conveys: "If we are prepared to acknowledge that a woman who has undergone oppressive socialization but who rebels against its dictates may be accessing her 'authentic' values and desires and acting autonomously… we cannot rule out a priori the possibility that a similarly socialized woman who chooses otherwise may be autonomous too." See "Gender Identity and Women's Agency: Culture, Norms, and Internalized Oppression Revisited," chap. 1 in *Gender in the Mirror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Oxford Scholarship Online, doi:10.1093/0195140419.003.0001. For a detailed summary of the feminist debate on women's agency within patriarchy see Anita Superson, "Feminist Moral Psychology," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Stanford: Stanford University, 2014), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2014/entries/feminism-moralpsych/.

[3] This predominance of male-performed violence has led some to conclude that male biology, in particular testosterone, inherently predisposes men to be violent. This theory has been strongly challenged by abundant research that notes gender socialisation as instrumental to the excessive male performance of violence. Paul J. Fleming et al., "Men's Violence Against Women and Men are Inter-related: Recommendations for Simultaneous Intervention," *Social Science and Medicine* 146 (2015): 251, doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.10.021.

[4] Michael S. Kimmel, "'Gender Symmetry' in Domestic Violence," *Violence Against Women* 8, no. 11 (2002): 1342-1343, doi:10.1177/107780102237407.

[5] Alan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 4.

then, establishes a theoretical foundation for perceiving how this masculinised societal environment conditions men's and women's experiences and involvement in patterns of violence. It shows how women habituated to an androcentric worldview are rendered particularly vulnerable to specific experiences of psychological and physical violence. Determining these specificities necessitates detailed consideration of the characteristics of androcentricity that direct gendered formation through enculturation.

Androcentricity

Despite the varied particulars of contemporary and historical male-centred cultures,[6] they are ultimately based upon common core characteristics. Fundamentally, they deploy a male-centred/**androcentric worldview** that situates the **male as normative** for humanity. In turn, this worldview is generative of, and mutually fortified by, **male-identified, male-dominated,** and **male-controlled** social structures and institutions.[7] Explicating these characteristics further, the socially dominant androcentric worldview is galvanised by men as it places men and their experience of maleness at the centre of meaning making and normative for humanity, and thus assumes universal human experience. In actuality, this worldview comprises the reality of a single subject, and that subject is male.

Furthermore, this worldview is contingent upon hierarchical, dualistic perspectives that employ **binary opposites**, for example male-female, good-evil, white-black, rich-poor, with the effect of privileging and empowering one pole of the binary in contradistinction to the other. This worldview subsequently results in the privileging, empowerment, and

[6] For some theories concerning the origins of androcentric societies see Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); James DeMeo, "Saharasia: The Origins of Patriarchal Authoritarian Culture in Ancient Desertification," in *Societies of Peace: Matriarchies Past, Present, and Future,* ed. Heide Goettner-Abendroth (Toronto: Inanna Publications, 2009), 407–23; Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Rosemary Radford Ruether, *New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation* (New York: Seabury, 1975), 3-35.
[7] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 6-14.

valuing of men, (in Western society, typically white, heterosexual, and wealthy men), and the marginalisation of those deemed non-normative. This hierarchical, binary consciousness intrinsic to the androcentric worldview, informs other power hierarchies within society that privilege some at the expense of others, and shape layers of oppression, including those anchored upon the differences of race, religion, class, ability, age, and sexuality.[8]

The exclusive single subject reality of the androcentric worldview is thus representative of the ruling male class and promotes a hegemonic masculinity.[9] Fundamentally, the dominating androcentric consciousness associates a perception of men, maleness, and masculinity[10] with cultural ideas of what is authoritative and socially desirable. Accordingly, the outworking of this androcentric worldview manifests in patriarchal institutions and social structures that invest men with power and importance. In this regard, the predominant political, legal, religious, cultural, familial, and economic structures of

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[8] Women and men of colour, religious minorities, the poor, the disabled, children and non-heterosexual persons, for example, endure enhanced vulnerability to discrimination and violence within the hierarchical power structures of society. Paul Kivel, *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* (Minnesota: Hazelden, 1992), 67, 152. As R.W. Connell remarks: "Though men in general benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, they do not benefit equally." R.W. Connell, *Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 6. Kivel notes further, "in many situations men of colour are treated much worse than white women, but better than women of colour." Kivel, *Men's Work*, 168. Sandra Bartky expresses, however, alongside the need to understand and challenge the multiple layers of oppression that affect women's lives, the shared commonality of women's particular subjugation. "…women of many conditions – women who are lesbian, and women who are not, women of color and white women, poor women and privileged women. All sorts of women have known in their daily lives the low self-esteem that is attendant upon cultural depreciation, the humiliation of sexual objectification, the troubled relationship to a socially inferiorized body, the confusions and even the anguish that come in the wake of incompatible social definitions of womanhood; women of all kinds and colors have endured not only the overt, but also the disguised and covert attacks of a misogynist society." Sandra Lee Bartky, "Introduction," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 9.

[9] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 2002), 29; R.W. Connell, "The Social Organization of Masculinity," in *The Masculinities Reader*, ed. S.M. Whitehead and F.J. Barrett (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 30-50.

[10] As will be discussed below, multiple masculinities exist within societies and compete with each other. Though dominant masculinities frequently subordinate and marginalise other non-normative masculinities. R.W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

historical and contemporary societies attest to the male dominance that androcentricity orchestrates.[11]

The injurious nature of the hegemonic androcentric worldview is realised in its derivative effects. In particular, androcentricity denies, censors, or undermines the diversity of human experience – that is, women's and some men's experiences – as this diversity is reductively eclipsed by overriding male norms.[12] Concomitantly, this dominant worldview is contingent upon the marginalisation of those who are defined as 'non-normative' women and men. These persons are determined as derivative, subsidiary, and dependent, as they are defined in contradistinction to dominant male standards.[13]

Intrinsic to androcentric societies is the enculturating of males and females into a hierarchical gender consciousness according to a binary system of polarised gender qualities. Androcentric societies emphasise the biological/sex differences between males and females through attributing socio-politically contrived gender identity categories to them that distinguish and elevate masculinity over against femininity.[14] As Juliet Mitchell has expressed: "All human societies make a social mark of the distinction between the sexes. This is a structural distinction, placing people on one side or other of an imagined

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[11] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 6-14, 18; Peter Glick, "Ambivalent Sexism, Power Distance, and Gender Inequality Across Cultures," in *Social Comparison and Social Psychology: Understanding Cognition, Intergroup Relations and Culture*, ed. Serge Guimond (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283-302. Non-patriarchal societies have and do exist, for example in the form of matrilineal, matrilocal, and matrifocal constructions. Archaeological evidence from such tribal societies suggests that sexual violence against women and perceptions of them as men's property was virtually non-existent in these communities; rather it arose in correlation with male dominance. Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 65. While non-patrilineal societies value femaleness and allocate aspects of social power to women, they still commonly manifest patriarchal properties insofar as men assume the primary political governance roles. As Sherry L. Hamby states: "Whereas many matrilineal societies are not matriarchal, most patrilineal societies are patriarchal." Hamby, "The Importance of Community in a Feminist Analysis of Domestic Violence among Native Americans," in *Domestic Violence at the Margins: Readings on Race, Class, Gender, and Culture*, ed. Natalie J. Sokoloff and Christina Pratt (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 183.

[12] Rita M. Gross, *A Garland of Feminist Reflections* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 57. See also Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 6, 94.

[13] Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism," *Contagion* 1 (1994): 19n3, doi:10.1353/ctn.1994.0000.

[14] Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 9.

line… Societies name the people on either side men and women and their attributes masculinity and femininity; these are not fixed qualities but the mark that distinguishes them means that each is the condition of the other and at no point can they occupy the same place."[15] Mitchell further states: "Across the world, throughout history and, indeed, within prehistory, woman's situation has varied enormously, but [always] relative to the man of her society."[16]

History and the great variety of androcentric cultures have shown that this constructed sex/gender differentiation has generated biased and injurious subject formation that is particularly deleterious for women. As men's subjectivity is shaped in relation to the characteristics of dominant masculinity, women's subjectivity is influenced in relation to the embodiment of 'feminine' characteristics determined in contradistinction. In other words, as men's *subjectivity* is affirmed, so women's *objectivity* has been structured in relation to it.[17] Simone de Beauvoir (and Luce Irigaray like her) understands that such formation has meant that 'woman' is not a subject in her own right, but occupies the place as the alterity to man against whom the woman determines and differentiates herself. "Man thinks himself without a woman. Woman does not think herself without a man. And she is nothing other than what man decides…. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other."[18] In short, men have determined the absolute human type as male, and it is the standard women are measured against and socially relegated as 'other'.

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[15] Juliet Mitchell, *Women: The Longest Revolution: Essays in Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* (London: Virago, 1984), 241-2.
[16] Mitchell, *Women,* 81.
[17] Luce Irigaray, "The Question of the Other (Democracy Begins Between Two)," in *French Women Philosophers: A Contemporary Reader,* ed. Christina Howells (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004), 82-91, ProQuest Ebook Central; Luce Irigaray, *Key Writings* (London: Continuum, 2004), viii.
[18] Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex,* trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1949; London: Vintage Books, 2011), 6.

This androcentric sex/gender differentiating is highly problematic insofar as it generates a binary gender taxonomy that is laden with value inequity. Males are privileged with characteristics and associations more highly valued and commanding of social power than the female side of the binary. Deeply embedded in the Western psyche, for example, is the gender binary schema that has aligned men/masculinity/maleness with positively regarded markers such as 'culture', 'reason', 'mind', 'spirit', 'independence', 'strength', and so on. Whereas, women/femininity/femaleness has been aligned with the contrasting, pejoratively rendered markers:[19] 'nature', 'chaos', 'body', 'carnality', 'dependence', 'weakness', and the like. Hence, while men have accessed the power and privilege of being aligned to the more highly valued active, rational, public, leadership, and proprietor domain, women have been subject to disempowerment through segregation to the passive, emotional/maternal, private, serving, chattel domain.[20] In this regard, Cixous expresses: "Thought has always worked by opposition… By dual, hierarchized oppositions. Superior/Inferior. The hierarchization subjects the entire conceptual organization to man."[21]

As a result of hierarchical assignment to the negative and submissive pole, girls and women are significantly immersed in a worldview that coerces them to embody male-determined values and diminishing binary conventions and social roles as normal for their sex. This does not mean that girls and women within androcentric societies are not valued. Typically, they are highly valued according to their embodiment of certain 'feminine' qualities, be it attractiveness, sexual desirability, fertility, mothering skills, domestic

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[19] Some binary configurations clearly align females with patently negative qualities. However, the complexity of the binary issue often lies not with the characteristics in and of themselves, but how the characteristics have been pejoratively established and aligned with females according to the dominant worldview. There is no intrinsic negative connotation attributable to the concept 'body', yet it has been pejoratively inscribed in the social consciousness and associated with females.
[20] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 80. Ann Rosalind Jones, "Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of L'Ecriture Feminine," *Feminist Studies* 7, no. 2 (1981): 252, doi:10.2307/3177523; Anne M. Clifford, *Introducing Feminist Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 16-21; Nowak, "Girardian Theory," 19-29.
[21] Hélène Cixous, "Sorties," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, trans. Ann Liddle (Sussex: Harvester, 1985), 90-91.

labour, and so forth. Yet, appraisals of this kind ultimately serve to devalue women as they align with the broader dominant consciousness that varyingly trivialises, sentimentalises, objectifies, and limits women's personhood, while situating them to advantage the androcentric-patriarchal order according to masculine desires and authority.[22]

Androcentric Language

As language is integral to culture and worldviews, to be enculturated into androcentricity is to also be enculturated into, and through, androcentric language.[23] In Freudo-Lacanian psychoanalytical terms, humans are socialised into, and by, androcentric language in early infancy. Subject formation occurs when infants enter into language, into the 'Law of the Father', where "the socio-symbolic order is governed by a patriarcally conceived father"[24] and the phallus holds the primary place as the dominant signifier.[25] Jacques Derrida has further stipulated that language is the domain of men. As the masculine point of view dominates, and the social order is 'phallocentric', so language is 'phallogocentric'. Here the phallus as the privileged signifier not only signifies the difference between the sexes, but also confers elevated status upon biological maleness and masculinity within the

[22] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 7.
[23] Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), 15. For extensive studies on sexism in language and across cultures see: Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bußmann, eds., *Gender Across Languages: Vol. 1–3* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2001-2003); Deborah Cameron, *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).
[24] Tina Chanter, *Gender: Key Concepts in Philosophy* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 119.
[25] In this theoretical frame, as a subject enters into language, they are inscribed within the 'Oedipal', 'paternal' social order. Lacan terms this a transition into the 'Law of the Father' via the phallus as the primary and dominant signifier that orchestrates subject formation. For detailed discussion of the role of the father in instigating a 'symbolic castration complex' in a child, which breaches the 'mother-child union' and transitions the child from the imaginary into the symbolic order, see Alicia Etchegoyen, "Psychoanalytical Ideas About Fathers," in *The Importance of Fathers: A Psychoanalytic Re-Evaluation*, ed. Judith Trowell and Alicia Etchegoyen (East Sussex: Brunner-Routledge, 2002), 29-31.

symbolic order.[26] As such, Derrida emphasises that it is "this strong phallogocentric underpinning that conditions just about all of our cultural heritage."[27]

Within androcentric societies, then, dominant linguistic frameworks and systems for making meaning and ordering reality are understood to be shaped according to male-centredness and associated male norms, identity, and dominance. Concurrently, these linguistic frameworks and systems cement the dominant male-determined attitudes, values, and beliefs that privilege and empower men. Androcentric language thus heavily inscribes within its populace the ideologies anchored upon a hierarchical gender consciousness that disadvantages women. As Marlis Hellinger and Hadumod Bußmann summarise, language has "social-psychological functions in that it reflects social hierarchies and mechanisms of identification, and it contributes to the construction and communication of gender. More specifically, language is assumed to codify an androcentric worldview."[28]

The sustained dominance of androcentric discourse includes a variety of linguistic stratagems. Notably the power of 'naming' the world has been the domain of men,[29] though this naming has been one-sided, and false because it has been asserted as whole and complete.[30] Men's power to name has also functioned via a semantic rule that linguistically reduces women's experience of being female. This skewing process of 'semantic

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[26] The neologism 'phallogocentrism', coined by Derrida, particularly denotes the cultural privileging of masculinity/phallocentrism in thinking, writing, orating, and therefore meaning making. For Derrida the term asserts the complicity and equivalence between logocentrism and phallocentrism. "In both cases there is a transcendental authority and point of reference: truth, reason, the phallus, 'man'". Jonathan D. Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*. 25th ann. ed. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 61, 172. For further discussion on binary opposition within language as a 'violent hierarchy' see Jacques Derrida, *Positions*, trans Alan Bass (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 41.
[27] "[C]ette puissante assise phallogocentrique qui conditionne à peu près tout notre héritage culturel." Jacques Derrida, "Autrui est Secret parce qu'il est Autre: Interview with Antoine Spire," *Le Monde de l'Education* 284, September 2000, https://redaprenderycambiar.com.ar/derrida/frances/autri.htm.
[28] Hellinger and Bußmann, *Gender Across Languages*, 18.
[29] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 8, 53.
[30] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon,1985), 8.

derogation'[31] achieves biased categorisation as it aligns 'male' with "a range of meanings which are positive and good", while 'female' comes to be "linked to the absence of those qualities, that is, to be decidedly negative and usually sexually debased."[32] Linguistically, and therefore socially, 'woman' does not possess equal standing or significance with 'man', as 'woman' has become pejoratively denoted.[33]

Additional outworking of this semantic bias is the systematic pejoration of terms related to women. For, "once a name or a word becomes associated with women, it is rarely again considered suitable for males" in any positive sense.[34] In fact, such terms can become highly offensive slurs to men if labelled with them because of their association with denigrated and sexually objectified women. This linguistic asymmetry generates the encoding of sexist double standards within lexicons. A common feature within cultures, for example, is an abundance of disparaging and misogynist expressions distinctively loaded to signify and control women as sexual objects; expressions that find little to no deprecating equivalence in their connotations in relation to men or male sexuality.[35]

Further to this, discriminating gendered labels are also mobilised to transmit knowledge about women in ways that are convenient for men. Terms such as 'virgin', 'concubine', 'courtesan', 'mademoiselle', 'nubile', 'damsel', 'maid/maiden', 'old maid', 'widow', 'mistress', 'Miss', and 'Mrs', particularly work to convey the marital and sexual status of women. Such terms serve the androcentric-patriarchal order by signaling which women

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[31] Muriel R. Schulz, "The Semantic Derogation of Women," in *The Routledge Language and Cultural Theory Reader*, ed. Lucy Burke, Tony Crowley, and Alan Girvin (New York: Routledge, 2003), 82-91.
[32] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 23; see also Hellinger and Bußmann, *Gender Across Languages, Vol. 2,* 16-17.
[33] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 17, 58.
[34] Casey Miller and Kate Swift, quoted in Spender, *Man Made Language*, 17.
[35] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 17, 23, 175. In Western vernacular, the myriad of terms demeaning women, such as whore, slut, wench, hussy, strumpet, slapper, hooker, tramp, skank, tart, trollop, ho, slag, and madam, emphasise the underlying male-dominant attitude that seeks to control female sexuality via denotations and attributions of shaming their sexual conduct. Terms for men's behaviour deemed immoral – rogue, scoundrel, dog, player, ladies' man – for example, function frequently as 'badges of honour'. See also Hellinger and Bußmann, *Gender Across Languages, Vol. 2,* 126, 240, 264.

have already been 'claimed' by men, and those that are still worthwhile and 'fair game'.[36] Still other names for women have succumbed to the degenerating effects of the androcentric sematic rule and lost their metaphoric force. In this regard Daly notes: "*Spinster, Webster, Weird, Hag, Witch, Sibyl, Muse*, and many Others, as well as *Goddess*." Via the pejoration of terms like these, deeper motives and effects are realised. As Daly sees it: "The waning of such words' power is part of the program of elimination of female powers."[37]

Men's power to name is also interlinked with the prominence, privileging, and continuity of men's personal names over women's names. In androcentric societies men's names have typically had a permanency and an identity that has not been afforded to women. This is evident in cultural practices where wedded women replace their father's surname with that of their husband's, and where the male line is preserved in the names bestowed upon children.[38] The privileging of men's names (and identities, experience and perceptions of knowledge) is also apparent in contrast with the absence of women's names throughout history.[39] As Spender further expresses of these records: "the meanings of our female ancestors have frequently disappeared."[40] Similarly, Cixous unequivocally maintains that the history of writing has been governed by a masculine libidinal economy;[41] and according to Irigaray: "We have to acknowledge that official History is partial and

[36] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 27.
[37] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, xix.
[38] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 24-28.
[39] Ibid., 52-53.
[40] Ibid., 53.
[41] Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1, no. 4 (1976): 878-879, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239. See also Cixous, "Sorties," 92. 96. For discussion of Cixous' perceptions that different psychic drives, instincts, and passions - different libidinal energies and economies - are present in males and females (though not reducible to biology), see Katherine Binhammer, "Metaphor or Metonymy? The Question of Essentialism in Cixous," *Tessera* 10 (1991): 65-79, doi:10.25071/1923-9408 .23650.

slanted… women has been erased in relation to the role of men in the unfolding of History."[42]

This 'erasure' also entails the effacement of women's identity as they have been linguistically located in ways that emphasise the identity of men. In this regard, women's personal names have been routinely relinquished, and their personhood reductively codified according to their relationship and position to men. As Charlotte Perkins Gilman states: "She has held always the place of a preposition in relation to man. She has been considered above him or below him, before him, behind him, beside him, a wholly relative existence—'Sydney's sister,' 'Pembroke's mother'—but never by any chance Sydney or Pembroke herself."[43] In such ways, as Cixous remarks: "Woman has always functioned 'within' the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier."[44]

Erasing women and their experience has also been linguistically reinforced through biased generic expressions that emphasise men's experience as representative of collective humanity. In particular, a misrepresentation and suppression of women occurs where male pronouns - 'he', 'him', 'his' - and terms such as 'mankind' are assumed to be inclusive of and denoting women and women's experience. These all-encompassing and widely entrenched masculine phrasings employ literal false generic terms given the obvious discontinuity between the signifier and its precise semantic property.[45] Additionally, they

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[42] Quoted in Morny Joy, "Women, Sacrifice, and Transcendence," in *Woman and the Divine: Touching Transcendence*, ed. Gillian Howie and J'annine Jobling (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 102.
[43] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *The Man-Made World* (1911; repr., Auckland: The Floating Press, 2011), 11, https://books.google.com.au/books?isbn=1775450759.
[44] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 887.
[45] Jennifer, L. Prewitt-Freilino, T. Andrew Caswell, and Emmi K. Laakso, "The Gendering of Language: A Comparison of Gender Equality in Countries with Gendered, Natural Gender, and Genderless Languages," *Sex Roles* 66, no. 3 (2012): 268-281, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/docview/1081897416?accountid=8194.

impose an ambiguity onto women that is not experienced by men, as women must determine whether they are intended to be inferred in the context or not.[46]

As a result of the masculine power to name, to linguistically represent reality, and to disseminate men's experiences as knowledge, women are underrepresented in both language and knowledge.[47] The "vast repertoire of women's meanings – which could explain and order their view of the world – are missing from language and from areas of codified experience."[48] Thus, within androcentric societies, the different and alternate meanings that women undoubtedly have produced have not been permitted equal expression and endurance; they have been excluded, or ignored, or disallowed, or derided. As a result, where women have not conformed to the dominant views, their differing voices and experiences have been frequently rendered silent and invisible.[49]

This silencing has been conditioned via multiple attendant factors that interrelate with men's power and control. Historically, women have been a muted group as they have been broadly denied equivalent education to men in addition to being socially and psychologically positioned in ways that have isolated them from each other. This has hindered them from cultivating an astute alternative and socially modifying discourse of their own. Their subordinate status has commonly accustomed women to hone linguistic habits of politeness, servility, and compliance in their relationships with men - a verbal style also habitually crafted to pacify men's aggression and moderate hardship in their lives.[50] Women have traditionally been deprived of access to the vested public platforms dominated by men where they could articulate different worldviews and potentialities

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[46] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 146-147.
[47] John B. Thompson, "Editor's Introduction," in Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 5.
[48] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 59.
[49] Ibid., 53-54, 121.
[50] Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 21, 97, 101; Spender, *Man Made Language*, 36-37, 76-83.

alongside men.[51] If permitted to speak, women have frequently had to contend with an intimidating milieu, and judiciously navigate the restraining social expectations of speaking in a manner deemed befitting for their sex.[52]

Subsequently, women are significantly encumbered with the difficulties of trying to verbalise their perspectives and experience through a 'foreign language'. Without a language codified in frames of significance, meaning, and worth in relationship to their own experiences, women are constrained to communicating their reality through the loaded language structures, semantic range, and registers of the dominant male group. [53] As Irigaray expresses, one cannot simply step outside phallogocentrism. Women experience a type of 'homelessness' within the symbolic order.[54] Thus: "Women's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to 'masculine' systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women."[55]

Consequently, Irigaray, Cixous, and Kristeva, among others, advocate for the cultivation of alternate types of expression that enable women to counter the dominance of phallogocentrism and its correlating repression of their experience and bodies.[56] Irigaray and Cixous call women to perceive how their bodies, and libidinal drives, are different

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[51] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 21, 82, 107.
[52] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa", 880-881.
[53] Spender, *Man Made Language*, 83; Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 878; Luce Irigaray, "The Power of Discourse and the Subordination of the Feminine," in *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 85.
[54] Margaret Whitford, "Identity and Violence," in *Luce Irigaray: Philosophy in the Feminine* (London: Routledge, 1991), 124-125.
[55] Irigaray, "Power of Discourse," 85.
[56] Irigaray, "Power of Discourse," 68-85; Luce Irigaray, "When Our Lips Speak Together," in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 205-218; Julia Kristeva, "Stabat Mater," in *French Feminists on Religion: A Reader*, ed. Morny Joy, Kathleen O'Grady, and Judith L. Poxon (London: Routledge, 2002), 112-138; Helénè Cixous, "Coming to Writing," in '*Coming to Writing' and Other Essays*, ed. Deborah Jenson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 1-58; Monique Wittig, *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David Le Vay (New York: William Morrow, 1975); Helénè Cixous and Catherine Clement, *Newly Born Woman*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996); Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 8-9.

from men, because the plural, ubiquitous, multifaceted nature of women's sexuality can transcend the limiting parameters of phallocentrism.[57] Cixous calls women to "Write your self. Your body must be heard. Only then will the immense resources of the unconscious spring forth…' giving back to women access to 'her native strength,… her goods, her pleasures, her organs, her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal…"[58] Kristeva petitions women to mobilise revolutionary agency, to "reject everything definite, structured, loaded with meaning, in the existing state of society." Because, "Such an attitude places women on the side of the explosion of social codes."[59] Monique Wittig summons women to remember: "There was a time when you were not a slave. You walked alone, full of laughter, you bathed bare-bellied… remember… Or, failing that, invent."[60]

Through such means, women might challenge the gendered 'symbolic power' or 'symbolic violence' women are subject to through enculturation into androcentricity and its biased androcentric linguistic systems that deny and hinder their authentic personhood. As Bourdieu has theorised, power is frequently "transmuted into symbolic form, and thereby endowed with a kind of legitimacy, that it would not otherwise have… Symbolic power is invisible power which is misrecognised as such and thereby recognised."[61] As girls and women are a dominated group prone to absorbing androcentric language and inherent ideologies and images, they also come to believe in, sustain, and construct an interior monologue, self-image, and social discourse, that legitimises the hierarchical symbolic

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[57] Jones, "Writing the Body," 250-252.
[58] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 880.
[59] Julia Kristeva, "Oscillation Between Power and Denial: An Interview by Xavière Gauthier," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, trans. Marilyn A. August (Sussex: Harvester, 1985), 166.
[60] Quoted in Susan Knutson, *Narrative in the Feminine: Daphne Marlatt and Nicole Brossard* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2000), 199n6.
[61] John B. Thompson, introduction to *Language and Symbolic Power*, by Pierre Bourdieu, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23-24.

power invested in men.[62] Thus, until women journey out of an androcentric worldview through psychological, epistemological, and ontological insights that provision them with a critical lens and the faculty to recast their subjectivity and identity anew, women inadvertently function within an overarching and detrimental cultural design. As Diana Meyers expresses:

> Many women will continue to use distorted and distorting images of womanhood to frame their self-concepts and their commitments as long as patriarchal cultures are bombarding them with such imagery. It is extremely difficult for an individual to do otherwise in these cultural contexts.[63]

Androcentric Power[64]

As the above discussion has evidenced, androcentric societies characteristically rely upon and uphold unequal power relationships, fundamentally between the sexes. As women and men are enculturated into worldviews, institutions, and linguistic contexts that distinguish and elevate men at the expense of women, so they are socialised into an environment that normalises men's control and power over women (and other men). As Johnson emphasises: "As with any system of privilege that elevates one group by oppressing another, control is an essential element of patriarchy: men maintain their privilege by controlling both women and other men who might threaten it."[65] This power differential is ingrained in boys and men as they are subject to the impetus to imitate, embody, and fulfil

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[62] Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 23, 167.
[63] Diana Tietjens Meyers, "Live Ordnance in the Cultural Field: Gender Imagery, Sexism, and the Fragility of Feminist Gains," chap. 7 in *Gender in the Mirror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Oxford Scholarship Online, doi:10.1093/0195140419.003.0007.
[64] Power here is understood in a Foucauldian sense as flowing everywhere, not in a way external to humans, but located in the very networks between them. Power manifests in the modification of the action of others and becomes ordered in particular ways within institutions. Michael Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry*, *8* (1982): 777-795, doi:10.2307/1343197. Subsequently, within androcentric societies, power is channelled in ways that serve male-dominant purposes.
[65] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 13.

culturally normative ideas of masculinity, which includes control of assets, events, self and others. Girls and women, on the other hand, are strongly subject to diminishing normative codes for their identity formation, and influenced to imitate, internalise, and accept as natural men's authority and control over them.[66]

Women's freedoms and choices have thus been traditionally curtailed and constrained. Women have typically been excluded from major institutions, and where they have been permitted a place, they have generally been relegated to second class, menial positions.[67] Their subordinate status has historically located them in domestic contexts under the governance and headship of male relatives, and frequently as the explicit or implicit property of fathers or husbands. In such environments women's bodies, sexuality, procreative power, and labour have been controlled, appropriated, and transacted, with inadequate recompense, in order to serve and satisfy the needs and desires of men. As Irigaray has said of this social order and its commodification of women: "The use, consumption, and circulation of their sexualised bodies underwrite the organization and the reproduction of the social order, in which they have never taken part as subjects."[68]

As an example, marital customs have typically embodied men's power over girls and women, and made demands of them and their sexuality in ways that have not been expected of boys and men. Virgin brides have been mandated and traded between men to ensure the paternity of offspring and to indulge the sexual gratification of husbands. Women deemed unfaithful to their husbands have frequently been subject to legal codes that include sanctioning violent retribution against them. Judicial frameworks have also

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[66] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 13; Luce Irigaray, "Body Against Body: In Relation to the Mother," in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 20.
[67] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 15.
[68] Irigaray, "Power of Discourse," 84. See also Luce Irigaray, "Body Against Body," 10; Luce Irigaray, "Divine Women," in *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 72.

typically protected the right of fathers or husbands to discipline offending daughters and wives as they see fit. While some legal codes have included punishing men for illicit sexual relations, it is the offence against the man to whom the woman is officially bound that justice has generally been decided. The raping of wives, slaves, servants, concubines, prostitutes, or the women of wartime enemies for example, have historically been acceptable, while avenues for such victimised women to seek legal redress have been absent or notoriously difficult to access.[69]

The prolific entrenchment of double standards of sexual behaviour in androcentric societies is instrumental to men's control of female bodies. Girls and women broadly live in controlling environments that entail some form of double standard and social censure if they are reckoned to be sexually immoral. Though sexual objectification and exploitation of women by men is commonplace, it is women who have been laden with upholding sexual moral codes. Men's sexual liberty has remained predominantly condoned, even respected, while women deemed promiscuous continue to be subject to reproach, shaming, stigmatisation, and, in some settings, legalised violent justice. Women's sexuality has been subject to appraisal and vilification according to male-defined parameters. In Western patriarchal frames women and their sexuality have long been demarcated and consequently esteemed or branded according to the 'virgin-whore' dichotomy.[70]

Further to this duality, female bodies and sexuality have largely been controlled and configured, often in contradictory ways, in service of the male libidinal economy. In one sense, female sexuality has undergone negation as women have been defined by men as naturally docile and passive, without passionate desires of their own. Conversely, females

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[69] Carol P. Christ, "A New Definition of Patriarchy: Control of Women's Sexuality, Private Property, and War," *Feminist Theology* 24, no. 3 (2016): 219, doi:10.1177/0966735015627949.
[70] Christ, "New Definition of Patriarchy", 218-219. See also Ruth E. Fassinger and Julie R. Arseneau, "Diverse Women's Sexualities," in *Psychology of Women: A Handbook of Issues and Theories*, 2nd ed, ed. Florence L. Denmark and Michelle A. Paludi (London: Praeger, 2008), 493-494.

have also been determined as innately lustful and corrupt, "sexual beings who are spiritually imperfect, and thus in need of guidance and control."[71] In yet another vein, female sexuality has been negatively codified in contrast to male sexuality. With little consideration that female sexuality might have a specificity of its own, female sexual qualities have been summed up in ideas of atrophy and deprivation, that is, of 'penis envy' and 'jealousy of men'.[72]

In such ways, women have been coerced to perform within a masculine libidinal economy that impairs and denies their own.[73] Furthermore, male-defined sexuality links sexuality to male dominance, and validates men's use of violence to realise both. As John Stoltenberg expresses, this ingrained association between androcentric normative ideas of male and female sexuality and oppressive control of females is patently evident in the vast pornography industry.[74]

> Pornography *institutionalizes* the sexuality that both embodies and enacts male supremacy. Pornography says about that sexuality… Here's how to act out male supremacy in sex… Your penis is a weapon; her body is your target… Because men are masters, women are slaves; men are superior, women are subordinate; men are real, women are objects; men are sex machines, women are sluts… Pornography also *eroticizes* male supremacy. It makes dominance and subordination feel like sex; it makes hierarchy feel like sex; it makes force and violence feel like sex… it makes inequality feel like sex.[75]

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[71] Joy, "Women, Sacrifice, and Transcendence," 103.
[72] Irigaray, "Power of Discourse," 68-75.
[73] Irigaray, "Body Against Body," 20.
[74] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 142.
[75] John Stoltenberg, "Pornography and Freedom," in *Men's Lives*, ed. Michael S. Kimmel and Michael A. Messner (New York: Macmillan, 1989), 485 (italics in original). Quoted in Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 142.

In sum, within androcentric societies, women's bodies and sexuality have been significantly conceptualised, controlled, and conditioned in ways that satisfy and advantage men.

Aspects of the controlling power of androcentric societies therefore lie in the formation of compliant subjectivities and identities that uphold the hierarchical gender consciousness that subordinates women. As men's superiority and dominance over women is intrinsically encoded in institutions and language, so women's and men's consciousness are disparately shaped accordingly. Relentless subjection to androcentric normative structures influences women to form a detrimental, false consciousness that orients them to assume the delimiting norms androcentricity deems appropriate for them. A corollary of this formation is women's own self-regulating and disciplining of their bodies and behaviour in accordance with 'truths' fixed by androcentricity and the androcentric identity they have acquired.[76]

Further intertwined with the androcentric formation of gendered subjects is a punitive arm that works to regulate and sustain the androcentric order. *Any* person who challenges the heteronormative androcentric gender constructs, and exposes the constructed nature of gender, are vulnerable to the prejudice and 'corrective violence' of those who defend the dominant androcentric order.[77] As a result, "most women accept their status because it is all they know or the best they can get. The alternative is to risk challenging a system defended by powerful interests, which makes going along with male privilege women's path of least resistance. To choose different paths is of course possible, as the frequent heroism of women makes clear, but not without considerable effort and risk."[78]

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[76] Chanter, *Gender*, 57.
[77] Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthropology*, ed. Ann E. Cudd and Robin O. Andreasen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 148.
[78] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 155.

The dominance of androcentric power constructs certainly does not mean that girls and women are wholly unable to exercise expressions of independence, power, and control in their lives. Many have mobilised significant agency and gained social advances for women within the historically male-centred world within which they live and work. There are examples of women who have managed to access the upper levels of major institutions and wield significant power. However, this does not shield them from the deep-seated consciousness that sustains men's dominance and control over women. Women typically have had to shape their performance in relation to a pseudo-male cognisance conducive to the wider androcentric climate and infrastructure. [79] Powerful women have also proven that such status does not exempt them from sexist treatment, including misogynistic smear campaigns.[80] Though some women may hold power over men, they are frequently less respected and often derided for it.[81] So, while some women appear to contradict the systematic disempowerment of girls and women, on closer examination these examples often witness to ongoing struggles with the dominant social consciousness that obstructs girls' and women's enhancement of agency as normative.

It has further been suggested that these atypical examples of powerful women serve to sustain androcentrism's masculine power. As Johnson notes: "The power of patriarchy is also reflected in its ability to absorb the pressures of superficial change as a defence

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[79] Kara Cooney, "Women Achieved Enormous Power in Ancient Egypt. What they Did With it is a Warning for Today," *Time*, Oct 18, 2018, http://time.com/5425216/ancient-egypt-women-in-power-today/. Eva Cox, "Feminism has Failed and Needs a Radical Rethink," *The Conversation*, 8 March, 2016, https://theconversation.com/feminism-has-failed-and-needs-a-radical-rethink-55441. As Sandra Lee Bartky has summarised: "a panoptical male connoisseur resides within the consciousness of most women." Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 72.

[80] Julia Gillard's term as the Australian Prime Minister stands as a case in point; during which politicians and the media besmeared her for being unmarried and childless, labelled her as a 'bitch,' 'witch,' and a 'slut,' and pictorially lampooned her with pots and pans, and dildos. Mary Delahunty, "Liars, Witches and Trolls: On the Political Battlefield," *Griffith Review* 40 (2013): 22-23, 25. For discussion of the misogyny levelled at Hillary Clinton during the 2016 presidential election see Rebecca Traister, *Good and Mad: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Anger* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018), 16-19.

[81] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 13-15. Soraya Chemaly, *Rage Becomes Her: The Power of Women's Anger* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2018), 156.

against deeper challenges. Every social system has a certain amount of give that allows some change to occur and in the process leaves deep structures untouched and even invisible. Indeed, the 'give' plays a critical part in maintaining the status quo by fostering illusions of fundamental change and acting as a systemic shock absorber."[82] This phenomenon is readily evident in the frequently employed rhetorical strategy of drawing on 'exception to the rule' examples of powerful women as a means to contradict women's ongoing and widespread experiences of complex and multifaceted subjugation. Thus, regardless of some facets of progress and examples of empowered women, women's disempowerment remains entrenched, as Johnson summarises: "In short, the basic features that define patriarchy as a type of society have barely budged."[83]

Distorted Subjectivity, Desire, and Agency

As the above has indicated, women and men are subject to markedly different gendered enculturation within androcentric societies, and this enculturation especially subjects women to diminished states of being. The following discussion sets out further how this enculturation affects women's and men's participation in violence in distinctive ways. Gendered subjectivity, desire, and agency are shown to influence women's experiences of violence. Women's experiences of violence are also evidenced as intertwined with dynamics of men's violence. Furthermore, structures of gendered violence are ascertained as grounded in, and ultimately sustained by, androcentric myths.

Foremost to interpreting the distinctive nature of women's experiences of violence is realising the significant psychological abuse inflicted upon girls and women when enculturation inhibits their capacity to determine and develop their authentic selves; that is, the self they might otherwise be if they were free from androcentric conditioning and

[82] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 17.
[83] Ibid., 16.

identity formation. As Irigaray and Cixous maintain, there is a difference between women and men, as they embody different interiorities, and this difference elicits divergent onto-epistemological ways of being in the world.[84] Yet authentic women's difference and subjectivities are still to be struggled for in light of androcentricity's powerful and false construction and socialisation of women as the opposite to men.

Intrinsic to this perspective is appreciating women's uniqueness and the potential for women to co-exist as equal, self-defined subjects, alongside of and in mutually fruitful relationships with men. Critically, this position emphasises that womanhood cannot be defined in or by any essentialist ideas of femininity or notions of 'the eternal feminine'. As Kristeva states: "she (woman) does not exist with a capital W, possessor of some mythical unity…"[85] 'Woman' is "that which cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies."[86] Or as Cixous asserts: "you can't talk about a female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes – any more than you can talk about one unconsciousness resembling another."[87] For Irigaray, "woman can become woman through and of herself, as opposed to what is 'other' to male identity."[88] These positions realise that alternate, diverse, and multivocal conceptions of 'woman' can emerge through deconstructing the androcentric fabrications of women as the 'Other' to men and exploring new potentialities for female subjectivities.[89] As Kristeva,

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[84] Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 23-33; Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 880. 1988. Hélène Cixous, "Conversations," in *Writing Differences: Readings from the seminar of Hélène Cixous*, ed. Susan Sellers (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1988), 151.
[85] Kristeva, "Women's Time," 30.
[86] Julia Kristeva, "Woman Can Never Be Defined: An Interview by Psych & Po," in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology*, ed. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, trans. Helen Eustis (Sussex: Harvester, 1985), 137.
[87] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa", 876.
[88] Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 4.
[89] Luce Irigaray, *Key Writings* (New York: Continuum, 2004), viii.

Cixous, and Irigaray each conceive in their own way, the multiplicity of 'woman' and women's imaginary is potentially inexhaustible.[90]

However, women's power, vitality, and being – their positive desires and *jouissance*[91] - is oppressed through subjection to the male-centred regulation which androcentricity upholds. A profound violence is done to women, then, when they take on a false androcentric consciousness and identity according to meaning making, discourses, attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge, experiences, and norms that are not their own. A profound violence is done to women when they come to unconsciously participate in and sustain their social vulnerability through habituation to embodying the diminished subjectivity, desires, and agency androcentricity considers normal for them.[92]

Numerous examples abound that show when women become accustomed to diminished norms, they are highly likely to accept and desire to fulfil these expectations.[93] For instance, the chiefly women-performed procedures of female genital mutilation reflect the desires of women enculturated to this tradition to ensure the girls within their communities conform to the standards of the androcentric status quo. They desire that these girls relinquish future libidinal pleasure and modes of wellbeing as it is deemed appropriate and

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[90] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 876; Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 28-29. Kristeva, "Women's Time," 15-18. This position also embraces the capacity for men to redefine themselves through multiple imaginaries beyond androcentricity. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian C. Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 98.

[91] The term '*jouissance'* in its simplest translation means 'pleasure'. Yet it encompasses rich connotations that include joy, to live exuberantly without fear, as well as sexual pleasure. In French Feminism '*jouissance'* suggests women's pleasure is of a different order that includes notions of fluidity, diffusion, duration, and freely giving without expectations or concerned with ends. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron, eds., "Introduction 3", in *New French Feminisms: An Anthology* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1980), 36n8.

[92] Cecily Jensen-Clayton and Rena MacLeod, "Female Pleasure in the Academy," in *Producing Pleasure within the Contemporary University*, ed. S. Riddle, M. Harmes, and P.A. Danaher (Rotterdam: Sense 2017).

[93] For detailed discussion of this phenomenon see Martha C. Nussbaum, *Women and Human Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 112-114, 140-141. See also Sandra Lee Bartky, "Narcissism, Femininity, and Alienation," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 33-44; Ann E. Cudd, "Oppression by Choice," *Journal of Social Psychology* 25 (1998): 22-44, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9833.1994.tb00347.x; Jean Baker Miller, *Toward a New Psychology of Women* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 10-11.

desirable to men. In other contexts, girls and women subject their bodies to debilitating dietary and exercise controls, and needless surgical risks, in pursuit of androcentric standards of desirability.[94] Some women's desire to live out the gendered narrative of romantic relationships is so strong they justify their abuse from male partners as acceptable for the perceived sense of intimacy it triggers.[95] Some women's desire to live selfless lives includes forfeiting their own welfare in ways that enable others to exploit and abuse them.[96] In sum, countless girls and women enculturated into androcentricity come to desire to construct themselves according to the reductive, objectifying ideals of femininity androcentric cultures desire of them without realising their injurious ramifications. While women employ and enjoy agency in this construction of self, ultimately it is the agency that androcentricity condones them to use as they fulfil androcentric standards of desirable femininity.[97]

What is more, as women's desires are coerced by androcentric designs of what women should be in relation to men, they not only take on desires injurious towards the self, but also become isolated from and rivals with each other. In effect, women are subjected to identity formation that positions them in acrimonious opposition with each other as they vie to fulfil male-determined desires and satisfy the wants of men. As a corollary of this competitive dynamic, satisfying the desires of men also provides women with a platform from which to achieve further personal desires for security, status, and increased agency.

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[94] Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," 66-67, 73; Kathryn Pauly Morgan, "Women and the Knife: Cosmetic Surgery and the Colonization of Women's Bodies," *Hypatia* 6 (1991): 28-32, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3809838.

[95] Julia T. Wood, "The Normalisation of Violence in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships: Women's Narratives of Love and Violence," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 18, no. 2 (2001): 247-254, doi:10.1177/0265407501182005.

[96] Stephanie Golden, *Slaying the Mermaid: Women and the Culture of Sacrifice* (New York: Three Rivers, 1998), 1-22.

[97] This does not mean all women's desires and agency are distorted. As Uma Narayan has explained women within androcentric societies can have deformed and nondeformed desires. Some women exert degrees of autonomy as they bargain with patriarchy. Uma Narayan, "Minds of Their Own: Choices, Autonomy, Cultural Practices, and Other Women," in *A Mind of One's Own: Feminist Essays on Reason and Objectivity*, 2nd ed, ed. Louise M. Antony and Charlotte E. Witt (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2002), 418-432.

Irigaray summarises: "As women are assessed according to masculine sex and genealogy, they are in competition for the importance that man attaches to them; they are placed in a position to become rivals."[98] For Cixous this means: "Men have committed the greatest crime against women. Insidiously, violently, they have led them to hate women, to be their own enemies, to mobilise their immense strength against themselves."[99] The subtle and deeply injurious quality of uncritical embodying of androcentric desires is that it perpetuates men's control over women. As women contend with each other and seek to satisfy men's desires, they fundamentally mirror men's superiority, authority, and power back to men.[100] In this way, women also come to be participants in the construction and perpetuation of men's foremost agency and desires to embody normative codes of dominant masculinity that includes dominion over women.

In sum, a pronounced and distinctive violence is done to women when their subjectivity, desires, and agency are constructed in ways that render them subordinate. They suffer an internal, psychological violence as their consciousness, development, and expression of more authentic personhood is hindered or denied. They are also made vulnerable to external, physical violence as they are constructed as socially weak, sexually objectified, undervalued, and diminished. This positions them as extremely vulnerable to isolation and violence not only in their personal relationships with men, but also within the dynamics of men's interactions with other men.

Men's and Women's Experiences of Violence

To perceive women's experiences of violence and victimhood more completely, it is necessary to comprehend characteristics of men's experiences of violence and victimhood.

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[98] Luce Irigaray, "Postscript: The Long Path Towards Being a Woman: Conversation between Luce Irigaray and Birgitte H. Midttun," in *Conversations* (London: Continuum, 2008), 155. See also Irigaray, "Body Against Body," 11.
[99] Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 878.
[100] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 12.

Within androcentric societies, distinctively complex and volatile relationships exist between men as men are collectively enculturated to be dominant and powerful figures. This construction and distortion of men's subjectivity, and attendant desires and agency, is intrinsically intertwined with the performance of gendered violence. As men are subjected to taking on the characteristics of dominant forms of masculinity, so their desires are also formed accordingly. Many men come to desire a fulfillment of the characteristics and expectations deemed normal for men: strength, independence, authority and control over assets, events, self and others. Intrinsic to this are the desires of proving themselves sufficiently dominant alongside of, and over against, other men and non-normative masculinities. As Fleming, Gruskin, Rojo, and Dworkin state: "men need to prove themselves as powerful and strong. Men who do not portray – or even prove – themselves as such can be victimized, stigmatized, or otherwise relegated to lower social status."[101] There are also, of course, contexts where men and women are rivals, especially if women have accessed traditionally male-dominant domains and threaten men's sense of masculine identity. However, within androcentric societies men's overarching rivals and hostile opponents are other men - not women who are customarily psychosocially positioned as inferior to them irrespective of their social standing.[102]

Further to this, men's subjectivity, desires, and agency are strongly impacted by the controlling powers of other men. Johnson elaborates on this masculine context:

> [W]hat fuels competition, aggression, oppression and violence is a dynamic relationship between control and fear. Patriarchy encourages men to seek security, status, and other rewards through control, to fear other men's ability to control and harm them, and to identify being in control as both their best defence against loss

[101] Fleming et al., "Men's Violence," 251.
[102] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 12-13, 55.

> and humiliation and the surest route to what they need and desire… In short, patriarchy encourages men to fear all the things that other men might do to exert control and thereby protect and enhance their standing as real men in relation to other men.[103]

Given this aspect of fear, a key characteristic of androcentric societies is the bonding of some men over against other men. Often the making and proving of 'real manhood' is played out in peer groups, where hatred and aggression against other men, and women, become badges of securing masculine respect. "Men in these social environments will perpetrate violence against other males and against women in an effort to gain, maintain, or avoid losing status and power. The key here is that men's violence…can also be viewed as establishing hierarchies among men."[104] This dynamic of male bonding and aggression over against other men, inclusive of currents of violence against women, is abundantly evident in vast hyper-masculine phenomena including: football hooliganism, violent sports, fraternity hazing rituals, 'king hits' and street thuggery, tribal and 'turf' wars, outlaw rings, gangs, mafia syndicates, military combat and terrorism.

Unquestionably, men suffer excessive and extreme violence at the hands of other men.[105] Data shows that "men are overwhelmingly more likely than women to be both perpetrators and victims of interpersonal violence."[106] Men are more likely to have risk factors conducive to increased violence in their lives such as substance abuse, or psychotic disorders. They are more likely to witness excessive violence, and to engage in

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[103] Ibid., 50-51.
[104] Fleming et al., "Men's Violence," 251.
[105] Gary Barker, "Male Violence or Patriarchal Violence? Global Trends in Men and Violence," *Sexualidad, Salud y Sociedad (Rio de Janeiro)* 22 (2016): 316-330, doi:10.1590/1984-6487.sess.2016.22.14.a; Fleming et al., "Men's Violence," 251.
[106] Fleming et al., "Men's Violence," 250.

brawling.[107] And they are more prone to imprisonment, suicide,[108] and murder by other men.[109]

Within such dynamics of men's rivalry, women are precariously and dangerously placed. In one vein they become bodies upon whom men can personally and/or collectively express and re-establish their masculine power and 'manhood', and bond as males. In another vein, women's bodies become sites upon which men can vent their deep frustrations and rage as they wrestle with conflicting desires,[110] feelings of powerlessness,[111] and efforts to meet the normative codes of masculinity expected of them in a competitive masculine environment.[112] Research has found that, as men are conditioned to objectify women and to control themselves and others, they frequently experience diminished relationships with women, and with other men; thus they have limited relational outlets for healthy relief of anxiety and strain. As Kaufman states: "Men become pressure cookers. The failure to find safe avenues of emotional expression and

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[107] Ibid., 250-251.

[108] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 160-161, 171-172.

[109] The United Nations reports that globally 79 per cent of all homicide victims are male with 95 per cent of homicide perpetrated by males. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (Vienna: UNODC, 2013); 13-14, https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.

[110] Studies have shown that men frequently embody conflicting desires and masculinities. Many violent men have also expressed desires to be nurturing partners and fathers and feel degrees of shame when they lose control and fail in these roles. Kerstin Edin and Bo Nilsson, "Men's Violence: Narratives of Men Attending Anti-Violence Programmes in Sweden," *Women's Studies International Forum* 46 (2014): 100, doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2013.12.006.

[111] Androcentric societies' identification of power with men, does not mean that all men feel or are powerful. Many men, particularly of marginalised, oppressed, and impoverished groups, experience strong degrees of disempowerment. Johnson elaborates, however, that disempowered men "can still feel some connection with the *idea* of male dominance and with men who are powerful. It is far easier, for example, for an unemployed working-class man to identify with male leaders and their displays of patriarchal masculine toughness than it is for a woman of any class." Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 9. Karen Bloomquist further mentions that exerting control over the women in their lives, provides a means for men experiencing disempowerment to "assert manhood and gain at least some sense of personal power vis-à-vis other *men*." Karen L. Bloomquist, "Sexual Violence: Patriarchy's Offense and Defense," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 63.

[112] As literature has shown, women come to violently imbibe the tensions of men striving to meet androcentric cultural conceptions of manhood. Julia T. Wood, "Monsters and Victims: Male Felons' Accounts of Intimate Partner Violence," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 21, no. 5 (2004): 567-570, doi:10.1177/0265407504045887; Wood, "Normalisation of Violence," 247-54; Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 46.

discharge means that a whole range of emotions are transformed into anger and hostility. Part of the anger is directed at oneself…Part is directed at other men. Part of it is directed at women."[113] In such contexts, women's bodies become isolated locations that serve to absorb cathartic purges of men's frustration and fury ultimately grounded in men's rivalry and opposition.

Clearly, enculturation into androcentricity influences both women's and men's subjection to violence and victimhood. Yet, this violence and victimhood is distinctive as it is shaped by gendered enculturation which impacts upon men's and women's subjectivity, desires, and agency in different ways. Women's victimhood is deeply intertwined with men's violence and victimhood. Though, as the above has described, these experiences are distinguishable from each other in light of their gendered construction. What is more, men's violence against women evidently plays a complex and critical role within androcentric societies, as a means of channelling men's aggression and sustaining the androcentric social order.

Androcentric Myths

At its very core, then, this channelling of violence and sustaining of the androcentric social order is grounded within the fabric of a myth that conveys males as superior to females. Fundamentally, androcentric societies are ordered in alignment with a gendered mythical discourse that shapes social consciousness in a way that accepts girls and women as inherently inferior to boys and men. This mythical discourse works in a dual fashion as it both *cements* male privilege while *denying* male privilege as socially constructed. Men's

[113] Michael Kaufman, "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change*, ed. Michael Kaufman (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12.

superiority, authority, and control over women is thus infused within the social consciousness as innate and natural.

It is this foundational myth that underlies the myriad of auxiliary myths that have kept women subordinate over the centuries. These myths have inculcated, for example, that "women are responsible for bringing death into the world through disobedience, chaos or uncontrolled sensuality";[114] women's smaller brain size is directly related to their functional inferiority;[115] women are innately weak and "specially made to please man";[116] women's biology is her destiny,[117] and so on. It is this fundamental gendered mythical discourse that has induced divergent and hierarchical socialisation, sex roles and expectations within relationships that suffice to empower and favour men.

Furthermore, this mythical gendered discourse has motivated social attitudes that men's violence is normal and a customary means of expressing masculinity. This discourse underlies men's imitation and internalisation of cultural attitudes that overtly or covertly tolerate and conceal men's expressions of violence against women. Further to this, as men come to embody the myth of masculine superiority, which inherently permits men's performance of violence, they also access the derivative mythical frameworks that endorse blaming women victims for provoking the violence.[118]

While the breadth of accusations levelled against women victims for triggering violence are vast, the mythic fabric of blame serves a key common purpose - to justify men's

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[114] Mary Condren, "Suffering into Truth: Constructing the Patriarchal Sacred," *Feminist Theology* 17, no. 3 (2009): 363, doi:10.1177/0966735009102364.
[115] Stephanie A. Shields, "Functionalism, Darwinism, and the Psychology of Women: A Study of Social Myth," *American Psychologist* 30 (1975): 740-742, doi:10.1037/h0076948.
[116] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Émile*, quoted in Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Typecasting: On the Arts and Sciences of Human Inequality Revised Edition* (New York: Seven Stories, 2008), 11.
[117] Ewen and Ewen, *Typecasting*, 3.
[118] Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Violence, Society, and the Church: A Cultural Approach* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2004), 113. See also Varda Burstyn, *The Rites of Men: Manhood, Politics, and the Culture of Sport* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 162.

violence and thereby obscure it. For instance, men's violence against women is mystified and concealed when women are blamed for bringing shame to the family; or for failing their domestic roles; or for rejecting their husband's authority, and/or his 'right' to sex. They are blamed for provoking violence through the clothes they wear and the locations they visit, for taunting, teasing, and seducing men. They are blamed for not leaving a violent partner, for not fighting back and thus signaling consent. Women are accused of saying 'no' when they mean 'yes', for telling lies, exaggerating, giving false reports, and trying to entrap men. Other justifications for the violent treatment of women arise in the context of assumptions that women really desire, enjoy, and deserve aggression, and benefit from 'corrective punishment'.[119] Men are not the only ones influenced by myths of this kind, for women also come to internalise their experience of violence and blame themselves and other women according to such myths.[120] The process of blaming the victim further underpins the mystification and obscuring of women's experiences of men's violence as it buttresses denial of the issue through privileging masculine voices and perspectives that downplay men's violence. Arguments of denial propound, for example, that there is no such thing as toxic masculinity[121] and women are equally as violent as men.[122]

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[119] Anne Borrowdale, *"Distorted Images": Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex* (London: SPCK, 1991), 98-99. See also Edin and Nilsson, "Men's Violence," 96-106.

[120] Michael Flood and Bob Pease, "Factors Influencing Attitudes to Violence Against Women," *Trauma, Violence and Abuse* 10, no. 2 (2009): 125-142, doi:10.1177/1524838009334131. For extended discussion on rape myths see Caroline Blyth, *The Narrative of Rape In Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010), doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199589456.001.0001.

[121] Christine Flowers, "Toxic Masculinity is a Myth," *Victoria Advocate*, January 24, 2019, https://www.victoriaadvocate.com/opinion/toxic-masculinity-is-a-myth/article_042550bc-2014-11e9-ba29-9b102aabf8cb.html.

[122] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 21-25. Significant research has illustrated women's enactment or participation in violence is deeply interconnected with their experiences of victimisation by men. See Suzanne C. Swan et al., "A Review of Research on Women's Use of Violence with Male Intimate Partners," *Violence and Victims* 23, no. 3 (2008): 301-314, doi:10.1891/0886-6708.23.3.301; Donileen R. Loseke, Richard J. Gelles, and Mary M. Cavanaugh, *Current Controversies on Family Violence*. 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2005); Michael S. Kimmel, "'Gender Symmetry' in Domestic Violence: A Substantive and Methodological Research Review," *Violence Against Women* 8, no. 11 (2002): 1332-1363, doi:10.1177/107780102237407.

This gendered mythical discourse also significantly limits the avenues women have for attaining reparations and pressing for positive change. Though some legislative and social progress is apparent in some parts of the world, this mythical discourse still extensively underpins androcentric institutions and safeguards the privilege of men. Institutions remain largely dislocated from, and insensible to, the experiences of girls and women. This is perhaps nowhere more palpably evident than in the extensive data that shows the pervasive trend of exceptionally low conviction rates of men who have perpetrated rape.[123] Overarchingly, this gendered mythical discourse effects an obscuration of violence against women. Women's experiences of violence become mystified as they are conditioned to accept them as normal, or themselves responsible. Moreover, women are motivated to stay silent through fears they will be subject to further distress and injustice.

In sum, women and men significantly live out of, or in relation to, a worldview, linguistic habitus, and male-dominant power context that are fundamentally structured upon androcentric mythology that the social privilege men wield is natural and normal. Clearly, it is possible to transcend androcentricity through psychological transformation and to become less subject to androcentric culture. However, the entrenched nature of androcentricity endures, as does its perpetuation of a tragic, violent system that distorts both women and men as it conditions them to live in fractured and violent relationships with each other. Even though many men are not violent, and do not feel powerful, the androcentric discourse ultimately propagates a social order that influences men to be perpetrators of violence and permits all men to identify with, and benefit from, the constructs of masculine power. In contrast, women are typically located within a social

[123] Kimberly A. Lonsway and Joanne Archambault, "The 'Justice Gap' for Sexual Assault Cases: Future Directions for Research and Reform," *Violence Against Women* 18, no. 2 (2012): 157, doi:10.1177 /1077801212440017.

order dependent upon their diminishment, which hinders their right to live uninhibited within a climate free from the threat of men's violence.[124]

As is shown above, androcentricity and androcentric language and power generates substantial distinctive gendered experiences of violence as enculturation shapes subjectivity, desire, and agency – and thus experiences of violence and victimhood - in different ways for women and men. The attendant processes - of imitating and internalising hierarchical gender norms, blaming women victims, and thereby justifying men's violence - preserve a climate where girls' and women's experience of violence is normative, mystified and obscured. Through these processes and the underlying mythology that sustains male dominance, androcentricity is shown to locate women as a particular category of victim whose victimisation is imperative to maintaining the androcentric order.

The Interpretive Model: Utilising Mimetic and Feminist Theories

This chapter has set out an understanding of how victimhood is shaped in particular ways for women as they are socialised into androcentric societies and cultures. The concepts of *androcentricity*, *androcentric language* and *androcentric power*, and their inherent impact upon women's subjectivity, desire and agency, and therefore women's experiences of violence and victimhood, have been ascertained. As such, these concepts are pertinent analytical tools for facilitating detailed examination and deconstruction of gendered experiences of violence. Subsequently, these concepts are to be used as analytical tools for investigating the biblical representation of persecuted women and disclosure of gendered patterns of violence. The following conceptual model (figure 2 below) and ensuing discussion, illustrates how these two theoretical frameworks provide concepts that combine

[124] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 9. Paul Kivel, *Men's Work: How to Stop the Violence that Tears Our Lives Apart* (Minnesota: Hazelden, 1992), 168-170.

in mutually collaborative ways to form a dialogical interpretive model for analysing gendered violence within biblical texts.

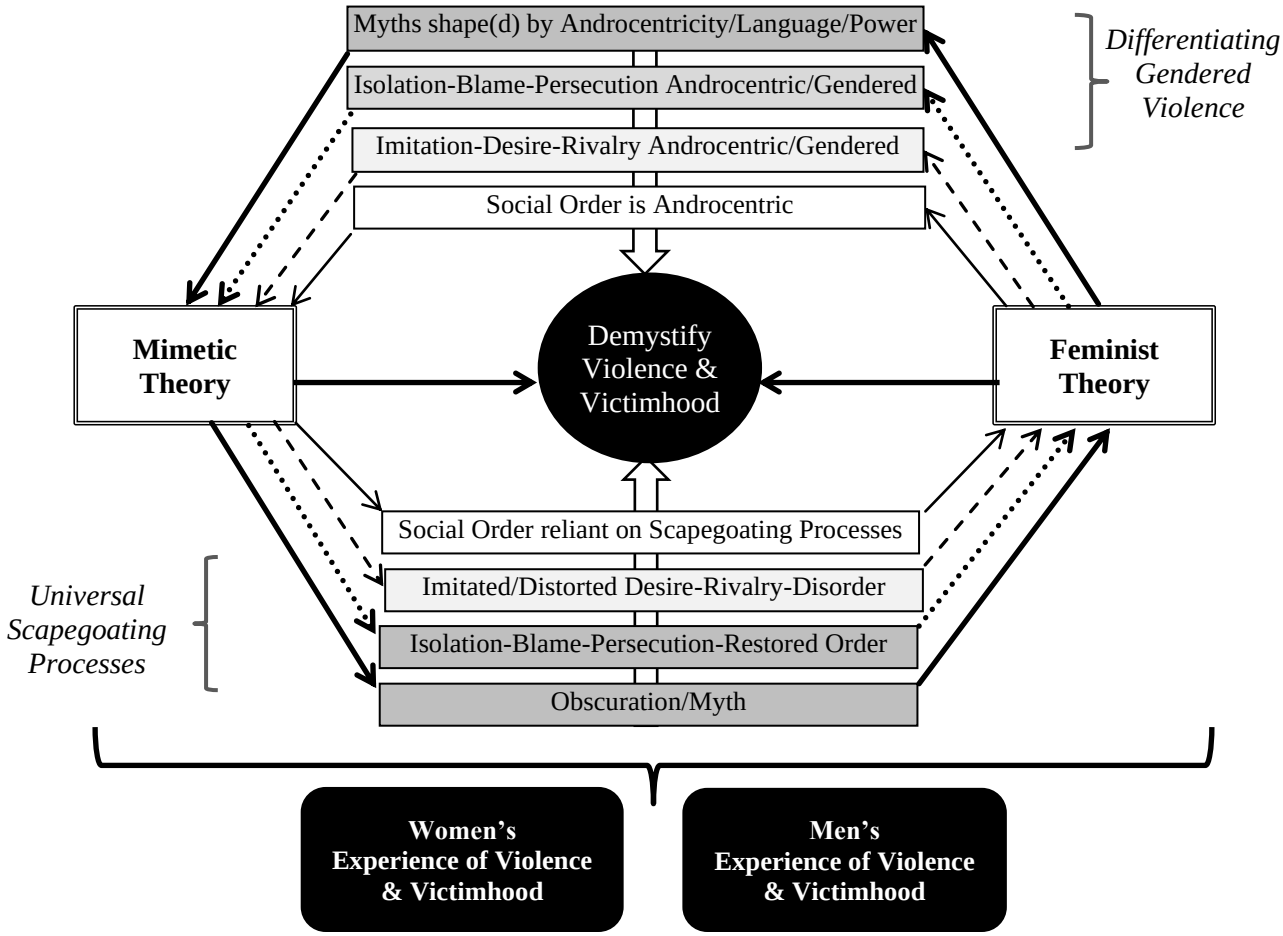

Figure 2. Dialogical Interpretive Model

As this conceptual model exemplifies, both mimetic theory and feminist theory are concerned with analysing and demystifying patterns and processes of victimhood. While mimetic theory encompasses sensitivity to women as a category of victims, it primarily provides a frame for conceptualising and analysing universal, rather than gendered, patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. Feminist theory, however, provides a qualifying lens through concepts that analyse how these patterns and processes are shaped in different ways for women and men via their enculturation into androcentricity. Mimetic

theory's analytical schema provides a logic that explains patterns of victimisation as instrumental to channelling violence and thus generating and sustaining social order. The feminist analytical approach as defined in this dissertation, further emphasises that the social order is also predominantly and historically androcentric and subsequently sustained by gendered patterns of victimisation.

Concepts of imitation, distorted desire, and rivalry are common to mimetic and feminist theory. Both theoretical frameworks perceive desire to be intrinsically positive and dynamic, yet socially influenced and corruptible in its connection to constitutions of selfhood and metaphysical desires for the fullness of *being*. Mimetic theory particularly affords conceptualisation and analysis of the volatile nature of imitated human desire, and its capacity to distort into rivalry and embroilment of others in escalations of violence that lead to disorder. The feminist theory concepts emphasise, however, that imitated, socially constructed desires and derivative yearnings for *being*, are significantly gendered as they are informed and corrupted by enculturation into an androcentric gender consciousness - one that models diminished codes of femininity to females and privileged empowered codes of masculinity to males. Feminist theory supplies, then, the qualification that distorted desires, rivalry, and ensuing tensions/disorder are highly gendered and must be analysed as so.

Both mimetic and feminist theory acknowledge that those who are socially diminished and marginalised with reduced agency, are especially vulnerable to victimisation – and in this sense women configure as a vulnerable group. Mimetic theory exposes a logic of isolating a victim and blaming them in a manner that justifies and obscures their persecution. These processes alleviate violent social tensions as they are channelled upon a victim with socially harmonising restorative ends. Feminist theory imparts the need, however, to subject these processes to discriminating gender analysis. For while it is evident both

women and men experience isolation, blame, and persecution, these processes are significantly influenced by the male-dominant power constructs that androcentricity inscribes. Androcentricity's gender hierarchy means women typically experience heightened and disparate forms of marginalisation, and systemic blame and persecution in comparison with men who comprise the dominant group. Women therefore configure as a particular category of victim that maintains the androcentric social order as they are socially positioned to absorb purges of men's violence.

Both mimetic and feminist theory perceive that persecutory violence against innocent victims is concealed. Mimetic theory provides a developed logic that conceptualises how this victimisation is obscured and mystified. It imparts a demystifying vantage point that discerns how myths, throughout the history of human culture, have functioned both to endorse and conceal violence and victimisation – in other words, to maintain a social consciousness ignorant of the reality of its persecution. Feminist theory concepts, however, provide a further discerning lens as they discern that myths too have shaped, and been shaped, by androcentricity, especially androcentric language and power, and have worked enduringly to sustain and conceal women's experiences of men's violence. Feminist theory accords with mimetic theory's anthropological conceptualisation of myth as a social mechanism of violence. Feminist theory supplies in turn, a sociological consideration of myth as culturally gendered, thereby conceptualising women as a particular category of victim within androcentric societies. In dialogue, mimetic theory and feminist theory concepts provide an interpretive model that facilitates examining texts and contexts of violence and discerning women experiences of violence as distinctive from men's experiences.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has finalised and established my interpretive model and the theoretical framework upon which it is structured. Concepts drawn from mimetic and feminist theory have been substantiated as combining to form a comprehensive dialogical interpretive model that facilitates detailed examination of biblical texts of persecuted women, and how these texts potentially demystify patterns and processes of gendered violence that target girls and women. I move now to set out the further methodological design choices employed in the application of this interpretive approach.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of the decision-making process and central methodological design choices made prior to commencing the textual analysis and investigations of this dissertation. In this dissertation methodological design is understood as the collection of strategies, methods, and techniques employed to address the research questions.[1] It is to these three domains of research design that I now turn. The following provides a rationale for the primary strategies of textual examination conducted, the overarching method of analytical interpretation employed, and the key techniques of textual analysis exercised. These processes are explained in relation to the research questions' investigatory interests to discern how biblical texts represent women's victimhood; and how this representation might be perceived, when read through the lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, as disclosing enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence in liberatory ways.

Dialogical Interpretive Model

Intrinsic to the methodological design was the strategy of analysing the narratives of Jephthah's daughter (Judg 11:29-40) and the Levite's wife (Judg 19:1-30) according to the dialoguing of concepts from mimetic and feminist theory. In order to investigate the biblical representation of women's victimhood in texts depicting their extreme persecution, it was necessary to formulate an interpretive model capable of deconstructing such biblical narratives in ways that discerned and illuminated underpinning patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. As set out in Chapters 2 and 3, combined concepts from mimetic

[1] Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, eds., "Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research," in *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2008), 34.

and feminist theory provided an enhanced interpretive lens for investigating how the selected narratives evidenced patterns and processes of human violence and victimhood, and how these patterns and processes assumed gendered form. This interpretive framework also enabled investigating the degree to which the selected narratives mystified or demystified these patterns and processes in correlation with concealing or revealing their victims.

The narrative features of Judges 11:29-40 and 19:1-30 were analysed through these two conceptual frameworks working in dialogical relationship with each other. Textual features were examined for their illustration of mimetic patterns and processes of scapegoat violence and victimhood. That is, they were analysed for their representation of *imitated/distorted desire* that leads to *rivalry, conflict* and *crisis,* and the subsequent *isolation, blame* and *persecution* of a victim that brings about *restoration of order* to society. Concomitantly, these patterns and processes of violence were examined for their gendered co-construction according to women and men's divergent enculturation into *androcentricity*, *androcentric language* and *androcentric power*. Additionally, these narratives were examined for the degree to which their depiction of gendered violence and victimhood resisted and undermined mystifying/mythologizing obscuration.

This strategy of analysing the selected narratives according to the concepts of mimetic and feminist theory facilitated examination of this dissertation's central aims. This interpretive lens enabled heightened exploration of the biblical representation of women's distinctive experiences of gendered violence and victimhood. It also enabled new insights to be brought forward in relation to how these narratives and their female victims represent enduring patterns and processes of androcentric violence. Lastly, it enabled examining how these extreme texts of persecuted women could be considered redeemable and relevant to contemporary times. This final aim is shown insofar as the texts' demystification of

androcentric patterns and processes of gendered violence represents an ongoing challenge to humanity to move beyond the androcentric consciousness that continues to sustain gendered structures of violence.

Chosen Narratives for Analyses

Further to the methodological design was selecting the two narratives of Jephthah's daughter (Judg 11:29-40) and the Levite's wife (Judg 19:1-30) to analyse for their representation of extreme masculine violence against women. Though there are many biblical narratives and female characters suited to the investigatory lines of this dissertation given their depiction of women's victimisation, these two narratives and characters were selected because they enabled particular analytical complexity and scope. Firstly, and fundamentally, they are arguably the most extreme biblical depictions of women's victimhood. Thus, they provided a rigorous research context within which to test the capacity of my interpretive model to determine inherent liberatory value within markedly violent biblical texts.

Secondly, these two narratives were selected as they afforded heightened examination of the Bible's representation of diverse women's experiences of men's violence. While the characters of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife are comparable both in their youthful ages and subjection to common aspects of androcentric gender socialisation, they are distinctive in their social status and in their relationship positions to their male victimisers. Subsequently, the narrative of Jephthah's daughter allowed for an analysis of gendered victimhood within the context of a father committing violence upon his dutiful and acquiescing virgin daughter who is permitted some opportunity to speak. The narrative of the Levite's wife, however, provided for analysing the violence perpetrated by a husband upon his runaway secondary-status wife who is rendered entirely silent in the text.

Thirdly, these two narratives and characters enabled examination of the biblical depiction of divergent manifestations of women's victimisation. Jephthah's daughter is subject to the physical violence of sacrificial murder performed in the domestic domain by her father as the sole agent of a single act of violence; whereas the Levite's wife is subject to multiple physical and sexual acts of violence - expulsion, torture, gang rape, murder, and dismemberment - by multiple men in a chiefly public context. As such these narratives and female figures enabled enhanced examination of the biblical representation of diverse aspects of women's experience of victimhood within varied androcentric settings. Accordingly, this contextual breadth provided a rigorous domain within which to apply my interpretive model and evaluate the capacity for mimetic and feminist theory concepts to determine within these representations of violence the depiction and liberatory disclosure of clandestine patterns and processes of gendered violence.

Fourthly, these narratives and female characters allowed for examination of the portrayal of women's victimhood as a purposeful literary device within the textual dynamics and parameters of one biblical book. Within the Book of Judges and its trajectory of violence, these two victims are discernible as particularly salient examples of women's victimhood that emphasise the violent androcentric world of the text. They are also discernible as characters intrinsic to the book's textual designs of depicting Israel's degeneration into excessive male-performed brutality. As such these two female victims provided for exploring their potential to function within broader purposeful textual designs as powerful figures capable of moving their readers to new insights through their portrayals of women's subjection to men's victimisation.

Given the scope and diversity of these narratives and female characters, the strategy of examining these two passages was deemed to provide an especially appropriate research platform for this dissertation's investigatory interests. They presented a fitting domain

within which to assess the biblical representation of distinctive experiences of women's victimhood within androcentric settings. They provided pertinent and varied contexts within which to assess the capacity for my interpretive model to discern a demystification and disclosure of patterns and processes of gendered violence within this biblical representation of women's victimhood. Accordingly, they provided an appropriate frame within which to examine the capacity of these violent biblical narratives, typically estimated to be irredeemable, to be read in liberatory ways as they demystify and undermine enduring structures of gendered violence.

Method of Narrative Analysis

As part of the methodological design, and in alignment with my own postmodern onto-epistemology, the two texts of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife were examined within the overarching methodological interpretive frames of narrative analysis. This method enabled the narratives to be examined in ways commensurate with the investigative interests of this dissertation as: 1) this qualitative method acknowledges the constructed character of narratives and the co-constructed nature of narrative meanings; 2) it provides for deconstructing dominant narrative structures and discourses to explore deeper substructures, patterns, and processes within narratives; and, 3) it recognises the capacity for new insights to be brought forward through alternate narrative perspectives and via the synergistic encounter that occurs between narratives and their readers.[2]

[2] A.K.M. Adam, *What is Post-Modern Biblical Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 18-19; Arthur Bochner and Nicholas A. Riggs, "Practicing Narrative Inquiry," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Patricia Leavy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 200-201, Oxford Handbooks Online, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199811755.013.024; Kathleen Wells, "An Introduction to Narrative Inquiry," chap. 1 in *Narrative Inquiry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6, Oxford Scholarship Online, doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195385793.003.0001; Maureen McHugh, "Feminist Qualitative Research: Towards Transformation of Science and Society," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Patricia Leavy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 151, Oxford Handbooks Online. doi:10.1093 /oxfordhb/9780199811755.013.014.

Examination of the texts of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife was thus conducted with the realisation that a reader's engagement with biblical narratives is one of process. That is to say, analysis was performed with awareness that textual content and meaning comes into being through the processes of co-operation, co-contribution and co-construction that initiate as relational acts between the text and the reader.[3] As Arthur Frank expresses, narratives are "artful presentations… always told within dialogues… responding to others – whether actually present or imagined."[4] Phyllis Trible articulates the synergistic dynamic of biblical interpretation as a "Trinitarian act that unites writer, text and reader in a collage of understanding."[5] Peggy Day similarly understands that meaning-making arises from the dialectic that occurs between texts and the experiences of their readers.[6] Accordingly, analyses of the two selected narratives were undertaken within frames of judicious reflexivity in light of the critical cognizance that my own onto-epistemology, experiences, and investigative interests were active factors in encountering these narratives. Analysis was thus conducted in recognition that these elements were constructive facets in the process of textual examination and meaning-making that enabled new insights into these narratives to issue forth.

In particular, the method of narrative analysis enabled each text's respective depiction of a victimised woman to be examined in ways commensurate with investigative interests to determine the biblical witness to patterns and processes of gendered violence in androcentric contexts. Notably, within the praxis of narrative analysis, biblical narratives are identified as storied constructions comprising conscious and unconscious influences that have impacted upon the author as they sought to create and convey, within the

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[3] Bochner and Riggs, "Practicing Narrative Inquiry," 200-201; Wells, "Introduction to Narrative Inquiry," 6.
[4]Arthur W. Frank, "Practicing Dialogical Narrative Analysis," in *Varieties of Narrative Analysis,* ed. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2012), 33.
[5] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 1.
[6] Peggy L. Day, "Introduction," in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel,* ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 2.

limitations of language, an impression of human experiences.[7] Accordingly, in light of this constructed complexity, narrative analysis facilitated a method for exceeding the dominant androcentric structures, discourses, and ideologies apparent in the texts, so they could be examined for other dynamics at work within their construction. Namely, the narratives could be examined for their representation of patterns and processes of violence and victimhood, together with their gendered formation within androcentric contexts, and the degree to which the narratives demythologised/demystified these structures.

Approaching the chosen texts as narratives was particularly necessary to investigate the complexity of the biblical representation of women's experience of violence and victimhood. It was essential to go beyond the immediate androcentric structures and discourses within the texts, to examine the influence of androcentricity itself upon the representations of violence within the narratives. The narrative analytical method allowed for lifting out the textually marginalised, silenced, and socially disempowered women victims to examine them, and the gaps and silences pertaining to them, in a way that disrupted each text's dominant androcentric discourse. This method enabled examining the androcentric features of each text for their representation of gendered enculturation, subjectivity, desires and agency, and associated dynamics of gendered power and conflict. These androcentric features could then be analysed for how they conveyed the biblical witness to gendered patterns and processes of violence and victimhood within texts of extreme persecution of women.

In this way, the method of narrative analysis enabled the androcentric features of the selected texts to be identified, critiqued, and realised in different ways. New insights and meanings could be brought forward in relation to how these androcentric narratives could

[7] Adam, *Post-Modern Biblical Criticism,* 20-21.

be perceived as illustrating women's distinctive vulnerability to men's violence in androcentric contexts. Moreover, they could be determined for their relevant liberatory power to disclose the enduring and clandestine quality of gendered patterns and processes of violence, which continue to shape women's experiences of violence.

Analysis of Primary Texts

Also integral to the methodological design was the technique of analysing the selected narratives within the bounded context of their original language. That is to say, these narratives were examined in their final structure as set down within the Hebrew Bible in their Masoretic form, with recognition also that the text limits and guides interpretation. The original text was translated and examined in association with other biblical translations, and in accordance with discerning those translations most faithful to the Masoretic text.

Given the central focus of this dissertation to investigate the biblical representation of gendered violence and victimhood, close attention was given to assessing and utilising translations that preserved the gendered features of the primary text. This attention to the gendered language of the original text enabled greater determination of the extent of the biblical representation of gendered violence, and its narrative witness to androcentric patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. This technique actualised more detailed probing into the substructures of gendered enculturation, power and conflict evident within the narratives. Accordingly, each narrative's testament to the differentiated subjectivity, desires, agency and experiences of women and men within androcentric contexts could be evaluated and consequently illuminated and emphasised.

This technique enabled assessments and insights to be drawn into how relevant liberatory value may be found within the portrayal of extreme women's victimhood as it explicitly

stands in the original Hebrew. The original language of each narrative could be perceived for its contravening of the conflation of women's experience of violence with men's experience, and subsequently noted for its explicit representation of the distinctive quality of women's experience of men's violence in androcentric contexts. Subsequently, this technique enhanced recognition of the original text's witness to enduring gendered patterns of violence within androcentric settings.

Secondary Texts

The methodological design also included the technique of consulting and analysing extensive biblical commentaries and scholarship so as to ensure comprehensive examination of the original language and narrative content. Secondary sources were carefully evaluated for any dilution of the original gendered language and associated androcentric qualities of the text. Feminist commentaries and interpretations in particular provided varying lenses that facilitated drawing out the marginalised female characters and negotiating the gaps and silences pertaining to them. These supplementary feminist lenses aided examination of the androcentric features of the texts for their substructures of gendered enculturation and associated dynamics of power and conflict. Further to this, feminist scholarship provided vantage points that enabled a deeper probing of various aspects of women's subjectivity, desire, and agency pertinent within the narratives irrespective of the female characters' marginality and degrees of silencing.

Utilising Auxiliary Texts

Classical Mythology Narratives

The methodological design also included the technique of comparing and contrasting the selected biblical narratives with texts drawn from Greco-Roman mythology. The narrative of Jephthah's daughter was compared with the Greek myth of Iphigenia – a narrative frequently noted for its comparable quality of depicting a father who sacrifices his

acquiescing daughter. The narrative of the Levite's wife was compared with a selection of Greco-Roman myths that share in common depictions of raped women. In particular, this technique involved comparing and contrasting the characters, including the characterisation of deities, and determining the degree to which the violence and victimisation depicted was mystified/mythologised through fantastical features and the machinations of deities. In other words, this comparison allowed for greater investigation into the manner by which some myths conceal the phenomenon of human violence and scapegoating behind conceptualisations of violent deities, and other texts that work to destabilise this consciousness through revealing human-centred violence and the truth of victimised and murdered scapegoat victims.

Given the tendency for biblical scholarship to examine biblical narratives within the parameters of the Bible and in relation to other biblical texts and contexts, this comparative dimension allowed alternate investigatory lines to be explored in relation to perceiving how biblical texts witness to patterns and processes of violence. This technique subsequently enabled new insights to emerge into how the biblical narratives function distinctively from other mythology, in ways that demythologise and demystify human structures of violence. Notably, this comparative technique drew out the divergent portrayal of YHWH in relation to other deities within Greco-Roman myths, and how this portrayal could be discerned as intrinsic to demystifying/demythologising momentums within the selected texts. Further to this, comparison with Greco-Roman mythology allowed for conceptualising how the selected biblical narratives represent women's experience of victimisation divergently and in explicit ways that demystify and destabilise the human-centred and gendered quality of patterns and processes of violence.

Parallel Biblical Narratives

Further to the methodological design was comparing the selected narratives with two other biblical texts customarily understood to be parallel narratives. The text of Jephthah's daughter was compared and contrasted with the narrative of Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:1-19); and the narrative of the Levite's wife was compared and contrasted with the text of Lot and the events at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-29). This comparison provided for enhanced investigation of the biblical representation of violence and victimhood, including demystifying and demythologising facets at work within the narratives. Accordingly, this comparison also entailed drawing out the portrayal of YHWH, so as to evaluate how this character's particular textual construction within each of the four narratives was characterised by features that mystify or demystify human patterns and processes of violence and victimhood.

In particular, this comparison enabled enhanced consideration as to how the narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife may be perceived within the wider demystifying/demythologising momentums within the Hebrew Bible.[8] Furthermore, the narratives and victims of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife could be perceived as working in specific ways within the textual designs of the Book of Judges, to affect a demystification of gendered structures of violence. Subsequently, this technique of comparison enabled insights to be drawn as to how the selected narratives and female victims may be perceived as generating a relevant liberating dynamic through their demystification of androcentric patterns of violence and victimhood.

[8] As mimetic theory conceptualises, the Hebrew Bible reflects a liberating dynamic at work within textual momentums that indicate human consciousness wresting free from notions of the violent sacred and frameworks of blood sacrifice justified via violent deities. See discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 69-77.

Critiquing Traditional Interpretations and Commentaries

The methodological design also included the technique of briefly reviewing how the selected narratives and their female victims have been historically and popularly interpreted.[9] This allowed for distinguishing between the narratives' representation of victimised women, and how this representation has been typically interpreted and disseminated. This review enabled new perceptions to emerge that furthered the potential for these violent narratives to be regarded in liberatory ways. It drew out for greater consideration that it is not so much the biblical narratives that explicitly showcase devastating men's victimisation of women that propagate gendered violence; rather it is their interpretation. While the texts contain androcentric bias, analysis illustrates that they seek to put men's violence on display in ways that expose it. Furthermore, discussion illuminates that the violent content has often been appropriated and disseminated through androcentric lenses in ways that have served androcentric interests and sustained women's vulnerability to gendered violence. Consequently, this review furthered the investigatory orientations of this dissertation to determine how such violent narratives may be reclaimed beyond the androcentric violence of the text and their history of dangerous interpretation.

Contextualising the Biblical Analyses

Lastly, a key element of the methodological design was providing a foundational context within which the focussed analyses of the narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife could be conceptualised. This contextualisation was necessary because a postmodern/post-structural interpretive orientation recognises that all texts are contextual and require a bounded framework within which to situate discussion.[10] In this dissertation

[9] Due to the limitations of the scope of this dissertation, discussion particularly draws upon David Gunn's comprehensive systematic review of each narrative's ancient, medieval, and early modern reception history. David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005).
[10] Adam, *Post-Modern Biblical Criticism*, 15.

contextualisation of the analyses of the two narratives involved examining the Book of Judges within frameworks of scholarship that perceive the book as a cohesive corpus, with structural, stylistic, linguistic, and thematic features that extend across the text as a whole.[11] The narratives and textual features within and across Judges were surveyed through the mimetic and feminist theory dialogical lens. This enabled the book's array of violent narratives to be broadly investigated for both mythologising and demythologising motifs and momentums. In other words, the Judges narratives and corpus were analysed for the presence of textual patterns of sacrificial myths that mystify, mythologise, and conceal the dynamics of human violence and victimhood. They were also analysed and determined for the degree to which they perceptibly destabilised these textual patterns through demystifying, demythologising and exposing human-centred violence and its victims.

This analytical survey enabled new insights to be brought forward in relation to ascertaining a way of reading the corpus with a view to its liberatory potential. This survey drew out for consideration how the Book of Judges can be perceived as functioning in a divergent manner to other mythology through its particular emphasis and disclosure of human, particularly male-performed violence within androcentric contexts. This survey further drew out the significant place of women victims within the book's trajectory of showcasing human, and significantly masculine, violence. This foundation provided an enhanced platform from which to conceptualise liberatory dynamics within the narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's wife, and how these characters conceivably perform an affective role within the wider liberatory momentums of the Book of Judges.

[11] For an overview of the conceptualisation of Judges as an integrated text see Gale A. Yee, "Introduction: Why Judges?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 9-12.

Chapter Summary

The aspects of methodological design discussed here have sought to indicate the rigorous parameters within which the research questions have been pursued. The strategies, interpretive methods and techniques of narrative analysis employed have facilitated comprehensive investigation of the biblical representation of the distinctive experiences of women victims of men's violence in androcentric contexts. Furthermore, these components of methodological design generated a viable platform from which to investigate the capacity of seemingly irredeemable biblical texts of persecutory violence against women to be reclaimed as relevant in light of their witness to, and liberatory demystification of, enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence. The ensuing three chapters of this dissertation set out the analytical details and findings of this investigation. I move now to establish in Chapter 5 the foundational contextualisation of the Book of Judges within which the ensuing exegesis chapters on Jephthah's daughter (Chapter 6), and the Levite's wife (Chapter 7), are set.

CHAPTER 5: THE BOOK OF JUDGES

Establishing Context

While comprehensive analysis of Judges is beyond the scope of this chapter, the following ascertains an overarching orientation to the book informed by the lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, which is advanced in further detail in the subsequent narrative analyses. In this chapter I set out how Judges can be comprehended as a corpus that works to expose the patterns and processes of human violence. Through analysing its textual patterns and characters, including the figure of YHWH, I show Judges to be reflective of the struggle of human experience moving beyond attachment to structures of violence associated with what Girard calls the 'violent sacred'. Though the narratives comprise androcentric worldviews, I further show that the female victims within them are instrumental figures that disclose the gendered nature of these violent structures.

In establishing this context, I first introduce Judges and set out key features and textual patterns of the book's compilation that are pertinent to my interpretive approach. In the course of this chapter these features and patterns are shown to be intrinsic to the book's demystification and disclosure of human patterns of violence. Before detailing the specifics of this argument, I locate my approach within other scholarly frames that read Judges as an integrated corpus and highlight the book's representation of gender-bound violence. Through a broad survey of the narratives, events, and characters, I then determine, via the lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, demythologising motifs that run throughout Judges that perceptibly subvert the victim-concealing functions of sacrificial myths. The female victims of Judges are shown to be instrumental characters that accentuate the human-

centred patterns and processes of androcentric violence - an argument which is supported by detailed textual analysis in Chapters 6 and 7.

Textual Features, Patterns, and Trajectory of Decline

The Book of Judges tells of violent events in the supposed pre-monarchical period of Israel's foundational history.[1] Following the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua, Judges continues the grand narrative of the Israelite tribes as they move into the land of Canaan, promised to them by YHWH in accordance with covenantal bonds, after wandering 40 years in the desert under the leadership of Moses. While the Book of Joshua suggests a more triumphant military acquisition of the land, this subsequent book portrays otherwise. Though Judges opens with a recounting of the final stages of Israel's settlement (1:1-3:6), the ensuing narratives show that Israel's designs on dispossessing the local inhabitants repeatedly go awry. In short, this collection of narratives varyingly depicts the Israelites and their deity as caught up in extensive violence with neighbouring resident tribes, and each other - violence of the most extreme order including torture, mutilation, rape, murder, massacres, and genocide.

The overall structure of the Book of Judges in which this violence unfolds is generally understood as comprising three major phases. Phase one, 'the prologue' (1:1-3:6), contextualises the events as occurring "after the death of Joshua" (1:1), and tells of Israel's repeated efforts and failure to drive out the local inhabitants. This section also conveys Israel's waywardness and breach of covenantal promises, and thus the need for judges to

[1] The narratives are generally considered to have been written down in the seventh and sixth century BCE, though they purport to tell of events from a period of so-called 'judges' in the eleventh century BCE. Susanne Scholz notes further, "none of the stories or characters can be reliably identified as historical." Scholz, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary: Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 113. J. Cheryl Exum also observes that: "It is impossible to get behind the highly stylized, artificial presentation of events in Judges to establish a chronology for the period or to discover very much about Israel's political or religious organization during this time." Exum, "Judges," in *The HarperCollins Bible Commentary*, ed. James L. Mays (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988), 225.

lead them. The prologue is also generally perceived as thematically characterised by the often-repeated phrase "did not/will not drive out" (1:19, 21, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32; 2:3) denoting Israel's inability to displace the Canaanite inhabitants. Phase two, 'the era of judges' (3:7-16:31), encompasses six key episodes that principally relay, via a common textual pattern (discussed below), the events of particular figures who lead Israel for a time: Othniel (3:7-11), Ehud (3:12-31), Deborah (4:1-5:31), Gideon (6:1-8:35), Abimelech (9:1-57), Jephthah (10:6-12:7), and Samson (13:1-16:31). Phase three, 'the epilogue' (17:1-21:25), illustrates however, that following the ultimately unsuccessful period of judges, Israel transitions to a leaderless time and experiences increased intertribal turmoil and violent conflict. This section is perceived as thematically characterised by the fourfold repeated phrase "in those days there was no king in Israel" (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).[2]

Further to the structural features, a major reoccurring textual pattern commences in the prologue and runs throughout phase two, the 'era of judges' (2:10-16:31). This pattern depicts first that the Israelites persistently disobey and forsake YHWH as they cohabit with the local tribes and take up worshipping their gods. Secondly, YHWH becomes angry with them and hands them into oppression under a dominating political adversary. Thirdly, Israel eventually cries to YHWH for deliverance and YHWH raises up a judge, a *shophet* (שׁוֹפֵט),[3] who is typically a military leader and commander of armies against enemy forces.

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[2] Richard G. Bowman, "Narrative Criticism: Human Purpose in Conflict with Divine Presence," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 25-26; Exum, "Judges," 223; Serge Frolov, "Rethinking Judges," *CBQ* 71, no.1 (2009): 27, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/stable/43726471; A.D.H. Mayes, *Judges* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 13-16; Gregory T.K. Wong, *Compositional Strategy of the Book of Judges: An Inductive, Rhetorical Study* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 23, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[3] The term 'Judge' is translated from the Hebrew participle *shophet*, which in turn stems from the verb *shapat*. This verb is broad in meaning and, in English, encapsulates concepts such as 'to decide or judge', 'to govern', 'to vindicate', and 'to deliver'. Gale Yee notes further, "except for the general, introductory description of the judges in 2:16-18, not one person in the rest of the book is actually called a *shophet*." Gale A. Yee, ed., "Introduction: Why Judges?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 2. See also Jo Ann Hackett, "'There Was No King in Israel': The Era of the Judges," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 187-189.

Through this leader YHWH brings about Israel's liberation. Lastly, the Israelites remain faithful to YHWH for a time and enjoy a period of 'peace' (שָׁקַט), often under the continuing leadership of the designated judge/deliverer.[4] This cyclic pattern of Israel's disobedience and fall into crisis, followed by YHWH's liberation via an appointed leader and the restoration of peace, is broadly evident in the stream of major and minor leaders that runs from Othniel, Ehud, Samgar, Deborah, Gideon and Abimelech, Tola and Jair, to Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, Abdon, and Samson.

As the book unfolds this cyclic pattern also entails some variances in association with the textual trend of depicting degeneration in the character and leadership of the judges.[5] Initial judges are more positively portrayed. Othniel is characterised as an ideal leader of notable lineage as Caleb's nephew (3:9).[6] Othniel, Ehud (3:12-30), and Deborah (4:1-14, 5:1-31) are represented as steadfast in fulfilling their tasks of successfully delivering Israel from oppression and securing a period of peace. This positive depiction shifts, however, with the figure of Gideon who constantly puts YHWH to the test (6:17, 37, 39). In this sequence the cyclic formula diverges insofar as the liberated people are not faithful to YHWH for a time; immediately following Gideon's military triumph he directs his people into apostasy.[7] Succeeding Gideon, Abimelech's rule[8] is gained by usurpation and fratricide, and is wholly characterised by tyranny (9:1-57). No period of peace is said to conclude the Abimelech sequence, nor is this aspect of the cyclic formula mentioned hereafter in the

[4] David Jobling, "Structuralist Criticism: The Text's World of Meaning," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 96; David M. Gunn, *Judges*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 17-18; Robert G. Boling, *Judges*: *A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 35, 73-76; A.D.H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (London: SCM, 1983), 61-62; Exum "Judges," 224.
[5] Yee, "Introduction," 3.
[6] Danna Nolan Fewell, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, 2nd ed, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 73.
[7] Fewell, "Judges," 73.
[8] Though not strictly a 'judge', Abimelech leads Israel for three years. Yee, "Introduction," 2.

ensuing Judges narratives.[9] Jephthah's character and career as leader is tainted by his efforts to bargain with the deity to secure his battlefield victory (11:30-31); and Samson, the last of the judges, conducts his life in violation of his divine calling and covenant with YHWH (13:1-16:31).[10] Here, the cyclic formula deviates as the oppressed Israelites of Samson's era do not cry to YHWH for deliverance and Samson dies in enemy captivity. As Danna Fewell succinctly summarises regarding this trajectory of decline: "Israel's leadership sinks a long way from Moses to Samson," and the deteriorating cyclic formula "ominously foreshadows Israel's future."[11]

This trend of deterioration in Israel's leaders is also represented in the Israelite people. As the six major judges decline in effectiveness Israel's actions become more internally malign. The third and final phase of the book, 'the epilogue' (17:1-21:25), portrays an Israel without leadership that has regressed to self-destructive actions in the form of internecine atrocities and warfare. Judges closes with accounts of intertribal mayhem that include gang rape and torture (19:25), mutilation (19:29), abductions (21:12, 23), murder (18:27; 20:4; 21:10), and genocidal degrees of war (20:46). All the promise of Israel's successful future upon their settlement into YHWH's promised land, appears to have disintegrated into anarchy as the book concludes with the pronouncement: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in their own eyes" (בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם אֵין מֶלֶךְ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה) (21:25).

The Book of Judges is thus a highly stylized text that employs a number of textual features and patterns in relation to portraying a degenerating Israel caught up in chronic dynamics of violence. These features and patterns which relay Israel's cycle of disobedience and

[9] Exum, "Judges," 225.
[10] Yee, "Introduction," 2-4; Fewell, "Judges," 73-74.
[11] Fewell, "Judges," 73, 74.

eventual regression into extreme self-destructive violence, as I will soon show, may also be perceived as exposing the human-centred and androcentric quality of patterns and processes of violence. Before moving to this discussion, the following first establishes the scholarly foundation within which my own approach rests, as one that reads Judges as an integrated corpus and analyses the text's representation of gender-bound violence.

The Book of Judges as an Integrated Text

The textual features and patterns within Judges have given rise to diverse perspectives as to how Judges configures as a cohesive collection of narratives. Scholarship broadly concurs that heterogeneous texts, initially transmitted orally, came to be compiled into a final form during (and for some scholars, after) the Babylonian exile of the sixth century BCE.[12] Martin Noth's influential study argued that significant material in Judges (2:6-11, 14-16, 18-19, 3:7-13:1, and possibly 13:2-16:31) reflected composition by a single editor during the exilic period, with postexilic revisions then expanding upon this nucleus bringing it to its final form.[13] Modifications to Noth's work by Frank Moore Cross[14] and Robert G. Boling,[15] contended that the exilic compilation reflected earlier editorial phases including that of a seventh-century BCE author favourably inclined to King Josiah's religious reforms. In light of such redaction criticism, narratives comprising the 'prologue' and the last five chapters of the 'epilogue' have been widely considered editorial additions to an otherwise collective core of texts.[16]

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[12] Scholz, "Judges," 113. Roger Ryan, *Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), xiii; Yee, "Introduction," 6.

[13] Noth's study also determined that portions of Judges reflected affinities with the style and theology in the Books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. For Noth, this signified a combined literary complex he labelled the 'Deuteronomist History' and the product of a single exilic author he termed the 'Deuteronomist'. Martin Noth, *The Deuteronomist History*, trans. Jane Doull (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1981).

[14] Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 274-289.

[15] Boling, *Judges*, 29-38.

[16] For further discussion on the redaction history of Judges see Exum, "Judges," 224; Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 10-11; Gregory T. K. Wong, *Compositional*

Diverging from approaches that emphasise redaction, others have stressed the final composition and overall narrative coherence of Judges. Here the extended structural, stylistic, linguistic, and thematic features and patterns evident across the text are perceived as indicative of a single composing hand. J.P.U. Lilley has appropriately argued that literary unities and coherences are evident within Judges that are otherwise missed by orientations that start with assumptions of redaction rather than authorship.[17] Counter to views that stress the prologue as comprising two contradictory introductions and thus two editorial phases, Lilley underscores a binding logic between them which marries Israel's failure to properly secure the land (Judg 1) with their defection from covenantal promises (Judg 2). Counter also to positions that regard chapters 17-21 as extraneous 'epilogue' supplements, Lilley highlights this phase as one of continuous literary artistry that brings Israel's unfolding degeneration and moral decay to its climax.[18]

Various other inquiries have highlighted the interrelated quality of the book's content. Barry Webb has contended that Judges is an integrated text analogous to a musical score complete with overture (1:1-3:6), variations (3:7-16:31), and coda (17:12-21:25).[19] For Gros Louis the prologue evidences deliberate construction and thematic association with central material. For instance, the treachery apparent in the attack on the city of Bethel (1:22-25) prefigures the treachery in the narratives of Ehud, Jael, Abimelech, and Samson.[20] D.W. Gooding[21] and Alexander Globe[22] have identified chiastic or ring

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Strategy of the Book of Judges: An Inductive, Rhetorical Study (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 4-10, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[17] J.P.U. Lilley, "A Literary Appreciation of the Book of Judges," *TynBul* 18 (1967): 93-94, https://legacy.tyndalehouse.com/.../TynBull_1967_18_04_Lilley_LiteraryJudges.pdf.

[18] Lilley, "Literary Appreciation," 94–102.

[19] Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges: An Integrated Reading* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987).

[20] Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, "The Book of Judges," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, ed. Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, James Stokes Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw (Nashville: Abingdon, 1974), 141-162.

[21] D. W. Gooding, "The Composition of the Book of Judges," *ErIsr* 16 (1982): 70–79, https://www.jstor.org /stable/23619563.

[22] Alexander Globe, "Enemies Round About: Disintegrative Structure in the Book of Judges," in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain*, ed. V. Tollers and J. Maier (Lewisberg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 233-251.

structures that sustain thematic links throughout the book. They note that Judges 1 correlates with Judges 19-21 as both sequences relay YHWH directing the tribe of Judah to be first into battle. For Lillian Klein, the overall structural integrity of the book is apparent in the occurrence of literary irony that permeates the texts.[23] My own approach to reading Judges as an integrated text, in which stylistic features and patterns work to emphasise themes of violence, rests within the frameworks of this scholarship.[24] So too does it align with scholarship that has drawn attention to the significant portrayal of gender-bound violence within the book.

Gender-Bound Violence and Female Characters

Broadly, Judges has been regarded as a text intended to serve religious didactic purposes.[25] Key rhetorical motives assumed of the text include support for Josiah's religious reform, and to teach exilic (and post-exilic) Israelites the dire consequences of unfaithfulness to YHWH.[26] To this end, the cyclic pattern of disobedience, oppression, and liberation is perceived as informing those in exile that displacement occurred due to forsaking their covenant with YHWH.[27] Other correlating motivations deemed of the book are the

[23] Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield: Almond, 1988).
[24] See also J. Cheryl Exum, "The Centre Cannot Hold: Thematic and Textual Instabilities in Judges," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 410-431, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/43718092; Gordon J. Wenham, *Story as Torah: Reading Old Testament Narrative Ethically* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 45-71; Gordon Oeste, "Butchered Brothers and Betrayed Families: Degenerating Kinship Structures in the Book of Judge," *JSOT* 35, no.3 (2011): 295-316, doi:10.1177/0309089211398709; Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 4; Fewell, "Judges," 73-83.
[25] Exum, "Judges," 224.
[26] Niditch, *Judges*, 10-11.
[27] Exum, "Judges," 224; Fewell, "Judges," 83.

extoling of YHWH's mercy, compassion, omnipotence, will, and purpose;[28] the need for Israel to cultivate their identity as YHWH's people,[29] and to acquire monarchical rule.[30]

Yet, in more recent decades, other rhetorical possibilities have been proposed beyond consideration of historical, religious, and political motivations.[31] Mieke Bal, for example, has stressed that dominant hermeneutical approaches, such as those that are oriented according to historiography and a political coherence bound up in "obsession with military and political chronology", repress other textual content and '*countercoherences*', including those involving women's experiences.[32] Bal has emphasised that the potential investigatory scope of Judges is broad indeed:

> The political, military, and religious theme of going astray stands out as one of the many themes the book 'is about.' This theme is the other side of the attempt of the Israelites to establish their specificity through monotheism, endogamy, and the conquest of land. But the book is also about lineage, fatherhood, and the lives of young girls. It is about virginity, mothers, and violence. It is about sex, obedience, and death. And, finally, it is about power and its dissymmetrical distribution, the conflicts and competition it generates, its consequences for those who have it and for those who lack it.[33]

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[28] Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 155; Robert H. O'Connell, *The Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 10; Clinton J. McCann, *Judges* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 10-11.
[29] Danna Nolan Fewell, "Imagination, Method, and Murder: Un/Framing the Face of Post-Exilic Israel," in *Reading Bibles, Writing Bodies: Identity and the Book*, ed. Timothy K. Beal and David M. Gunn (London: Routledge, 1997), 132–152; Ryan, *Judges*, 171.
[30] Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing*, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 59-119; O'Connell, *Rhetoric*, 1, 10, 343; McCann, *Judges*, 11.
[31] Deryn Guest, "Judging YHWH in the Book of Judges," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Oxford Handbooks Online, doi:10.1093 /oxfordhb/9780199967728.013.14.
[32] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 5.
[33] Ibid., 16-17.

Considerable contemporary perspectives, notably generated within feminist frames, have aligned with Bal's perspective that other 'coherences' are possible within Judges in light of "the reality of gender-bound violence" that is also represented in the book.[34] Along with Bal,[35] scholars such as Phyllis Trible,[36] J. Cheryl Exum,[37] Alice Bach,[38] and Alicia Ostriker,[39] have examined the narratives of victimised women and emphasised the violence inflicted upon them by fathers, husbands, and tribesmen within the androcentric society of the text. Exum,[40] Ester Fuchs,[41] and Gale Yee[42] have stressed how the portrayal of women in Judges exemplifies and serves to perpetuate androcentric/misogynist ideologies. Others, including Bal, Fewell, Klein, Leila Bronner, Susan Niditch, Carol Smith, Adele Reinhartz, and Yairah Amit, have highlighted the negative historical treatment of strong female

[34] Ibid., 5.
[35] Mieke Bal, "Dealing/With/Women: Daughters in the Book of Judges," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, ed. Alice Bach (London: Routledge, 1999), 317-333.
[36] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 65-116.
[37] J. Cheryl Exum, "On Judges 11," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 131-144.
[38] Alice Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women, Violence and Judges 21," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 143-159.
[39] Alicia Ostriker, "Jephthah's Daughter: A Lament," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, eds. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2003).
[40] J. Cheryl Exum, *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993); J. Cheryl Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 65-90.
[41] Esther Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5, no.1 (1989): 35-45, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/stable /25002095.
[42] Gale A. Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 146-170.

characters - Achsah,[43] Deborah,[44] Jael,[45] Delilah,[46] and Samson's mother[47] - and derived alternate conceptualisations of them.

Determining how the portrayal of men's violence and victimhood is closely intertwined with that of women's experience has also been strongly emphasised. Koala Jones-Warsaw importantly stresses that sensitive consideration of the interrelatedness of the fates of men and women is required in light of the extensive victimhood of men also apparent in the book.[48] Susanne Scholz underscores the injurious quality of masculine ideology for men that too pervades Judges, evident for example, in narratives that denote a deity who "nurtures and endorses an aggressive, warriorlike masculinity that eliminates the Other in battle."[49] Others rightly problematise the violent 'alpha male' deity and his involvement in extensive violence. They call strong attention to the need to scrutinize this typically unexamined character,[50] and, in the process, bring into question interpretations that

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[43] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 151-55; Danna Nolan Fewell, "Deconstructive Criticism: Achsah and the (E)razed City of Writing," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 119-145; Lillian R. Klein, "Achsah: What Price this Prize," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 18-26.
[44] Leila Leah Bronner, "Valorized or Vilified? The Women of Judges in Midrashic Sources," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 72-95.
[45] Susan Niditch, "Eroticism and Death in the Tale of Jael," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, ed. Alice Bach (London: Routledge, 1999), 305-315; Mieke Bal, *Murder and Difference: Gender, Genre, and Scholarship on Sisera's Death*, trans. Matthew Gumpert (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1992).
[46] Carol Smith, "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 93-116.
[47] Adele Reinhartz, "Samson's Mother: An Unnamed Protagonist," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 157-170; Yairah Amit, "'Manoah Promptly Followed his Wife' (Judges 13.11): On the Place of the Woman in Birth Narratives," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 146-156.
[48] Koala Jones-Warsaw, "Toward a Womanist Hermeneutic: A Reading of Judges 19-21," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 172-186.
[49] Scholz, "Judges," 119.
[50] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 34; Guest, "Judging YHWH"; Stuart Lasine, "Characterizing God in His/Our Own Image," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan Fewell (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), Oxford Handbooks Online, doi:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199967728.013.40.
David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell, *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford Bible Series; New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 48-49. See also Athalya Brenner, "Some Reflections on Violence against Women and the Image of the Hebrew God: The Prophetic Books Revisited," in *On the Cutting Edge: The Study of Women in Biblical Worlds*, ed. Jane Schaberg, Alice Bach, and Esther Fuchs (New York: Continuum, 2003), 69-81.

favourably evaluate YHWH's wrath and violent vengeance as righteous[51] and indicative of his compassionate commitment to his covenant people.[52]

Female characters have also been identified as intrinsic to the representation of the violence that coincides with the degeneration of Israel's social and religious life. The treatment and fate of women at the hands of men clearly worsens in correlation with this decline.[53] Fewell has argued: "The construction and destruction of female characters and their relationships form a pattern that mirrors the deterioration of Israel's relation to Yahweh."[54] Strong figures with voices, vision, and purpose such as Achsah and Deborah, give way to mutilated, abducted, raped, and murdered women who "have neither voice nor choice."[55] David Olson has noted of this correlating decline, that the portrayal of women shifts from independently acting subjects to objects and instruments of men's desires and actions, as women become caught in "schemes of male vengeance".[56] Deborah Sawyer perceives this narrative pattern as denoting authorial construction of female characters "as a literary device to illustrate the nadir of male behavior."[57] Such interpretative approaches demonstrate, via their sensitivity to gender-bound violence, the unmistakable significance of female characters in conceptualising the representation of violence that transpires within the book.

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[51] McCann, *Judges*, 21.
[52] Ryan, *Judges*, 169-170.
[53] Dennis T. Olson, "The Book of Judges: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in Vol 2 of *The New Interpreter's Bible,* ed. Leander E. Keck, 12 Vols (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:835. See also David Janzen, "Why the Deuteronomist Told about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," *JSOT* 29, no. 3 (2005): 342-344, doi:10.1177/0309089205052681; Exum, "Judges," 225; Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 116; Adrien Janis Bledstein, "Is Judges a Woman's Satire of Men who Play God?," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 50-52.
[54] Fewell, "Judges," 74.
[55] Ibid., 82-83.
[56] Olson, "Book of Judges," 872.
[57] Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 76.

In keeping with aspects of scholarship noted above, I suggest another way of reading Judges as an integrated corpus thematically concerned with patterns of violence. This reading pays close attention to the interrelatedness of women's and men's experience of violence. It also scrutinizes the typically unexamined violent deity, YHWH, and advances the textual importance of female victim characters within the Book of Judges.

Reading Judges Through the Dialogical Model

Via the lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, Judges can be perceived as a corpus that works to demythologise the violent sacred of sacrificial myths. According to Girard's schema, Judges contains textual patterns of sacrificial myths. Nevertheless, this corpus also perceptibly destabilises these structures and so reflects the struggle of human experience moving beyond frameworks of the violent sacred. Through the following survey of narratives, events, and characters, including the portrayal of Israel's violent masculine deity, I show that there are demythologising motifs throughout Judges that disclose this deity as a manifestation of the violent sacred. This deity becomes perceptible as a constructed figure that serves to sanction and justify human violence, though, in actuality, this figure is the embodied hostile will of humans against those determined as enemy-others. In light of this demystifying tendency, Judges may be perceived as representing human-centred violence anchored within clandestine and significantly gendered patterns and processes of scapegoat violence that transpire within androcentric contexts.

As I set out in Chapter 2 and briefly revisit here, mimetic theory discerns how biblical texts of persecution varyingly disclose patterns and processes of violence and victimhood that have otherwise been concealed within sacrificial myths - myths that are generated in

relation to acts of scapegoating.[58] In light of the seemingly transcendental quality of the stabilising effect of the murder, the victim came to be sacralised and deified thereby attaining sacred status as both the cause and cure of disorder. Myths developed in relation to the sacrificed and divinised victim, a phenomenon represented in narratives of double-faced divinities involved in the instigation and alleviation of crisis.[59]

While sacrificial myths functioned to sustain a collective consciousness ignorant of the unjust persecution of innocent humans at is core,[60] their common textual patterns, however, signify underlying scapegoating mechanics. These textual patterns include 1) an initial situation of disorder or undifferentiation, inclusive of phenomena of conflict and crisis; 2) reference to an isolated individual or group, often accused of committing a transgression that had triggered the state of disorder and crisis; 3) segregation of the individual via highlighting distinguishing personal features, followed by their expulsion or extermination, and 4) the subsequent return of differentiation, order, and harmony. These patterns of sacrificial myths are characteristically accompanied by fantastical, supernatural elements indicative of 'the sacred' at work. They typically include independently acting double-faced deities responsible for the crisis and its remedy.[61] In actuality these figures are constructed divinities that served to sanction and justify the *real* persecution and elimination of others for socially curative ends.

Textual patterns of sacrificial myths are also varyingly evident in biblical texts. As noted in Chapter 2, Girard regards a version of these patterns as evident in the founding narrative of

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[58] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 20-25, 101-103, 306; René Girard, *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 23, 30.
[59] Girard, *I See Satan*, 65-66; Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 31, 251; Michael Kirwan, *Discovering Girard* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2004), 39.
[60] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 33-36, 101-103, 258-259; Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, 11.
[61] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 251; René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 24-27, 49-50.

Noah and the flood.[62] This narrative commences with the signification of a loss of ordered difference, or 'undifferentiation' - the sons of God have intermarried with the daughters of men and produced children (Gen 6:1-4). A context of conflict ensues as all humankind is identified as wicked and the deity who created them is filled with pain and determines to eliminate them (Gen 6:5-6). Crisis eventuates, depicted in the flood,[63] which is both caused and alleviated by the autonomously acting deity (Gen 6:7; 8:1). The saving, restorative power of a single isolated figure is represented in Noah[64] – a figure singled out by the deity in this case for his righteousness - through whom the deity achieves his curative, reordering purposes.[65] The patterns of sacrificial myths are thus apparent in this text in the representation of undifferentiation, conflict, and crisis, which is alleviated via an isolated, distinguished figure, in association with an autonomous deity that both causes and cures the crisis through supernatural feats.[66]

Viewed through the lens of mimetic theory, numerous biblical narratives undermine these textual patterns as they witness to the reality of human violence and victimhood.[67] Representations of an autonomous double-faced deity causing and curing crises rescind as the human-centred and enacted patterns and processes of violence come to the fore. Divinely justified persecution and elimination of others gives way to recognition that such

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[62] René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. S. Bann and M. Metteer (London: Athlone, 1987), 148.
[63] Girard observes that social disorder and crisis is frequently conveyed within myths through symbolic destructive forces such as plagues, storms, floods, and earthquakes. *Violence and the Sacred*, 31.
[64] As quoted earlier (Chapter 3, p. 70), Girard emphasises that "Since the single victim brings reconciliation and safety by restoring life to the community, it is not difficult to appreciate that a sole survivor in a world where all others perish can, thematically, amount to the same things as a single victim extracted from a group in which no one, save the victim, perishes". *Things Hidden*, 143.
[65] Girard explains, "[Within] these mythic accounts, society and even nature appear as a whole being put in order, or in which order is being re-established…. For Noah, the final reorganization is implied not only in the Covenant after the Flood, but also in the confinement of prototypes of all species within the Ark; here we have something like a floating system of classification, on the basis of which the world will re-people itself in conformity with the norms of God's will." *Things Hidden*, 143.
[66] As Williams notes, glimmers of the movement away from mythical patterns is evident in relation to this narrative, as "the covenant after the flood is based on God's promise never again to destroy the earth". James G. Williams, "'Steadfast Love and Not Sacrifice': A Nonsacrificial Reading of the Hebrew Scriptures," chap. 4 in *Curing Violence*, ed. Mark I. Wallace and Theophus H. Smith (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1994), 80.
[67] See for examples the earlier discussion in Chapter 2, pp. 69-76.

persecution is the performance of the hostile will of humans.[68] As biblical texts emphasise victims, they also come to expose the patterns and processes of human violence and victimhood. They bear witness to the dynamics of human imitated/distorted desire, which generates hostile competition and social crises, and the subsequent subjection of a figure, or group, to isolation, blame, and persecution. Accordingly, biblical texts come to demythologise and demystify the functions of sacrificial myths that validate and conceal human violence and victimhood behind independently acting double-faced deities, who sanction the elimination of those deemed enemy-others for curative ends.[69] Certainly the Book of Judges includes textual patterns of sacrificial myths, though this corpus can also be perceived as destabilising them.

Textual Patterns of Sacrificial Myths

As I set out in table 1 below, the textual patterns of sacrificial myths (column 1) are evident in the cyclic pattern that broadly runs throughout Judges 2:10-16:31 (column 2).

Textual Patterns within Sacrificial Myths	Cyclic Pattern within Book of Judges
Loss of ordered difference/undifferentiation	Israel assimilates with local tribes and worships their gods
Double-faced deity causes and cures crisis	YHWH becomes angry – sells Israel into oppression
Conflict/Crisis	Israelites are oppressed by their enemy - enmity escalates to war
Isolated figure alleviates crisis	YHWH raises up a deliverer/judge who secures Israel's liberation
Restored Order	Israelites enjoy a period of peace

Table 1. Textual Patterns of Sacrificial Myths within the Book of Judges

[68] Girard, *I See Satan*, 117; René Girard, *Job: The Victim of His People*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 21-28.
[69] James G. Williams, foreword to *I See Satan*, by René Girard, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), ix-xxiii; Girard, *I See Satan*,103-136.

From the outset, Judges reflects a primary reoccurring social context of undifferentiation. Though the local tribes of Canaan are represented as Israel's enemy, Israel recurrently assimilates with them and loses distinctive identity as YHWH's people. Israel intermarries with the original inhabitants (3:5; 14:1, 8), and time and again they are said to have become like the Canaanites as they take up their practices of worshipping their gods (2:11; 3:7; 3:12; 6:9; 8:27; 10: 6-7; 13:1).

The character YHWH is also established from the beginning as a double-faced deity, a warlike and peaceful deity, who overarchingly shapes Israel's experiences for good or ill. In one vein, Israel is depicted as having caused their own troubles through disobedience to YHWH. Nevertheless, it is YHWH, in various expressions of jealously, petulance, wrath, and vengeance, who presses their seemingly harmonious situation to one of turmoil and suffering. It is he who hands them into oppression (2:14; 3:8; 3:12; 4:2; 6:1; 10:7; 13:1). What is more, this punitive deity, who will brook no rivals and demands total allegiance, intentionally impedes Israel's objectives of securing the land he has promised them. YHWH is said to have deliberately kept enemy tribes in place to test Israel's loyalty (2:20-3:4) and is not beyond openly backing their adversaries: "Whenever Israel went out to fight, the hand of the Lord was against them to defeat them, just as he had sworn to them" (בְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר יָצְאוּ יַד־יְהוָה הָיְתָה־בָּם לְרָעָה כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה וְכַאֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה לָהֶם) (2:15). Though YHWH is significantly implicated in Israel's experiences of oppression, conflict, and crisis, this deity is also intimated as bringing about the remedy. YHWH is said to raise up judges to deliver Israel from Canaanite domination. A solitary figure is inferred to be singled out as the divine vehicle through whom the crisis is alleviated (2:16; 3:9; 3:15; 4:6; 6:14; 10:16; 13:5).

Typical of the textual patterns of sacrificial myths these saving figures bear marks that distinguish them from the rest of the community. Othniel appears differentiated as the

perfect leader via his military prowess and honourable ancestry as "son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother" (1:12-13, 3:9). Ehud is marked by his left-handedness (3:15).[70] Deborah is distinguished as a female prophet (4:4). Gideon is demarcated as the weakest of his family within the weakest clan of Manasseh (6:15). Both Abimelech and Jephthah are marginalised figures within their families as respective sons of a concubine/slave and a prostitute (8:31, 9:18; 11:1); and Samson stands unique as a preordained Nazarite with supernatural strength (13:5).[71] Via these demarcated judges the last phase of the stereotypical pattern of sacrificial myths is varyingly realised. Through these figures the deity is presumed to usher in the liberation of Israel, re-establish order and Israel's distinctive identity, and instigate a period of peace. Patterns of sacrificial myths are thus evident within the Book of Judges. However, they are also perceptively destabilised.

Destabilising Textual Patterns of Sacrificial Myths

Judges undermines the textual patterns of sacrificial myths as human violence and victimhood come to the forefront in ways that arrest and demystify conceptions of an *autonomously acting* double-faced deity who causes and cures crises. Judges illustrates that, while YHWH's sanctioning of and implication in persecutory violence are alluded to, it is human violence that is running horrifically amok. As table 2 sets out below, demythologising motifs are apparent within Judges that subvert the typical characteristics of the violent sacred in sacrificial myths. Unlike the typical bold and autonomous performances of deities in sacrificial myths, the violent masculine deity of Judges is frequently shown to be an ambiguous figure: both a figure invoked in times of crisis to justify human aggression, and one so deeply intertwined with the hostile will of humans

[70] As Susan Niditch remarks, "Ehud is a left-handed man in a symbolic world in which the 'normal,' preferred side is the right". *Judges*, 4. Depending on how one reads this description, Ehud's left-handedness may denote a disability of limited function in his right arm. Baruch Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996), 40.
[71] For further discussion on how the selection of judges, kings, and prophets correlates with the patterns and processes of determining scapegoat victims, see Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, 129-147.

and human-performed violence as to be entirely synonymous with it. Furthermore, as representations of and allusions to the violent deity rescind within the narratives and the trajectory of the book as a whole, the human-centred quality of this violence becomes manifestly pronounced.

Characteristics of Deities in Sacrificial Myths	**Demythologising Motifs in Judges**
Unambiguous Autonomous/Bold Violent Performance Unmitigated Power ⬇ Mystifies human enacted patterns of violence and victimhood	YHWH: Ambiguous Figure Violence Synonymous with Human Violence Invoked by Humans to Justify Violence Mitigated Power Rescinds within Narratives and Corpus ⬇ Emphasises human enacted patterns of violence and victimhood

Table 2. Demythologising Motifs in Judges

Intrinsic to Judges' destabilisation of the god of the violent sacred, and the consciousness that sustains this figure, is the highly dubious portrait of YHWH's supremacy and omnipotence. While YHWH's power is often suggested to be almighty, it is also frequently conveyed as otherwise. Though the Lord is said to be with the fighting men of Israel as the book commences (1:19, 22), they are unable to totally drive out the Canaanite inhabitants (1:19, 21, 27-36). Regardless of the notion that Deborah is relaying YHWH's instructions, Barak lays down his own demands in response to them and Deborah acquiesces (4:6-8). While Deborah and Barak's victory song praises the Lord's supremacy, it also expresses YHWH's need for human help "against the mighty" (5:13-15, 23).[72] For all Gideon is said

[72] As Richard Bowman remarks, even though Ehud and Deborah credit YHWH with the victory, "their stories stress the importance and necessity of the human involvement in the achievement of success." Richard

to have "the Spirit of the Lord upon him" (6:34) he still requires repeated signs of assurance before committing to the deity's appointed military role (6:36-40). Though Jephthah too is a recipient of the 'Spirit of the Lord' (11:29), he deems it necessary to shore up his victory with an additional vow to the deity (11:30-31). The great promise of the preordained Nazirite of God, Samson, (13:3-7), one apparently "blessed by the Lord" (13:24), seems to only issue forth a covenant-breaking, self-centred, belligerent, and cruel man, whose many experiences of the Spirit of the Lord upon him (14:6, 19; 15:14-15) accomplish only personal vengeance and murder.[73] The epilogue's culmination of Israel's decline into intertribal turmoil appears to finally signify not only Israel's disobedience and lack of leadership, but also a deficit in YHWH's capacity to retain influence and rapport with his people.[74]

In addition to the dubious portrait of YHWH's supremacy and omnipotence, and counter to the characteristics of deities that typically feature in sacrificial myths, it is unclear as to how YHWH is to be perceived as autonomously active in exerting his might. The Judges' formula that identifies some of Israel's saving figures as recipients of the 'Lord's Spirit' (רוּחַ יְהוָֹה) may insinuate that the deity is immersed in the fray. Yet, how this force is independently active is entirely ambiguous as it is rendered completely indistinguishable from the human enacted violence and atrocities that unfold.[75] So much is this so, that the characters and actions of Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson, along with Othniel who also receives the 'Lord's Spirit' (3:10), seemingly convey that this bestowment is one and the same with men's adrenalin and bloodlust in combat. In Judges the 'Lord's Spirit' is aligned

Bowman, "Narrative Criticism: Human Purpose in Conflict with Divine Presence," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies,* ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 37.
[73] For extended discussion on the limitations of YHWH's power see Bowman, "Narrative Criticism," 34-39.
[74] Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible,* 77.
[75] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 19.

with men's performance of extensive slaughter and evidently generates no magnanimity, virtue, or wisdom in its recipients.[76]

Furthermore, unlike the myth of Noah where the deity acts autonomously giving highly detailed instructions to his elected deliverer before bringing about the flood himself, in Judges we are rarely afforded any details as to what the deity specifically intends. Instead, we hear at great length of the astounding horror of men's implemented violence – frequently figuratively embellished with a massive body count so we are left in no doubt as to the extent of human violence the text means to convey. As the following will repeatedly show, insinuations of the deity's independent violent performance are negated as it is made indeterminate and indecipherable apart from human actions.

In chapter one, all we heed of the deity's voice in response to an Israel *already committed to battle*, is that Judah is to go up first against the Canaanites (1:2). Yet, immediately following the deity's only instruction in this chapter, Judah decides independently to take the Simeonites with them (1:3). Though the Lord is said to give the Canaanites and Perizzites into Judah's hands (1:2, 1:4), the rest of the narrative relays in abundance the human-wreaked atrocities that follow as the Israelites attempt to destroy their enemies and procure the land for themselves. Judah slaughters ten thousand men (1:4), and in an act of cold-blooded vengeance they chase down Adoni-Bezek and lop off his four inner digits (1:6). The city of Jerusalem is put to the sword and torched (1:8), the city of Zephath is destroyed (1:17), and the cities and territories of Gaza, Ashkelon, and Ekron are likewise taken (1:18). The house of Joseph butchers the entire city of Bethel, except for one man (and his family) threatened prior with murder if he will not show them a way into the place (1:22-25). The Lord's presence is twice momentarily and ambiguously mentioned to be

[76] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 44; John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 112.

with the fighting men (1:19, 22). However, this indistinct presence is entirely subsumed and made synonymous with the extended coverage telling of Israel's liquidating efforts. While Israel's success in driving the inhabitants from the land is far from apparent (1:19, 27-35), the brutality which the men of Israel have rained down upon their enemies is made abundantly clear.

In chapter three the staggering extent of men's violence continues. The text implies in one sense the notion of divine providence at work insofar as the deity is noted to have raised Othniel and Ehud as judges (3:9, 15). Yet, any denotation that the deity's independent actions have delivered the enemy, Cushan-Rishathaim, into Othniel's hand is made suspect given the text's explicit account that Othniel became a powerful and exacting warlord (3:10). In the following episode the deity has no apparent role whatsoever in formulating Ehud's double-faced trickery of isolating the Moabite King, Eglon, long enough to dispatch him through the abdomen with a double-edged sword. Ehud may let Eglon know that the sword is a message from God (3:20-21), but the text itself gives the reader nothing more than his justifying word to go on that this is indeed so. Neither is there any counsel from the deity directing Ehud's later command to the Israelites to follow him in realising a further military massacre. Ehud certainly invokes the deity again as he rallies Israel's men to battle, crying "The Lord has given your enemy into your hands" (3:28), but the deity is not apparent in the narrative at all. The following sequence relays, however, a lurid human scene. The Israelite men strike down ten thousand Moabites at the Jordan River and ensure "not a man escaped" (3:28-29). As is typical of the battle scenes of Judges, we have no word as to the deity's intended scale of assault, but we are shown that the notion of divinely justified military triumph is bound up in human masculine forces that exceed the point of victory to realise near total obliteration of their enemies (4:16, 8:10,11; 9:45, 11:33, 12:6, 18:28, 20:46-48; 21:10-11).

The deity's silence continues throughout the next narrative sequence. Thus, as with Ehud, Deborah assumes the role of the deity's mouthpiece prompting the warfare of chapter four. Via her we are to imagine that the Lord has commanded Barak to assemble ten thousand men against Sisera upon Mount Tabor (4:6). As the narrative progresses, however, the Lord's routing of Sisera's army is shown to be tantamount to Barak's forces slaying Sisera's troops to the last man, save for the enemy general himself (4:14-16). In addition, though Deborah foretells that divine providence will see a woman honoured for Sisera's death rather than Barak, it is wholly indeterminate how the deity independently orchestrates Jael's murder of Sisera. For all Jael's deadly deed is lauded in the victory song of Judges 5 in correlation with justifying proclamations of divine sanctioning: "So may all your enemies perish, O Lord!" (5:31), the narrative illustrates she planned and performed the act alone in the privacy of her home. The violent context Deborah and Jael operate within is shown to the reader to be human, and significantly masculine in its military character. Furthermore, the close of Judges 4 conflates the notion of divine involvement with human-performed violence. The intimation that "On that day God subdued Jabin" (4:23) is immediately followed by lucid articulation that it is human military savagery that has done the subduing: "And the hand of the Israelites bore harder and harder on Jabin, the Canaanite king, until they destroyed him" (4:24).

Accentuation of men's violence as fundamentally operative attains extended coverage in Gideon's exploits. In the first half of this sequence the warring deity is represented as having an active voice in inciting Gideon to battle. After several conversations with a reluctant Gideon and the granting of divine signs (6:17-21; 36-40), the Lord (6:14-19; 23-26) or angel/messenger of the Lord (6:11-12; 20-21) induces him to mobilise men to arms as tensions escalate with the enemy Midianites and their allies (6:25-35). The deity's directing of Gideon's pending military campaign continues in chapter 7, though with a

decidedly conceited flavour. In order that YHWH secure full glory for the victory, Gideon must reduce his troops from 32,000 to 300 men against the opposition assembled "as thick as locusts" (7:2-12). Once Gideon overhears a premonition of his pending victory the narrative sequence shifts emphasis away from intimations of any independently active deity. Gideon becomes his own self-directing warlord, implementing his own military manoeuvres and acts of brutal vengeance. The deity is not heard from again in the rest of the sequence.

Just as the demythologising motif has functioned in the earlier narratives, the deity rescinds into the background as men's violence comes fully to the fore. Gideon directs his men to surround the enemy camp, to sound trumpets, brandish torches, and to proclaim the deity in a battle cry: "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" (7:16-20). The enemy turns on each other in their fear and confusion. (7:22).[77] Like Judah, Ehud, Barak, and Jael, Gideon makes his own choices. Ignoring earlier directives, he bolsters his meagre army as he draws out his allies from Naphtali, Asher, Manasseh, and the hill country of Ephraim against the fleeing enemy (7:23-24). This eventually accomplishes the decapitation of two enemy leaders and a triumphant presentation of their heads to Gideon (7:25). Gideon and his troops pursue and capture the enemy kings, Zebah and Zalmunna, routing their entire army in the process (8:12). Gideon stays true to his promise to torture the men of Succoth, tearing their flesh with desert thorns and briers, for refusing to feed his men en route to capturing the Midianite kings (8:7, 16). For the same reason he also pulls down the tower of Peniel and kills the men of the town (8:17). Finally, in vengeance for the slaying of his

[77] The text's comment that the confusion is from the Lord (7:22) again negates notions of the deity's independent violent performance as it is rendered indeterminate and indecipherable apart from Gideon and his men's actions.

brothers he executes Zebah and Zalmunna, but only after they taunt Gideon to do the job himself rather than make his own son, a frightened boy, do it (8:19-21).

Though the deity is initially represented as having coaxed Gideon to battle, the text is overt in relaying that Gideon becomes his own self-made military monster. The sequence may close with the formulaic Judges' expression intimating that it was "the Lord their God, who had rescued them from the hands of all their enemies" (8:34). However, the reader is left in no doubt as to the terrible violence Gideon has dealt out. In addition, the text generates a highly dubious impression of Gideon's relationship with Israel's supposedly powerful deity who has fallen markedly silent and, in the end, authoritatively deficit. Gideon voices that the Lord, not himself, will rule over the Israelites (8:22-23), but immediately following his victory he has a gold ephod made from the plunder that becomes his snare, and "All Israel prostituted themselves by worshipping it" (8:24-27).

The succeeding narrative, centred upon Abimelech, exemplifies the same motif of an initial and comparatively brief mention of the deity's meddling hand in unfolding violence that then gives way to showcasing excessive human brutality. Following Abimelech's mass murder of his 70 brothers[78] to procure sole rule of Shechem, we learn that the deity pursues vengeance for Gideon's slain sons by sending an evil spirit to stir trouble between Abimelech and those who aided him in fratricide (9:22-23). What unfolds, however, is another human bloodbath this time anchored in men's rivalry for power in Shechem. Gaal son of Ebed vies for control and the deposing of Abimelech (9:29). Abimelech mobilises his forces against him. Battle ensues until Gaal and his brothers are driven out (9:41). Though Abimelech's primary opponent has been removed, his violent rampage continues

[78] Or 69 brothers, as the text reads Abimelech murdered his 70 brothers on one stone, but Jotham, the youngest escaped into hiding (וַיַּהֲרֹג אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּנֵי־יְרֻבַּעַל שִׁבְעִים אִישׁ עַל־אֶבֶן אֶחָת וַיִּוָּתֵר יוֹתָם בֶּן־יְרֻבַּעַל הַקָּטֹן כִּי נֶחְבָּא) (9:5).

unabated. He and his supporting companies then capture and destroy the city of Shechem (9:42-45). Upon learning residents had sought sanctuary in the temple of El-Berith, Abimelech sets about torching it, incinerating "about a thousand men and women" (9:46-49). He next lays siege to and captures the city of Thebez. It is here as he storms the stronghold to which the city's people have fled, that he finally meets his end as the result of a fatal blow from a millstone cast by an unnamed woman (9:50-54). The sequence closes with a momentary mention that God thereby achieved revenge on Abimelech and the citizens of Shechem for the murder of Gideon's sons (9:56-57).

Yet, in light of Abimelech's formerly narrated killing spree, the notion of divinely attained reprisal is made incongruous, for the text has shown it is due to human enacted brutality that thousands of innocent people have been murdered. As this narrative sequence closes, the rabble-rousing 'evil spirit' has been rendered entirely synonymous with men's rivalry and the savage momentums of battle and bloodlust. As Adrien Bledstein has noted, it is the rivalrous male-based drive for self-aggrandisement and power, signified in Gideon's very naming of one of his multiple sons 'Abimelech' – 'my father is king' (אֲבִימֶלֶךְ), that "sow(s) the seeds for all hell to break loose when he dies."[79] Abimelech's career of slaughter has been perceptibly illustrated to the reader as human initiated, propelled, and perpetrated.

The Jephthah sequence further destabilises allusions to an independent warring deity, as the reality of men's violence comes to the forefront. Judges 10:6-16 depicts Israel imploring their punitive YHWH for salvation from their oppressors, and YHWH is said to relent as "he could bear Israel's misery no longer" (וַתִּקְצַר נַפְשׁוֹ בַּעֲמַל יִשְׂרָאֵל) (10:16). However, any perception that Jephthah, the social outcast of his brothers, is divinely

[79] Bledstein, "Is Judges a Woman's Satire?," 44.

selected as the next military leader and liberator of Israel is shown to be amiss. As the text tells it, the elders of Gilead make the choice themselves (11:5-8). Other than the two formulaic Judges' ascriptions: "the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah" (11:29), and the Lord delivered the enemy into Jephthah's hands (11:32; 12:3) - ascriptions which amalgamate notions of the deity's involvement in violence with human enacted battlefield massacres - nothing is actually heard from the deity. Rather the sequence is made up of extended discourses between rivalrous men: between the elders of Gilead and Jephthah (11:6-11), between Jephthah and the unyielding king of Amon (11:12-28), and lastly between Jephthah and the Ephraimites who slander him (12:1-6). These discourses ultimately result in another horrendous body count. Jephthah's army decimates the Ammonites (11:33), he sacrifices his daughter to uphold his misbegotten vow (11:34-39), and the sequence concludes with him personally directing the massacre of 42,000 Ephraimites (12:6). For all Jephthah invokes and insinuates the deity as sanctioning and providentially steering these outcomes (11:27, 12:3), there is no representation of an independently acting or speaking deity present in these morbid human events. As the Jephthah sequence unfolds, the reader is situated to perceive the human-performed violence that transpires in accordance with a consciousness that perceives the extermination of enemies as divinely sanctioned and justified.

The narratives telling of Samson and the Philistines exemplify the same motif with regards to rescinding representations of the deity in correlation with the pronounced portrayal of brutal conflict between men. Throughout Judges 13 the deity plays an active role in the narrative that prefigures the birth of Samson. Via the deity's interaction with Manoah and his barren wife they become parents of Samson, a "child set apart to God from birth" and one foretold to commence Israel's deliverance from Philistine oppression (13:5). As in prior narratives there is brief intimation of a meddling warring deity prompting the

violence to come. The trouble commences when Samson desires a Philistine wife against his parents' counsel - a situation the text narrates as generating "from the Lord, who was seeking an occasion to confront the Philistines" (14:4). However, also in keeping with the trend in prior narrative sequences, what follows henceforth is unmitigated human violence grounded explicitly in men's rivalry and acts of vengeance.

Once Sampson has married his Philistine bride a cycle of violent human reprisal quickly unfolds. Samson's scheme to swindle his thirty Philistine companions with an unsolvable riddle backfires when his wife leaks the answer and he must pay the wager. Samson subsequently murders thirty men of Ashkelon and strips them of their belongings and garments so to pay his creditors (14:10-19). Angry too that his wife had been given to another man, Samson determines his own justified payback: "This time I have a right to get even with the Philistines" (וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם שִׁמְשׁוֹן נִקֵּיתִי הַפַּעַם מִפְּלִשְׁתִּים כִּי־עֹשֶׂה אֲנִי עִמָּם רָעָה) (15:3). Turning loose three hundred foxes, tied in pairs with an ignited torch fastened to each pair, he sets the Philistine crops ablaze (15:4-5). When the Philistines put to death Samson's wife and her father as the root cause of all the trouble, Samson slaughters more of them (15:6-8). In a later skirmish he accrues another thousand dead Philistines as he wields a donkey jawbone with the killing power characterised in Judges as the 'Spirit of the Lord' upon him (15:11-17). With Delilah's help the Philistines finally capture him, though Samson's ultimate revenge is still to be had in the form of a murder/suicide. He kills thousands of Philistines as he brings down their temple atop them all (16:23-30), "killing many more when he died than while he lived" (וַיִּהְיוּ הַמֵּתִים אֲשֶׁר הֵמִית בְּמוֹתוֹ רַבִּים מֵאֲשֶׁר הֵמִית בְּחַיָּיו) (16:30).

The supernatural features in this sequence that might otherwise denote Samson as God's appointed killing machine become, as in previous narratives, entirely suspect in light of the extravaganza of human violence within which they are placed. The text relays Samson as

an antagonistic and unruly man of his own wilful mind; eating unclean food as he likes (14:8), sleeping with whomever he desires (16:1), deceiving whomever he wishes (14:9, 18; 16:6-15), and killing as he pleases (14:19). Samson's circumstances, conduct, and downfall are encapsulated in a cycle of human vengeance which he alone commenced and exacerbated. With the deity's voice long absent from the Samson sequence, the text seemingly emphasises, and with some irony, Samson's invocation to YHWH to support and validate his final act of reprisal. Irrespective of his earlier caustic petition to the deity for water lest he fall into the hands of the Philistines (15:18), his capture and imprisonment has come about after all. Samson's supernatural strength is employed one last time in a manner which causes his own ignoble death amidst his enemies. As the Samson narrative closes, the ambiguous insinuations of the deity's dabbling hand in the sequence of savage events are rendered entirely commensurate with the overwhelming human enacted performance of vengeance and violence.

It is at this junction in the Judges' corpus that the demythologising processes we have been following modify. Discussion up until this point has evidenced that the deity is at times intimated within the text as sanctioning and involved in human violence. However, this warlike and peaceful double-faced deity is destabilised for the reader as the narratives manifestly show that it is ultimately human initiated, propelled, and perpetrated violence that is enacted. This demythologising quality is produced in one sense as, counter to the deities of sacrificial myths, denotations of YHWH's performance of violence are depicted as entirely indistinguishable from human enacted violence. Furthermore, as the deity rescinds within the narratives the hostile will of humans and human-performed violence come graphically to the fore. These motifs adjust, however, in the final epilogue phase. Here the ambiguous presence and transient voice of the masculine warrior deity that we have been occasionally privy to up until now, fade out all but entirely. In the following

chapters in Judges the extended absence of the deity amplifies the reality and destructiveness of human, and significantly masculine, violence. Thus, the textual inclination to undermine the concealing quality of sacrificial myths, which mystify human violence by veiling it in divine justification and involvement, is advanced even further.

Stripped of any ambiguous intimations of a double-faced deity at work, the brute reality of human violence is laid bare in the ensuing epilogue sequences. Furthermore, it is done so in conjunction with reference to the way humans construct the deity to justify self-interested objectives and the use of violence to obtain them. The next narrative episode explicitly depicts, via Micah and his Levite priest, the human consciousness that fashions idolatrous self-serving notions of God. Micah is represented as confidently knowing (יָדַעְתִּי) that YHWH will be good to him because he installed a (well-remunerated) Levite to manage his household idols (וַיֹּאמֶר מִיכָה עַתָּה יָדַעְתִּי כִּי־יֵיטִיב יְהוָה לִי כִּי הָיָה־לִי הַלֵּוִי לְכֹהֵן) (17:13). The text then lucidly illustrates the human-centred, self-serving validation of extreme violence generated via a consciousness that constructs divine justification for it. The intimidating Danite spies glean from Micah's idolatrous Levite what they want to hear, that YHWH has approved their journey to find a homeland (18:5-6). The Danites then abuse Micah's hospitality, threaten him, and steal from him, directing his priest to also abandon him for a more illustrious career with them (18:19-20). The Danites then move on to the isolated city of Laish where they massacre the "peaceful and unsuspecting people" (שׁקֵט וּבֹטֵחַ) residing there, burning their city to the ground (18:27-29). The narrative emphasises to the reader the ugliness with which the Danites take the land for themselves under the exonerating pretext, formulaically denoted but destabilised in Judges, that God has given it into their hands (18:10).

In Judges 19 the violence is further portrayed as unequivocally human. There are no pretensions to an involved deity, neither are there any postulations of divine justification

for it. A mob of Benjamites descend upon a Levite at his host's abode intending to sexually violate him. His wife in turn is thrown out to placate them. She is finally left tortured, pack raped, dead, and dismembered (19:23-30); an event from which the Levite ignites largescale intertribal war. As Judges moves towards its calamitous end, the extensive human and significantly masculine face of violence has been thoroughly unmasked from any mystifying overlays.

There is one last manifestation of the deity as the book concludes, which seems in light of the demythologising motifs observed in Judges thus far, only to magnify to the reader the problem of human allegiance to a constructed conception of a violent double-faced deity that sanctions persecution. Such a deity serves to justify violence against *anyone* determined to be the enemy-other. By the end of Judges, and punctuated with tragic parody, this deity that initially corroborated Israel's resolution to fight against the Canaanites, is now seen to guide Israel's military might against itself. Once more in a context where war is already decided, though this time internal war, the deity when asked: "Who of us shall go first to fight against the Benjamites?' repeats in a perfunctory manner just as he had done in chapter one: "Judah shall go first" (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יְהוּדָה בַתְּחִלָּה) (20:18). Given the mockery that Israel's religion has become, this is a deity that appears more emblematic of Israel's distorted, waring mind than any 'true divinity'.

Furthermore, as in all the preceding narratives, it is the decisions and military actions of humans that follow, this time to all but liquidate the tribe of Benjamin. After a massive battlefield loss and despite having purportedly followed the deity's directives to go up against the Benjamites (20:18-25), the men of Israel formulate their own warfare strategy that results in all the Benjaminite towns being put "to the sword" (20:48). They then devise of their own accord, as a corrective to the upshot of the carnage, to murder the citizens of

Jabesh Gilead so to abduct their virgins, in addition to those of Shiloh, as wives for the surviving Benjamite remnant (21:6-11, 20-21).

The text seemingly emphasises as it ends, the devastation that generates from a consciousness that conceptualises a violent deity who sanctions the massacring of enemy-others. By the end of Judges, Israel's belief in a deity who justifies such violence is shown only to have led to their collective, self-inflicted tribal anguish. YHWH may be reckoned earlier in the sequence as giving the Benjamites into Israel's hands (20:28) - a feat of victory he has been inferred to have performed so many times before when the Israelites wiped out their enemies. Though now this assumption is depicted to have radically backfired. While the narrative relays that the people hold YHWH responsible for making a gap in the tribes of Israel (כִּי־עָשָׂה יְהוָה פֶּרֶץ בְּשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל) (21:15), the reader is left to ponder that it was in actuality the Israelites' bloody exertions that accomplished this outcome. Though Israel cries bitterly to a mute militant deity who appears to have abandoned them, "why has this happened to Israel?" (21:3), the reader is positioned to see that Israel has resorted to the business of shifting blame to another for its own inflicted atrocities.

As this chapter has shown, the Book of Judges can be perceived as one that destabilises sacrificial myths that conceal the truth of human violence behind double-faced deities who condone and perform persecutory violence. The double-faced deity in Judges is represented as a markedly suspect figure. Though this deity is at times intimated as sanctioning and ambiguously involved in bloodshed, what ensues is testament that the extensive violence is human directed and inflicted. Unlike typical sacrificial myths, there is no autonomously violent deity in Judges; any intimations of the deity's violence are shown to be entirely simultaneous and synonymous with human violence. Furthermore, identification of the violence as human-centred is emphasised through the rescinding voice

and presence of the deity within the narrative sequences and across the book as a whole. In short, the deity characterised within Judges becomes discernible as one and the same with the hostile will and violence of humans. As such, this collection of texts substantially corroborates Raymund Schwager's perspective on the demythologising tendency at work within the Hebrew Bible, where narratives representing an angry YHWH destroying humans fundamentally embody one group of people violently assaulting another:

> Consequently we may assume that human violence is meant when there is talk of divine anger and retribution…. As seen by experience, it is always a question of human power interpreted as God's action…. whenever sacred violence is mentioned, it is always human beings attacking one another.[80]

Violence and Victimhood: Androcentric Patterns and Processes

With the double-faced deity destabilised what becomes apparent in the Book of Judges is not only the human quality of perpetrated violence, but also the androcentric character of its patterns and processes. The following will show that, as human violence and victimhood come to the forefront, what lies behind Judges' sacrificial textual patterns is the clandestine dynamic of *distorted mimetic desires*. Behind the features of undifferentiation, conflict, crisis, and restored order via saving figures, lies distorted desire which gives rise to rivalry, crises, and the reestablishment of order through victimisation deemed justified. Moreover, Judges exemplifies that these human-centred patterns and processes of violence are significantly gendered, as men's and women's subjectivity, desires, and agency are influenced in divergent ways due to enculturation into androcentricity. In short, Judges can be perceived for its representation of the gendered patterns and processes of violence that show men within androcentric contexts as both the primary perpetrators and victims of

[80] Raymond Schwager, *Must There Be Scapegoats?: Violence and Redemption in the Bible*, trans. Maria L. Assad (New York: Crossroad, 2000), 63, 67.

aggressive violence, while women are located as vulnerable bodies upon which men's violence can be channelled with restorative effects for the androcentric social order.

Overarchingly, Judges is an androcentric corpus that focuses primarily upon the perspectives, actions, and voices of male characters.[81] It also centres upon and conveys the substantial violence performed by men that transpires within the androcentric world of the text. Certainly, as will be discussed later, there are some female characters who are engaged in violent performance and exert degrees of power and agency. Though how they do so is nevertheless influenced by their social context which is male identified, dominated, and controlled, where men's ascendency over other men and women is culturally normative.[82] Given this fundamental narrative context, the texts portray the extensive rivalry and aggression that happens between some men in androcentric environments where men's subjectivity and desires are influenced in relation to performing normative codes of dominant masculinity - that is to be men of strength and independence, with status, authority, and agency to control assets, self, and others. Put simply, the androcentric texts of Judges depict androcentric contexts where men's foremost rivals are other men - be it those of Canaanite tribes, fellow Israelite tribes, or those within the family. These men engage in acts of violence out of deep-seated, distorted acquisitive and metaphysical desires to prove themselves sufficiently dominant alongside of and over against other men, in an effort to attain a sense of identity and security in an androcentric world.

From the outset Judges emphasises a foundational climate of intense masculine rivalry and aggression between Israel and the neighbouring local tribes. The opening chapter makes

[81] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 17.
[82] Athalya Brenner, ed., "Introduction," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 13; Exum, "Judges," 225; Exum, "Feminist Criticism," 65-88.

manifestly clear the reciprocal nature of this aggression which underpins most of the book. Israel may endure oppression by Canaanite rulers, but Israel is openly said to oppress them also (1:28, 30, 32, 35). With the double-faced deity destabilised, it becomes perceptible then, that this substantial theme of conflict between Israel and the Canaanites is not so much about Israel's righteous acquisition of land promised to them by God – evidently a callous, conflict-inspiring promise as it includes deliberately dispossessing others who already occupy the land. Rather, the conflict is about *human* acquisitive desires to attain territory already claimed. Moreover, this conflict is about the deep metaphysical desires for autonomy, status, power, and identity - a fullness of *being* - that comes with the acquisition of territory within a context where the Canaanite male inhabitants and leaders are the stumbling blocks to Israel's men.

From this vantage point the dynamics of volatile *imitated* acquisitive and metaphysical desires become detectable as underpinning Israel's rivalry, resentment, and enmity with respective Canaanite groups. In one sense, the Canaanites become perceptible as tribes who model the land as desirable to a vulnerable, immigrant Israel. But more than this, or rather *through* this desirable object, the Canaanite men exemplify fuller modes of masculine being to Israel's men - autonomy, status, power and identity - that come with territorial dominion. Israel's penchant for frequently imitating and assimilating with Canaanite groups signifies this dynamic of Canaanite modelling of that which is acquisitively and metaphysically desirable. According to Girard, it is precisely this dissolution of differences between a subject (here Israel), and their model (the Canaanites), that gives rise to conflict and crisis. The intricacies of this conflict result in external fighting performed in relation to the coveted object. But internally, aggression rises as the one imitated senses that their unique identity is threatened, and so they seek to reclaim it.

In turn, the imitator reciprocally moves to defend their sense of distinctiveness, opposing any conception of mediated desires on their part.[83]

The narratives appear to attest to this human dynamic of the volatile dissolving of differences that leads to crisis and violence. Certainly, in one vein, the textual component of sacrificial myths that conceal this dynamic behind double-faced deities who bring about crisis and order is present – as noted earlier, YHWH is said to hand the Israelites into subjugation and suffering. However, the narratives undermine this aspect as they openly relay Israel's imitation of the Canaanites, and thus the intrinsic dissolving of differences as primary. With the double-faced deity destabilised, it is this dynamic of the dissolution of differences which fundamentally makes sense of Israel's initial peaceable cohabiting with local tribes collapsing into episodes of conflict and oppression. In addition, the narratives witness to the consciousness that accompanies violence in such a context as the imitating party then seeks to confirm their autonomy and distinctiveness. Israel is represented as only appealing to YHWH in times of calamity, when their need to assert their unique identity, distinctive territorial rights, and justified enactment of violence against the Canaanites is at its peak.[84]

The narratives of Canaanite conflict further evidence, according to mimetic theory, the volatile quality of 'internal mediation'. That is, they demonstrate the enmity that can occur between a subject and their model when they are in close proximity, as well as the escalation of this enmity to violent extremes as both parties become mirror images of each other in their mounting hostilities. Throughout Judges the Israelite men are shown to

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[83] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 146-148; Girard, *I See Satan*, 15-16, 22; Girard, *Things Hidden*, 290; René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 10-11.

[84] As Gunn and Fewell note in *Narrative in the Hebrew Bible* (119), "YHWH is not consulted when the crucial decisions have to be made. Rather the god of Israel is called on when it is a matter of convenience – when a battle has to be won or authority has to be claimed".

become copies of their male rivals even though they sustain an impression of their distinctiveness and irreproachability. The tribe of Judah, for instance, subjects Adoni-Bezek to his just desserts while exactly imitating his brutality. They sever his thumbs and toes just as he had done to former enemy kings (1:6-7). Gideon replicates the ruthlessness of Zebah and Zalmunna; because they had not spared the lives of his brothers, Gideon will not spare theirs (8:19). As Canaanite groups are said to have oppressed Israel, Israel validates their reciprocated oppression of them. The numerous narratives that relay the crushing Israelite victories of Othniel, Ehud, Barak, Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, depict that these 'saving figures' have in actuality become the 'monstrous doubles' of their respective opposing warlords – Cushan-Rishathaim, Eglon, Sisera, the Midianite kings, the King of Ammon, and the Philistine leaders. As Fewell aptly remarks concerning Israel's violent performance: "the reader might surmise that in the end the difference between Israel and Canaan is not so vast after all."[85] Judges paints a troubling picture of this reciprocated violence for the reader, however, as it becomes ever more aligned with a wayward Israel and the overtly flawed and scandalous judges who carry it out.

Further to this troubling picture, the narratives witness to the immense victimhood of the enemy-other that Israel has justified and exacted. The breadth of this victimhood is sobering as it includes not only numerous assassinated kings (3:10, 3:20, 4:24, 7:25, 8:21) and manifold decimated armies (3:29, 4:16, 8:10-12, 11:32), but also entire cities of civilians destroyed (1:8, 1:25, 11:33), along with episodes of torture (1:7, 8:16) and gloating (5:24-31). In sum, these narratives appear to attest to the human-centred, and significantly male-performed patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. The human rivalries, conflicts, and crises ultimately seem to stem from the tensions of men's distorted desires and rivalrous will to power; tensions which eventually unleash in war

[85] Fewell, "Judges," 76, 78.

against an enemy-other who is perceived as justly eliminated. The identification of these patterns in the Book of Judges subsequently accords with the disruption of the textual patterns of sacrificial myths and their recourse to the violent sacred and associated 'saving figures'. In Judges, Israel's military leaders are shown to be 'saving figures' only insofar as they embody the characteristics of their deemed rivalrous, militant deity, and lead their troops in the eradication of the enemy-other.

What is more, these narratives of conflict with external enemies appear connected with Israel's own explosive internal masculine mimetic pressures. While various groups of Israelite men are represented as martially led into bonding over against a common foreign enemy, these narratives also progressively witness to the volatile tensions *within* Israel. These internal tensions necessitate external channelling so to be alleviated, yet by the end of Judges these tensions eventually turn inward against one of Israel's own tribes. The deep unrest, rivalry, and conflict between men within the tribes of Israel becomes increasingly apparent as they vie for security, autonomy, status, and power. On separate occasions the Ephraimites contend with Gideon and Jephthah for leaving them out of victorious battles (8:1, 12:1). Gideon's presumed allies, the men of Succoth and Peniel, snub allegiances to bolster their standing with the enemy Midianites (8:5-8). With the clear impetus of injured egos, Gideon, and the slandered Jephthah, annihilate their intertribal fraternal offenders (8:16-17, 21; 12:4-6). The theme of slaying brothers pervades the Abimelech sequence in association with his quest for status and power. The narratives of Gideon, Abimelech, and Jephthah convey that their acts of fraternal butchery are grounded in rivalry and a desire to prove themselves sufficiently masculine and dominant. Their actions are textually moored in personal motivations, that by gaining positions of headship they may counteract their respective ignoble social status as the 'weakest man of the weakest clan' (6:15), and as sons of a concubine/slave (9:18) and a prostitute (11:1). By

the epilogue phase of Judges, Israel's intertribal masculine rivalry and aggression have become plainly and deplorably apparent. Men's will to power and desires to perform dominant masculinity inclusive of controlling other men pervades the final texts: Micah is subjected to intimidation and death threats by Danite men (18:25-26), a Levite is subjected to sadistic terrorization by a Benjamite mob (19:22), and the Benjamites are subjected to liquidation by the fighting men of Israel (20:8-11).

Thus, the entire Judges corpus becomes perceptible as permeated by an androcentric context of distorted desire, identity and fear generated in relation to the risk men pose to each other. Whether they concern the enmity between Israel and Canaanite groups or that between fellow Israelite tribes or brothers, the narratives of conflict reflect the bonding of some men over against other men as a way of mobilising agency to garner security, achieve rivalrous desires, and perform dominant masculinity. Judges unequivocally depicts within the ebb and flow of masculine power, how some men gain ascendency and social agency to diminish the agency of other men who are made subject to their control. Subsequently, on one hand, Judges reflects how men's power and acts of violence suffice to sustain hierarchies among men within the androcentric social order. On the other hand, however, Judges illustrates via the representation of the slide of Israel's men into internecine conflict, that in contexts where internal tensions between men are not channelled onto a common external enemy, societies can become self-destructive.

Judges evidently reflects an androcentric world where men enculturated to perform dominant codes of masculinity become primary rivals with each other. Accordingly, men within this corpus of narratives are depicted as both significant perpetrators and victims of men's violence. Androcentric patterns of violence and victimhood unfold as desires anchored in embodying dominant masculinity distort into hostile competition, conflict, and crisis with other men. As rivalrous tensions increase, some men come to bond over against

other men, and in their justified vilification and destruction of them, degrees of social order are reclaimed for a time. Ultimately, hostilities stemming from distorted desires anchored in performing dominant masculinity are channelled outwards and frequently alleviated upon victimised bodies. Critically though, the trajectory of the Book of Judges exposes the fundamentally destructive frames of these cyclic patterns and processes, as it illustrates the transitory quality of the order and peace regained in addition to Israel's social and moral degeneration.

Female Characters and Androcentric Patterns of Violence

The array of female characters in Judges, though predominantly subsidiary characters within the narratives of men, are instrumental to the disclosure of the androcentric quality of these patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. The female characters within Judges evidence how women's experience of violence and victimhood is intertwined with men's experience, yet also distinctive as women's subjectivity, desires, and agency are shaped in divergent ways within androcentric contexts. They exemplify how women are made vulnerable to violence and victimhood as they become caught in the dynamics of men's violence. In correlation with Judges' trajectory of decline, they come to illustrate how women are socially located as vulnerable bodies upon which men's violence plays out with ameliorating effects for the androcentric social order.

Judges certainly contains some female characters who depict women exercising power and agency, and engagement in acts of violence. In this respect Judges represents an inherent quality of androcentric societies and contexts insofar as they do not wholly exclude some women from exerting high degrees of self-determination, agency, and influence over others including men.[86] Deborah stands out in this regard as a prophet, judge, and leader of

[86] Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 11.

Israel who coordinates a military campaign. Achsah, Jael, Delilah, and the millstone throwing woman of Thebez, are others who varyingly exemplify women's employment of agency, power, and violent performance in pursuit of their objectives. Yet, these characters indicate nevertheless, how women's subjectivity, desires, and agency are impacted in androcentric ways within a world structured according to men's power and privilege.

Achsah, the first female character in Judges, clearly exercises agency as she requests and attains springs of water from her father, Caleb, to go with his bestowal of land (1:14-15). Her agency, however, is still wholly bound within androcentric, patriarchal frames. Achsah's successful acquisition of that which she desires is entirely subject to her father acquiescing to it. Furthermore, the MT indicates that the initial procurement of land is attained through her husband's agency as she urges Othniel to ask for the land (וַיְהִי בְּבוֹאָהּ וַתְּסִיתֵהוּ לִשְׁאָל מֵאֵת־אָבִיהָ הַשָּׂדֶה) (1:14).[87] Achsah certainly signifies as an assertive woman who asks for and obtains what she wants from her father. But the text also relays that she was earlier her father's object of trade as an implement for hastening his military success. Prior to gaining the land and springs, Caleb offers Achsah as a prize to the man who can capture Kiriath Sepher. Subject to her father's overriding desires and power, Achsah is subsequently married off to her uncle, Othniel, who accomplishes the feat (1:12-13).

Deborah is distinguished as a prominent female figure who exerts significant authority and agency within Israel. That she leads Israel with a contra-feminine formidable personality and presence is emphasised in her descriptor as the 'wife of Lappidoth' (4:4), which translates as 'woman of fire'.[88] Though Deborah is an extraordinary exemplar of a woman

[87] The LXX and Vulgate invert this sequence. They position Achsah as the instrument of her husband's desires as Othniel persuades her to ask for the land. See for further discussion Klein, "Achsah," 22-23.
[88] Scholz, "Judges," 118.

who embodies social power, the text illustrates that she remains subject to the androcentric culture and context nonetheless, which shape her implementation of agency and her objectives. The situation within which Deborah's desire and actions for Israel's liberation are configured is overtly masculine. Israel's oppression is at the hands of men, namely the Canaanite king, Jabin, and Jabin's general, Sisera, and his army. The narrative shows Deborah's agency relies solely on her capacity to access and mobilise channels of masculine military power in response. Like Achsah, her agency is conditional upon the agency of a man, in this case Barak, and his authority to command an army against the enemy general. Though Deborah holds a position of eminence, her social standing is obviously circumscribed in accordance with male power as Barak dictates stipulations to her and she is compelled to comply (4:8). In an overriding context of masculine power and conflict that ultimately plays out between Sisera's and Barak's forces, the agency which Deborah is able to deploy lies in her performance as a pseudo-man[89] inducing and directing Israel's war machine. As Ambrose of Milan (340-397) noted of Deborah: "she, not at all restrained by the weakness of her sex, undertook to perform the duties of a man."[90] Yet, as Roger Ryan remarks, this performance also necessitated the assistance of a man: "Israel's deliverance is not, on this occasion, due to the individual heroism of a lone judge-deliverer."[91] Deborah exemplifies how powerful women mired within androcentricity come to comply with pre-existing masculine institutional structures and contribute to the patterns of conflict within androcentric contexts.

Jael and the woman of Thebez are also exemplars of women who exercise power and agency in acts of violence against men. Jael plainly manipulates her situation as she lulls

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[89] Deborah's behaviours mark her as a pseudo-man as they are consistent with male-identifed behaviours, values, and structures within an androcentric context.
[90] Quoted in Anne W. Stewart, "Deborah, Jael, and Her Interpreters," in *The Women's Bible Commentary, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 130.
[91] Ryan, *Judges*, 30.

Sisera into a false sense of security that enables her to dispatch him. Violent though this act is, Jael performs it as a woman subjected to a perilous situation imposed upon her. Though often accused of flouting rules of hospitality,[92] the situation is beyond such mores. Jael makes her brutal hammer and tent peg decision as an exceptionally vulnerable Canaanite woman stationed between a warlord and his pursuing enemies.[93] This is a particularly dangerous situation as the imagery of plundered women in wartime makes clear in the next chapter (5:30). Her actualisation of power and agency to end Sisera's life may appear disturbing for its calculated precision and the fact that it is carried out by a woman. But, this lone act of violence is markedly distinctive in its motivations in comparison to the male-enacted bloodbath that has unfolded on the battlefield. Jael is not a violent woman by trait or training. She does not employ a knife or a sword, or any other weapon designed for killing. Rather, she ensures her safety through domestic implements available to her as a choice of self-protection is pressed upon her.[94] Similarly, the woman who hurls the millstone that instigates Abimelech's end does so in self-defence. Untrained, unarmed, and unprepared for war, but made subject to the direct threat of men's violence, like Jael she contrives a weapon from a domestic tool in an effort to protect herself from harm and death.

Delilah is also represented as a woman who wields power and agency over men and is implicated in an act of violence against one. She is characterised as using her sexuality and 'feminine wiles' to seduce and betray an infatuated Samson while disabling his macho physical powers. As with the other women, however, Delilah is located in a precarious situation not of her own making, caught as she is in a much larger male conflict between Samson and the Philistines – exceptionally dangerous men associated with extreme cruelty

[92] Collins, *Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible,* 111.
[93] Fewell, "Judges," 75.
[94] Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise,* 124.

and murder. Her position of vulnerability is further pronounced as she has no husband, father, or brother to safeguard and support her. In such a social situation where money means degrees of security for independent women, Delilah's agency can be bought by the Philistine leaders. Her desires unsurprisingly lie with their bribe (16:5), and the financial as well as physical security it brings.[95] Delilah's desires and agency are fundamentally wrought according to the violent masculine context she has been made subject to. Her actions are certainly indirectly linked to the brutality Samson suffers, but it is the Philistine men who ultimately exercise their power to seize him and bind him and gouge out his eyes (16:21).[96]

These women clearly exercise more agency than other women in Judges; yet how they do so is subject to the androcentric culture they are immersed in and habituated to. This includes subjection to androcentric evaluative and punitive measures, as women's conduct and agency are determined good or bad insofar as they serve the overriding androcentric social order. Both Deborah and Jael's realisation of violence, for example, are proclaimed favourably within the text as heroic for their toppling of Israel's enemy. Yet, Delilah's actions, which conceivably would earn her the same accolade from a Philistine perspective, have historically been understood as those of a *femme fatale* and thus evidence of the dangerous cunning that lies within and defines womanhood.[97]

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[95] Fewell, "Judges," 80.

[96] Much feminist commentary notes the difficulty of retrieving the nuances of Delilah's characterisation and the gendered nature of her situation, from her *femme fatale* reputation and the ill-founded esteem of Samson as a hero. See Fewell, "Judges," 78-80; Bledstein, "Is Judges a Woman's Satire?," 49-50; Carol Smith, "Delilah: A Suitable Case for (Feminist) Treatment?," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 93-116; Betsy Merideth, "Desire and Danger: The Drama of Betrayal in Judges and Judith," in *Anti-Covenant: Counter-Reading Women's Lives in the Hebrew Bible*, ed. Mieke Bal (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 63-78.

[97] Fewell, "Judges," 80. Lilian R. Klein, "The Book of Judges: Paradigm and Deviation in Images of Women," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 65-67; Caroline Blyth, *Reimagining Delilah's Afterlives as Femme Fatale: The Lost Seduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

These female characters, strong and resourceful though they are, indicate how women's subjectivity, desires, and agency are impacted by the androcentric climate they are in. Their power to act, and how and why they act, are significantly circumscribed in relation to men's social power, as well as men's will to power, that gives rise to masculine conflict. Some women in Judges clearly perform acts of violence, yet, these narratives represent their enactments of violence as wholly generated in relation to men's violent performance. There are no textual portrayals of women killing other women in Judges. The women who do kill men, be it directly or indirectly, do so in a broader context of men's conflict, and frequently in accordance with obtaining self-protection and security. While these able and active female characters realise degrees of security and survival, they nevertheless point out women's experience of particular vulnerability to violence within androcentric cultures. They indicate how women become entangled in men's conflict, and how their desires and agency are bound in relation to being socially located as subsidiary to men and ultimately subject to men's power and privilege.

Furthermore, Judges reflects through numerous textual features, the hierarchical gender consciousness of androcentricity at work, where women are subjected to enculturation that diminishes them. Only four women are named in the entire book, and in contrast to male characters, women's ancestry is disregarded. In the main, anonymous women characters are denoted by their relational affiliation to men and in association with the cultural roles androcentricity values of females as wives/concubines and mothers (4:4, 4:21, 5:7, 5:28, 8:31, 13:2, 14:15, 17:2, 19:1). Some are further objectively labelled and codified according to their sexual availability and divergent worth as virgins (11:30, 21:11) or prostitutes (11:1, 16:1).[98] Women are typically located as the property of fathers and husbands, to be

[98] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 16-17; Athalya Brenner, "Introduction," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 9-14.

traded in marriage to other men (1:12, 3:5, 12:9, 14:20, 19:1), sometimes in polygamous arrangements (8:30), or as objects brutally taken from men by other men for their own purposes (5:30, 19:25, 21:12, 23).

Moreover, Judges reflects a world where men are enculturated to violent performance against other men within a consciousness of their pre-eminence in relation to women. These elements permeate the Judges corpus and are made explicit in certain scenes where men substantiating machismo is central. Caleb pits his men in competition with each other and prizes the most successfully violent warrior with his daughter (1:12-13). To those who have proven their superior masculine prowess in battle goes the right to take the defeated enemy's women as the due reward of the victorious (5:30).[99] With imperative force Gideon directs his scared young son to perform an act of masculinity by killing Zebah and Zalmunna (וַיֹּאמֶר לְיֶתֶר בְּכוֹרוֹ קוּם הֲרֹג אוֹתָם) (8:20). The two Canaanite kings, however, effectively goad Gideon into proving his own masculinity - a manoeuvre which secures them a more honourable death rather than that at the hands of an effeminate, timid boy: "Come do it yourself. 'As is the man so is his strength'" (וַיֹּאמֶר זֶבַח וְצַלְמֻנָּע קוּם אַתָּה וּפְגַע־בָּנוּ כִּי כָּאִישׁ גְּבוּרָתוֹ) (8:21). Barak, however, suffers a twofold injury to his masculinity. Not only does he fail to kill Sisera, but the esteem attached to the feat goes to a woman (4:9). Abimelech's dying desire is to avoid such emasculation. He orders his armour-bearer to run him through with his sword lest he go down ingloriously in history as having been killed by a woman (9:54).

Judges consequently denotes a world where women are also normalised to men's violence within a hierarchical gender consciousness that renders them subordinate to men. Deborah

[99] The Song of Deborah's mocking of Sisera's mother, imagined to be waiting for her son's return, considering perhaps the booty of war that has delayed him, carries the dark insinuation and subtle gloating that it is the Israelites who have substantiated their masculine prowess and are dividing the female spoils - "a womb or two for each man" (רַחַם רַחֲמָתַיִם לְרֹאשׁ גֶּבֶר) (5:30). Fewell, "Judges," 76.

and Sisera's mother's "wise ladies" (חַכְמוֹת שָׂרוֹתֶיהָ) (5:29) embody an androcentric consciousness normalised to men's victimisation of women. They are depicted as condoning of the plundering of wartime women as their voices are intertwined with the masculine military zeal for rape as a standard feature of war (5:30). Jephthah's daughter is portrayed as acting according to an injurious androcentric consciousness as she aligns her desires with her father's misbegotten deadly needs (11:36). Jephthah and Abimelech's respective mothers further signify the culturally engrained hypocrisy of double standards as they, a prostitute and a concubine/slave, not their male users, are rendered the source of their son's ignobility. Other female characters come to illustrate that, within a culture that normalises the violence of men and the subsidiary location of women, women may be rendered entirely expendable. Samson's immolated Philistine bride, the Levite's gang raped and murdered wife, and the abducted virgins of Jabesh Gilead and Shiloh exemplify how women are made entirely subject to the overriding and devastating desires, agency, and power of men.

Through characterisations such as these, Judges comes to signify the internal and external violence women are made subject to within androcentric societies. These narratives varyingly denote the distinctive internal/psychological violence done to women when their subjectivity, desires and agency are conditioned and coopted in accordance with an embodied androcentric consciousness. In addition, these narratives convey how women are made vulnerable to external/physical violence as, within androcentric frames, they are rendered objectified, undervalued, and ultimately expendable, with no collective power to challenge and subvert the constructs that diminish and destroy them.

Critically, the declining trajectory of Judges depicts how androcentricity positions women as vulnerable to violence not only in their personal relationships with men, but also within the dynamics of men's interactions with other men. As Judges unfolds, resourceful and

strong female characters who secured their safety regardless of their entanglement within the conflicts of men, give way to female characters who are unable to. Within the contexts of warring men, girls and women come to be represented as dangerously placed bodies upon which men's aggression is channelled. Though tensions lie between Samson and the Philistine men, it is Samson's wife who is threatened with murder if she does not coax her husband to divulge his riddle's answer (14:15). Though it was her father's action of regifting her to another man that triggered Samson's violent retaliation upon the Philistines, she is powerless to stop the Philistines from redirecting their deadly aggression upon her (15:2). In the context of Jephthah's war with the Ammonites, it is Jephthah's daughter who is made the sacrificial victim in association with his victory (11:39). The intensity of the Benjamite threat upon the Levite is resolved as his wife is cast out to the mob and they redirect their brutality onto her (19:25). Reparations and reconciliation are procured between the fighting men of Israel and the remanent men of Benjamin through the abduction and rape of virgins stolen from Jabesh Gilead and Shiloh (21:12, 23). As Judges concludes, the narrative trajectory of Israel's social and moral decline has come to expose that within androcentric contexts women configure as a category of victims whose victimhood generates distinctive ameliorating effects for men. These victims become visible as critical characters in their testimony to the expendable location of girls and women over which men can bond and alleviate violent tensions, while reaffirming their masculine power and reasserting the androcentric social order.

Theological Perspectives

Given this reading of Judges, it appears other theological possibilities are conceivable of the text beyond those that uphold YHWH's violence as compassionately corrective and righteous. The above reading certainly correlates to some degree with perceptions of didactic drives to emphasise that Israel's movement away from God is intrinsic to their

suffering. However, it appears there is much greater complexity with regards to the characterisation of YHWH, as to who the true God of Israel is. For not only does the problem of corrupt and violent humanity come to the fore, so too does the problem of a violent deity insofar as this deity is represented as inherent to humanity's repeating cycles of violence. As the declining trajectory of this corpus has disclosed, the more Israel's leaders understand themselves to be performing YHWH's violent will, the more flawed they become. The more Israel conceptualises their violence as divinely sanctioned, the more they come to destroy themselves.

Clearly, there are still elements within Judges that signify a violent deity 'righteously' at work physically punishing his wayward people and then slaughtering their oppressors to liberate them. Yet, this chapter has suggested these elements belong to an androcentric, sacrificial consciousness that the corpus is ultimately moving away from. To uphold this violent deity as righteous is to remain subject to a sacrificial consciousness, which history has proven grievous in its capacity to propagate persecution under the guise of divine modelling and sanctioning. Judges evidently shows by its conclusion that belief in this kind of god keeps the cyclic patterns of human violence and victimhood in motion. Alternate theological possibilities become discernible, however, precisely within Judge's striking divergence from sacrificial mythology including its extraordinary witness to victims.[100] Notably, Judge's divergent aspect of a rescinding deity who moves to passivity and silence as extreme human victimisation comes to the fore, presents a challenge to readers to break with idolatry of a violent masculine god, one constructed in man's image,[101] that justifies violence and approves of massive body counts.

[100] For extended discussion on navigating sacrificial and non-sacrificial material and readings of biblical narratives see Williams, "Steadfast Love," 71-99.
[101] Kari Latvus, *God, Anger and Ideology: The Anger of God in Joshua and Judges in Relation to Deuteronomy and the Priestly Writings* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998), 91, ProQuest Ebook Central.

The Book of Judges with its rescinding deity appears concerned with much more than establishing the need for a monarchy to bring social and religious regulation to a degenerate Israel. Judges' momentum to expose and demystify the deep and gendered patterns of human distorted desire, rivalry, conflict, and the concealment of victimisation through justification, continues within the books of Samuel and Kings - for example, in the narratives of David and Uriah (2 Sam 11), Amnon and Absalom (2 Sam 13), Absalom and David (2 Sam 15), and Adonijah and Solomon (1 Kgs 2).[102] As Trible has aptly summarised of these ensuing narratives and their witness to the ongoing human/masculine dynamics of violence: "In those days there was a king in Israel, and royalty did the right in its own eyes."[103]

Judges' deity, who rescinds at times of extreme victimisation, has troubled many scholars.[104] However, the theological weight of this motif becomes potently discernible within frames that perceive the texts as revealing the reality of human-centred violence so humanity might stem this violence. In other words, Judges becomes perceptible as reflecting an evolution of human consciousness moving beyond androcentric, mythological conceptions of punitive and pardoning deities towards an understanding of God as entirely contra to configurations of the violent sacred. Within the dynamics of the book's demythologising momentums, an inbreaking of the *holy* true God of Victims may be

[102] See for example, Hans J.L. Jensen, "Desire, Rivalry and Collective Violence in the 'Succession Narrative,'" *JSOT* 55 (1992): 39-59, doi:10.1177/030908929201705504; Hans J.L. Jensen, "An 'Oedipus Pattern' in the Old Testament?," *Religion* 37, no. 1 (2007): 39-52, doi:10.1016/j.religion.2007.01.003; James G. Williams, "Sacrifice and the Beginning of Kingship," *Semeia* 67 (1994): 73-92; Joel Hodge, "'Dead or Banished': A Comparative Reading of the Stories of King Oedipus and King David," *SJOT* 20, no. 2 (2006): 189-215, doi:10.1080/09018320601049458.
[103] Tribe, *Texts of Terror*, 84.
[104] As will be discussed in the ensuing two chapters of this dissertation.

detected, who exposes the human and violent identity of the *sacred*, and so appeals to humanity to work free of its violent structures.[105]

Chapter Summary

This chapter has established, that when read through the lenses of mimetic and feminist theory, the Book of Judges can be perceived as an integrated corpus that works to move human experience beyond the victim concealing machinations of the violent sacred. The discussion has illustrated that within Judges there is an impetus to disrupt the textual patterns of sacrificial myths that conceal the reality of human violence behind constructs of autonomous double-faced deities. With the double-faced deity of Judges destabilised, the narratives can be determined for their representation not only of the human-centred patterns of violence that originate in distorted mimetic desire, but also their androcentric quality. This chapter has substantiated that the female characters of Judges, particularly the female victims, may be perceived as significant, instrumental figures that disrupt the victim-concealing consciousness characteristic of sacrificial myths, as they illuminate the gendered patterns of violence and victimhood implicit in androcentric societies. I turn now to examine further this illumination of gendered violence within the narrative and character of Jephthah's daughter.

[105] Girard, *Battling to the End*, xi, 120-130; Girard, *Job*, 154-168; Williams, "Steadfast Love," 71; Kirwan, *Discovering Girard*, 71.

CHAPTER 6: JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER

Demystifying and Demythologising Violence

As the previous chapter has illustrated, the Book of Judges can be discerned as a literary collection that works counter to the textual patterns of sacrificial myths. As Judges demythologises the violent sacred and reveals the human-centred patterns and processes of violence, it defies the consciousness that otherwise serves to justify and obscure scapegoat victimhood behind warring and peaceful deities. In one sense, the Book of Judges exemplifies textual patterns of sacrificial myths, particularly in its cyclic formula that sees Israel's experience of crisis resolved via a single deliverer in association with a double-faced deity who both causes and cures the crisis. However, as the previous chapter has evidenced, demythologising motifs within these narratives work to subvert the patterns of sacrificial myths. The violent masculine deity becomes discernible as a construction invoked to sanction and justify human aggression, and an ambiguous figure so deeply intertwined with human violence as to be entirely synonymous with it. Furthermore, as the violent deity rescinds within the narratives, and within the corpus as a whole, the Book of Judges comes to disclose that the patterns and processes of violence enacted are actually and totally human. In addition, the female biblical characters within the androcentric narratives and world of Judges exemplify that this violence and victimhood is shaped in gendered ways. Women configure as a particular category of victim as their subsidiary social location renders them especially vulnerable to victimisation as conduits for absorbing and moderating men's aggression.

From this vantage point the following chapter examines the narrative and character of Jephthah's daughter within the Jephthah cycle. In what follows I first provide an overview

of Judges 10, establishing both the context of the Jephthah cycle and the standard textual patterns of sacrificial myths therein which the ensuing passages destabilise. I then examine the unfolding events of Judges 11 through the combined lens of mimetic and feminist theory. I show how these passages demythologise and demystify the violent sacred as they emphasise the violent events to be human and significantly masculine. The figure of Jephthah's daughter is highlighted as instrumental to this disclosure as she is portrayed as an explicit scapegoat within a context of men's rivalry, conflict, and crisis. The demystifying orientation of this text is further emphasised via comparison with the Greek myth of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia. Overall, the narrative and character of Jephthah's daughter can be read in a liberating way as they overtly emphasise the patterns and processes of gendered violence and victimhood.

Textual Patterns of Sacrificial Myths

The sequence that concludes in Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter commences in Judges 10, within a context that reflects key textual patterns of sacrificial myths: undifferentiation, conflict, crisis, and a deity implicated as the cause and cure of the violence. Israel once again had done "evil in the eyes of the Lord" and forsaken their identity as YHWH's people (10:6). Undifferentiation has occurred as Israel has assimilated with the local resident tribes and taken up worshipping their multiple gods: "They served the Baals and the Ashtaroths, the gods of Aram, the gods of Sidon, the gods of Moab, the gods of the Ammonites and the gods of the Philistines" (10:6). YHWH again rages against Israel and presses them into conflict and crisis as he sells them into Philistine and Ammonite oppression (10:7-10). Israel eventually implores YHWH to deliver them, and though YHWH initially threatens to withhold his liberating power, finally "he can bear their misery no longer" (10:10-16). The implication is that YHWH will cure the conflict and crisis and restore differentiation and order to his people through raising up a judge, a

military leader, who will liberate them. As Judges 10 closes with the enemy Ammonite forces assembled at Gilead and the Israelite forces assembled at Mizpah, the setting is ripe for Jephthah's entrance as the next divinely chosen military commander and deliverer through whom YHWH will restore identity, order, and peace to Israel. In the last verse of chapter 10 anticipation of YHWH's providential choice of emancipator is heightened as the leaders of the people of Gilead declare: "whoever directs the attack against the Ammonites will be the head of those living in Gilead" (10:17-18). As I set out in table 3 below, the Jephthah cycle commences in clear accordance with the textual patterns of sacrificial myths.[1]

Textual Patterns within Sacrificial Myths	**Cyclic Pattern within Judges 10**
Loss of ordered difference/undifferentiation	Israel assimilates with local tribes and worships their gods
Double-faced deity causes and cures crisis	YHWH becomes angry – sells Israel into Philistine and Ammonite oppression
Conflict/Crisis	Israelites oppressed by Philistines and Ammonites - War looms against Ammonites
Isolated figure who alleviates crisis	***Anticipation*** that YHWH will raise up a judge/deliverer to secure Israel's liberation
Restored Order	***Anticipation*** the Israelites will then enjoy a period of peace

Table 3. Textual Patterns of Sacrificial Myths in Judges 10

Over the course of Judges 11, these patterns of sacrificial myths are subverted. The ensuing narrative passages destabilise the notion of a violent deity who both causes and cures the crisis as they illustrate the deity to be a constructed figure invoked to justify human

[1] See earlier discussion in Chapter 5, pp. 166-168, where I establish these patterns of sacrificial myths as apparent within the Book of Judges.

violence. YHWH's performance of violence is shown to be simultaneous with and identical to human, and specifically masculine forms of aggression. Furthermore, the element of the deity's absence within the unfolding narrative accentuates that the violence is entirely human and anchored within men's distorted desire, rivalry, and conflict – a disclosure emphasised by the character of Jephthah's daughter.

Jephthah - Scapegoat, Judge, and Military Leader

As Judges 11 commences so does the demystification of the patterns of sacrificial myths as a context of men's rivalry and scapegoat violence is established from the outset (11:1-3). The next liberator of Israel – the one singled out as the vehicle through whom the crisis will be resolved – is introduced as a figure explicitly associated with the dynamics of scapegoating and one distinguishable by his own scapegoat status; Jephthah himself has been a victim of a mob. Though Jephthah is described as a mighty warrior (גִּבּוֹר חַיִל)[2] he is also identified as the son of a prostitute (זוֹנָה) (11:1). The narrative recounts that this ignoble birth effected a precarious relationship with his male siblings that resulted in his expulsion.[3] Jephthah was driven out of Gilead by his rivalrous half-brothers who united against him in determination he would not inherit his birthright.[4] That Jephthah's half-brothers (and conceivably the entire community)[5] banded together to the extent of a

[2] The Hebrew term entails denotations of a strong, mighty, manly hero in battle. Mieke Bal translates the term as 'a hero of might' and argues, in light of the noun 'might,' that "it is Jephthah's primary existential goal to deserve that modifier, and thus to compensate the loss of status in history as the son of a 'harlot'". *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 22-23.

[3] Jephthah's ancestry appears doubly indeterminate and disreputable as his paternal lineage is also muddied with the inference that Gilead the tribe (and place) fathered him (אִשָּׁה זוֹנָה וַיּוֹלֶד גִּלְעָד אֶת־יִפְתָּח) (11:1).

[4] Here we have another example of the motif of rivalrous, warring brothers that Girard has highlighted as frequently attested to in the Bible. See earlier discussion in Chapter 2, p. 71.

[5] As Danna Nolan Fewell notes, the ambiguous reference that Jephthah was fathered by Gilead carries the possibility that the entire community expelled him. "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 76. Yael Shemesh also observes the possibility that emphasis on Jephthah's father, as a Gileadite named Gilead, stresses Jephthah's rightful place in Gilead and thus an enhanced perception of the injustice met out upon him when he is expelled from his homeland. "Jephthah—Victimizer and Victim: A Comparison of Jephthah and Characters in Genesis," *JANESCU* 32, no. 1 (2017): 117, https://janes.scholasticahq.com/article/2518.pdf.

murderous mob is made certain by the text's attribution of terror in relation to the event; Jephthah is said to have "fled" (בָּרַח) to Tob (11:3). The narrative reiterates the vehemence of the hostility against him as Jephthah later recalls to the elders of Gilead that those who drove him out of his father's house "hated him" (11:7). The next judge of Israel is represented from the beginning as a scapegoat of men, where in the context of fraternal rivalry he was singled out, marked by his illegitimacy,[6] persecuted, and expelled. From the beginning the narrative establishes Jephthah in a context of men's rivalry and violence, and witnesses to his personal experience of gendered persecution at the hands of other men.

Further to the demystification of the patterns of sacrificial myths in the opening narrative sequence, the anticipated and presumed divinely elected deliverer is shown to be exclusively chosen by the community, not the deity at all (11:4-11). For all Judges 10 implies that YHWH will raise up a deliverer, nowhere in the Jephthah cycle is this made apparent. On the contrary, the text depicts that Jephthah is selected by the elders of Gilead, and Jephthah accepts the role upon striking a bargain with them. The narrative recounts that, with the threat of Ammonite war upon them, the elders of Gilead go to the land of Tob to petition Jephthah to return as their leader and to fight the Ammonites (11:4-6). Though Jephthah questions their petition given their previous hatred and persecution of him, he agrees to their request upon assurance that he will be made the head of Gilead (11:7-11).[7]

[6] And perhaps by his charisma - a trait evident in his capacity to attract and lead other men in Tob (11:1-3). As Pseudo Philo expressed of Jephthah's brothers in *Bib. Ant*, 39.2, they expelled him because they 'envied him'. Noted in Cheryl Anne Brown, *No Longer Be Silent: First Century Jewish Portraits of Biblical Women* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 96.

[7] Here Jephthah and the plot reflect parallel features of other scapegoat victims and texts. Oedipus driven out of Thebes is later asked to return by the Thebans to save the city from conflict; Joseph also expelled by his brothers later becomes their ruler and resolver of their conflict. See Joel Hodge, "'Dead or Banished': A Comparative Reading of the Stories of King Oedipus and King David," *SJOT* 20, no. 2 (2006): 189-215, doi:10.1080/09018320601049458.

Though the text relates that the terms of the bargain are declared/vowed before the Lord in Mizpah, that is "by oath in Yhwh's name, at a proper Yhwh shrine",[8] the deity remains entirely absent (11:9-11). The deity has neither elected Jephthah nor directed or acknowledged the making of any vows. Rather, the text illustrates that the men have invoked the deity within their own wheeling and dealing, and within the wider context of men's rivalry, conflict, and will to power. Though the deity has not uttered a word, he is further imputed as the one who will decide the conflict between the Ammonites and Israel. As Jephthah understands it, if Israel wins the battle it will be because the Lord has given the Ammonites into his hands (11:9). Then he, Jephthah, will be Israel's leader. As Phyllis Trible has highlighted, Jephthah's purview is one that co-opts the deity to suit his own ambitions. Unlike Gideon's post-victory declaration that it is the Lord who will rule (8:23): "Jephthah alone will claim permanent power without reference to Yahweh… the deity who is useful in the bargaining process has no part in the aftermath of the victory."[9]

In these opening phases of Judges 11, demystification of the patterns of sacrificial myths is in motion not only via the establishment of the context of rivalry and conflict between men, but also in relation to representing the vulnerability of Israel's next judge. This future liberator is one who has already experienced the peril of being singled out and subjected to violent persecution in accordance with androcentric social codes and masculine power constructs. Now he is singled out again by the collective power of other men. This is extra-dangerous terrain, as while these men may be favourably inclined towards him now, they clearly expect him to prove his worth. The text is clear that it is not out of goodwill that the Gilead elders have retracted Jephthah's outcast status and sought his return, but because it serves their wider and pressing purposes. Jephthah's vulnerability is pronounced as he is a

[8] Alice Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," *JBL* 128, no.4 (2009): 673-674, doi:10.2307/25610213. Logan also discusses the commonality of Jephthah's social position and actions with King David's.
[9] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 95.

figure set apart again by his former persecutors and expected to achieve their objectives (11:7-8). Behind their displays of reassurance and reintegration lies a community well capable of seizing violently upon Jephthah once again. Jephthah's communal identity remains shaped in relation to the ignobility of his birth and his history of subjection to resentment, shaming, and disenfranchisement as a 'lowborn' dishonourable man.

This characterisation of Jephthah intimates the deeper dynamics of masculine rivalry and conflict that are in play which underlie the entire narrative. Jephthah is a man of little status, formerly demeaned and disgraced by the agency and power of other men, and thus with things to prove according to the dominant designs of masculinity. He is yet to demonstrate pre-eminence alongside of and over against other valued men, and to be esteemed for his strength, independence, and authority, and capacity to control assets, events, self, and others. Though technically Jephthah is being exploited by the elders[10] and is no doubt expendable in their eyes,[11] Jephthah is highly susceptible to the temptation of their proposition. Their offer provides an opportunity for him to claim respectable manhood, status and power, and prove himself more than the ignoble leader of ignoble "empty" men (אֲנָשִׁים רֵיקִים) that he has become since his expulsion (11:3).[12]

Thus, implicit in Jephthah's choices and actions, and behind his desires for leadership and power, are deep metaphysical yearnings to attain fuller being through realising respected androcentric modes of dominant masculinity. As Mieke Bal has expressed of expelled

[10] Deborah W. Rooke makes an astute observation concerning the androcentric exploitation signified in the text: "Indeed, the reaction to Jephthah by the Gileadites can also be likened to the treatment of a harlot— just as the harlot is ostracized socially but tolerated when her services are required, so Jephthah is ostracized by his 'brothers' or fellow Gileadites but is tolerated when his services are required. Jephthah is to the Gileadites militarily what the harlot is to them sexually." Rooke, "Sex and Death, Or, the Death of Sex: The Fate of Jephthah's Daughter," chap. 10 in *Handel's Israelite Oratorio Libretti* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[11] Fewell, "Judges," 76.
[12] Shemesh notes the wider implications of this labelling as denoting Jephthah leads a group of men without inheritance or property in raids and plundering, or as a band of contract fighters. "Jephthah," 124.

lowborn sons in the Bible: "After they leave that house, their careers, their ambitions, will be, for the rest of their lives, to become a *gibbor* over the house they have been expelled from."[13] The proposition posed by the elders of Gilead therefore provides Jephthah an occasion to pursue his yearnings and reconstruct his subjectivity, identity, and agency according to the defined and desirable qualities of masculinity the culture has modelled to him. Though Jephthah exerts degrees of autonomy and agency as he accepts the elders' bargain, he is nevertheless manifestly conditioned and controlled according to androcentric notions of the ideal performance of dominant masculinity. As Jephthah assumes his position as military commander, the narrative portrays a man deeply imbedded in androcentric enculturation where his subjectivity, desires, and agency are still heavily manipulated and regulated by other men.

Jephthah's Rivalry with the King of Ammon

The demystification of sacrificial myths continues through the next phase (11:12-28), as it shows escalating rivalry and opposition between men in the mounting friction between the Israelites and the Ammonites. The depiction of rivalrous men is accentuated as the opposing military leaders, Jephthah and the King of Ammon, effectively become mirror images of each other. As tensions increase, they come to resemble a 'monstrous double' that will eventually play out in the carnage of the battlefield. In the pre-battle discourse between these two leaders, their common acquisitive desire is made obvious. The text conveys that the point of conflict lies in their mutual desire for the land. Though Jephthah is often noted for his diplomacy and efforts to negotiate a peaceful resolution with the King of Ammon,[14] the messages exchanged between these men contain no real sense of seeking

[13] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 199.
[14] Dennis Olson, "The Book of Judges: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in Vol 2 of *The New Interpreter's Bible,* ed. Leander E. Keck, 12 Vols (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:830; Robert G. Boling, *Judges: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 98.

conciliatory compromise at all. Both stake their claim to the land and feel wronged by the other (11:13, 27). Inherent and inferred in this desire for the land are the same metaphysical yearnings to be champions and so retain their dominant masculine status as rulers of men. Both leaders have cultural agency to direct the actions of other men who comprise their armies, and both are ready to slaughter as many men as it takes to achieve their desired outcomes. Extreme violence is set to ensue given the close proximity of these rivalrous military commanders, who, in the context of mimetic competitive tensions, have become volatile copies of each other.

The continued absence of the deity highlights the situation of men's conflict. There is still no word from the deity as tensions intensify towards open combat. The deity, however, is again invoked by Jephthah, within the men's rivalry and escalating hostility, and positioned as a figure condoning of previous and pending warfare. Jephthah's claim to the land in response to the King of Ammon weaves human violence together with denotations of a deity who justifies it. Jephthah recounts earlier episodes of Israel's military might, where Shion and all his men were defeated and Amorite land was seized through driving the inhabitants out. Yet, as Jephthah tells it, Israel's military conquest came about because their deity gave the land to them (11:21-24). Now, on the eve of battle with the Ammonites, Jephthah further binds the concept of a violent deity to the hostile competition and aggression between men. He decrees to the enemy King of Ammon: "Let the Lord, the Judge, decide the dispute this day between the Israelites and the Ammonites" (11:27). The text consequently conveys that it is Jephthah who constructs, invokes, and entwines concepts of a warring deity into this context of masculine hostility to warrant the conflict that is about to transpire. With no deity present thus far in the chapter, the narrative depicts that the explosive situation is entirely attributable to the actions of men. Tensions have escalated between Jephthah and the King of Ammon to bursting point. The Israelite men

have united over against other men, their enemy rivals, the sons of Ammon. Both camps are ready to enact fierce violence upon the other as hostilities reach their crisis point.

Jephthah's Vow and the Massacre of the Ammonites

Judges 11:29-33 continues the demystification of the violent sacred through depicting Jephthah's unsavoury auxiliary actions in relation to securing victory against the Ammonites. As the ensuing sequence shows, Jephthah's endeavour to strike a bargain with the deity, so to ensure his victory, further underscores the human context of masculine rivalry and violence. This sequence demystifies typical mythical patterns that conceal the truth of human violence and victimhood behind autonomously acting double-faced deities, as there is no independently violent deity apparent in the events. Moreover, there is no disguising of the fact that it is Jephthah, not the deity, who aligns an expendable figure as a sacrifice to resolve the conflict and crisis. The vow Jephthah makes advances the narrative momentum that an innocent human being, his daughter no less, is to be murdered by his own hands in correlation with ending the crisis transpiring between men.

As the sequence unfolds the text relays that Jephthah's vow embroils him in violent sacrificial dynamics. Though it is not wholly clear-cut as to what Jephthah exactly intended to sacrifice to uphold his vow, the seriousness of the context and the intensity of his yearnings suggests he most likely had a human offering in mind. Jephthah vows to the deity in return for success on the battlefield to sacrifice as a burnt offering (וְהַעֲלִיתִהוּ עוֹלָה) the first to meet/greet him that comes through the door of his house upon his triumphant homecoming (11:33). Some scholars have contended the vow implies Jephthah envisioned an animal sacrifice, for the Hebrew word אֲשֶׁר in the phrase "אֲשֶׁר comes out of the door of my house" can mean 'whatever' or 'whoever', and so signify an animal rather than a

human. Some have further conjectured that he anticipated an animal to issue forth first given the architecture of ancient Middle Eastern houses also included lodging livestock.[15]

Much scholarship concurs, however, that Jephthah meant to sacrifice a human. As George Moore has voiced: "That a human victim is intended is, in fact, as plain as words can make it; the language is inapplicable to an animal, and a vow to offer the first sheep or goat that he comes across – not to mention the possibility of an unclean animal – is trivial to absurdity."[16] Bal has similarly emphasised, "The futility of the question is even more obvious when we take the verb 'to meet' into consideration. Animals, unclean or clean, can hardly be expected to come and meet the hero."[17] Margaret Hunt elaborates that, "The wording of the vow makes it impossible to believe that Jephthah meant to sacrifice an animal. Nowhere in the Old Testament is the Hebrew word 'to greet' (qārā) applied to animals."[18] In addition, the proposition of a human sacrifice (one that some suggest makes his daughter the most probable candidate)[19] seems likely given the tradition that women of the household went out to greet and glorify the victors returning home from battle with music, dancing, and singing.[20] Cheryl Exum further underscores that the magnitude of the context specifies a human offering: "Jephthah vows the ultimate in order to ensure success,

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[15] Boling, *Judges*, 208.

[16] George F. Moore, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Judges*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1918), 299. Pseudo Philo and Genesis Rabbah for example, also noted Jephthah's foolishness considering his predicament should an unclean animal have presented itself. See for discussion David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 134-135.

[17] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 45. Bal emphasises that suppositions that Jephthah intended an animal "betrays its apologetic character by the sheer effort to prove the hero's innocence, thus ignoring the text." 45.

[18] Margaret Hunt, "Who is Culpable? The Last Days of Jephthah's Daughter (Judg 11:29-40)," *Lutheran Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (2007): 94n5.

[19] Lauren A. Monroe, "Disembodied Women: Sacrificial Language and the Deaths of Bat-Jephthah, Cozbi, and the Bethlehemite Concubine," *CBQ* 75, no. 1 (2013): 35, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au /stable/43728107; Yairah Amit, *The Book of Judges: The Art of Editing* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 88; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 44-45; Susan Niditch, *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 134. Jephthah's wife may also have been intended; an idea postulated by Augustine in *Questions on the Heptateuch*. See for discussion John L. Thompson, *Writing the Wrongs: Women of the Old Testament among Biblical Commentators from Philo through the Reformation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 126.

[20] This tradition is also apparent in other narratives; for example, Miriam leads a group of women in celebration of Israel's victory over Egypt (Ex 15:19-21), and women are seen to similarly celebrate the military victories secured by King David (1 Sam 8:6-7). Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 100.

something from his household that will cost him dearly. What is sacrificed must be precious to be meaningful."[21] A human sacrifice thus appears strongly implied. However, Jephthah's reaction of utter despair that his daughter is the first to meet him insinuates desperate recklessness on his part in his vow-making, rather than cold, calculated determinations he meant to offer her. Irrespective of Jephthah's explicit intentions, the trajectory of the narrative is set. He has anchored his innocent daughter as a sacrificial victim to a deity within the context of men's conflict and crisis.

The two fleeting references to the deity in the narrative phase of 11:29-33 further indicate the violence as human and masculine. Though the text states that the 'Spirit of the Lord' came upon Jephthah as he advanced against the Ammonites and made his vow (11:29-30), and the Lord gave the Ammonites into his hands (11:32), no clarity whatsoever is afforded as to how this force is independently active in or driving the events.[22] Intimations of the deity's violent involvement are portrayed as wholly indecipherable apart from human action. In all the other episodes within the Book of Judges where these two expressions are mentioned, they are rendered commensurate with men's enacted fervour in combat (3:10, 6:34, 11:26, 14:6, 19, 15:14; 1:4, 3:10; 3:28, 4:14, 11:32, 18:9, 20:28). It is no different here. The presence of the Spirit of the Lord in this narrative as in the others, appears to figure as the embodiment of men's battle-aroused adrenalin. As Bal has emphasised, the 'Spirit of the Lord' provides no insight of any kind, only a bodily action that allows slaughter.[23]

The dubious nature of this divine presence is magnified even further by Jephthah's conduct. Regardless of apparently having YHWH's Spirit upon him, he still perceives it

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[21] J. Cheryl Exum, "Murder they Wrote," in *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), 20.
[22] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 19.
[23] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 44. See also John J. Collins, *A Short Introduction to the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 112.

necessary to shore up his victory with an additional vow and heightened imploring. Jephthah is evidently unaware and unsure of any divine support. The vow he makes includes enhanced beseeching evident in the Hebrew infinite absolute 'to give' נָתוֹן תִּתֵּן - "If you will *really give* the sons of Ammon into my hand…" (11:30).[24] Moreover, the credibility of an autonomously active divinity involved in the events wanes even further as unlike Jacob, Hannah, Israel and Absalom who also made vows to YHWH, Jephthah receives no assurance whatsoever that his pre-battle vow has even been heard.[25]

Subsequently, what appears most perceptible is the text's witness to Jephthah's conceptualisation of a violent, masculine, warrior deity. This is a conceptualisation that he comes to model himself upon and emulate the characteristics of. Determinations that it is the deity's actions that delivered Jephthah's enemy into his hands become destabilised in view of the text's testament that it is Jephthah and his forces who wrecked immense and bloody destruction - a "very great slaughter" (מַכָּה גְּדוֹלָה מְאֹד) upon their enemy. The text illustrates that it is via the exertions of massacring men that Ammon is subdued through the devastation of twenty towns (11:33). The narrative indicates that it is not God's violent performance that has accrued this massive body count but men's, as they have acted in accordance with an embodied impression of a warring deity constructed in their own image who serves to inspire and validate their violent actions.

The demythologising of the violent sacred in this sequence is pronounced in comparison to the typical bold performances of double-faced deities such as Zeus, Artemis, and the like. In keeping with the patterns of sacrificial myths these deities openly and autonomously cause and cure calamity. Judges 11, however, is inclined to accentuate that it is actually

[24] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 96.
[25] Barbara Miller, *Tell It on the Mountain*: *The Daughter of Jephthah in Judges 11* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2005), 5-6.

human violence unfolding as any notion of distinguishable violent action on the deity's part is conflated, absorbed, and made one and the same with human perpetrated slaughter. In contrast to sacrificial myths, the violent deity made mention of in this sequence of Judges has been rendered identical with human violence. There are no other references to the deity in the narrative, nor, at any time is there a single word from this deity that obscures the reality of the human violence transpiring.

The text further relays how acquisitive and metaphysical desires can become distorted and lead to rivalry, conflict, and social crisis. The narrative presents desires shaped in gendered ways within androcentric contexts that position men as primary rivals with each other. Jephthah's vow is instrumental in highlighting the human violence unfolding within a context of aggressive competition between men. The vow is deeply personal and rooted in Jephthah's insecurity and ambition.[26] The narrative plot illustrates that Jephthah's paramount priority is securing his personal desires for conquest, status and power, so he might prove himself a dominant male and worthy leader.[27] As a man subject to designs of fulfilling androcentric social codes of masculinity inclusive of prowess in war, Jephthah's effort to bargain for providential victory is discernibly tied to the predominance of his deep metaphysical yearnings. As Danna Fewell has concluded, Jephthah "fights the Ammonites not out of zeal for Yahweh or concern for Israel's oppression but out of a need to show himself superior to the community that ostracized him in his youth."[28]

This momentum in the text also emphasises that in the fervour of war, Jephthah makes his short-sighted and ill-fated vow to a deity of his own idolatrous design. Counter to Israel's

[26] Valerie C. Cooper, "Some Place to Cry: Jephthah's Daughter and the Double Dilemma of Black Women in America," in *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible*, ed. Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 183.
[27] Elie Assis, *Self-Interest or Communal Interest: An Ideology of Leadership in the Gideon, Abimelech and Jephthah Narratives (Judg 6–12)* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 175–237.
[28] Fewell, "Judges," 74.

traditions and anti-sacrificial codes that proscribe child/human sacrifice,[29] he conjectures the mind of God as one to be brokered with, and as one that takes pleasure in sacrifice. As Jephthah makes his vow the narrative highlights his belief in and need for a masculine warring deity to support his violent actions. Jephthah's appeal illustrates that, in his mind, the deity is the primary agent in the Ammonite carnage to come. Thus, in accordance with pursuing his own desires, Jephthah inadvertently binds his daughter as a sacrificial victim to a deity *that explicitly has not asked for one*, a violent deity of Jephthah's own construction that he believes in and will later honour regardless of the tragic outcome. The narrative is poised to depict how Jephthah makes a pawn of his daughter in the exploits of men's ambition and competition. Through his androcentric agency and power to do as he pleases with all that lies within his house as his possessions, he aligns his daughter as an idolatrous sacrificial victim in pursuit of military victory and securing his enduring position of headship through procuring peace for Israel.

Jephthah's Daughter Meets Him

Rather than concealing an isolated, victimised figure behind fantastical features and double-faced deities, the next section of the text (11:34-38) establishes that an innocent human is to be murdered as a scapegoat in relation to a wider context of social conflict and crisis. Through the characters of Jephthah and his daughter, the mechanics and gendered qualities of violence and victimhood are emphasised. Jephthah's daughter is instrumental to the disclosure of androcentric violence that frequently plays out on girls and women caught in the middle of masculine conflict. She is a complex figure who both signifies the primary human-centred source of the violence in her father and the context of masculine

[29] Child sacrifice as idolatrous practice is noted in Deut 12:31; Lev 20:2-5; Ps 106:35-38; Jer 32:35; Hos 13:2. And as a practice that defiles God's people in Ezek 20:26, 31, God's sanctuary in Ezek 23:37, 39; and as incurring God's anger in Jer 19:4-5; Ezek 16:20-21, 36-37, and Hos 13:2.

rivalry, and the androcentric enculturation that renders girls and women vulnerable to men's violence.

Unlike sacrificial myths that conceal the identity of innocent victims, this sequence works to effect overt and arresting recognition of the scapegoat figure. Though Jephthah's daughter remains unnamed and is identified in a manner that emphasises her father, the narrative design nevertheless generates great poignancy around her as she makes her entrance and is thereby established as the one who will become the sacrificial victim. The text amplifies the dreadfulness that it is she who meets the vow's sacrificial specifications, as the emphatic "behold" (הִנֵּה) prefaces "his daughter came out to greet him" (בִתּוֹ יֹצֵאת לִקְרָאתוֹ) (11:34). Seemingly she associates Jephthah's return with his victory, and in a scene laced with tragedy, the text accentuates her innocence in the delight and celebratory joy with which she proceeds to greet her father, and thereby dances with her timbrels to her doom. The text's emotive drive intensifies as the horror and certainty of her terrible fate, rooted in this coincidence, is accentuated. Jephthah is devastated that his daughter, his only offspring, has greeted him first. That his vow carries the full weight of fatal consequences and his daughter's life is now forfeit is manifest in Jephthah's response when he sees her– he cries out: "Alas! My daughter!" as he rends his garments (וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֲהָהּ בִּתִּי) (11:35).

The scapegoat identity of Jephthah's daughter is heightened further as she is made the object of Jephthah's blame for the great misfortune that has befallen him, which now comprises the end of his family line. He projects his wretchedness onto her and finds her at fault: "You have brought me low and you have become my troubler" (הַכְרֵעַ הִכְרַעְתִּנִי וְאַתְּ הָיִית בְּעֹכְרָי) "because I have made a vow to the Lord that I cannot break" (11:35). In this context of blame the narrative reiterates Jephthah's belief in a sacrificial deity and thus the sense of righteousness he attributes to the sacrificial act he will later perform. Though

Jephthah is the one to have bound his daughter to the conflict and crisis of the battlefield – albeit seemingly unintentionally – his belief in a violent providential deity who determines battlefield outcomes negates any sense of personal accountability registering within him.

Yet, the reader is positioned differently. The text evidences that Jephthah is embroiled in the deep androcentric structures of distorted desire, rivalry, and violence. He is shown to be entangled in violent mimetic forces that escalated to calamitous degrees where the sway of the battlefield crisis aroused him to generate this sacrificial situation. Jephthah is depicted as ensnared in a sacrificial economy and consciousness that harbours the violent sacred, and so obscures from him the true reality of the human patterns and processes of violence that are in motion. Critically, the text illustrates that Jephthah does not comprehend the pending sacrifice to be murder given his belief in a deity that requires and values it. The text also relays to the reader, however, that Jephthah's belief in this deity is going to make a filicide butcher out of him.

The response of Jephthah's daughter is one of textual complexity that also works to continue the demystification of androcentric violence. Elements within her response both emphasise the human-centred nature of the violence and exemplify how girls and women configure as a scapegoat group within androcentric societies. While she evidently holds the same belief as her father in a sacrificial deity and echoes his language as she acquiesces to her fate, her dialogue nevertheless points up Jephthah's accountability. She does not voice acceptance of the blame bestowed upon her, rather she underscores his actions:[30] "You have opened your mouth to YHWH; do to me according to what has gone forth from your mouth" (11:36). Jephthah's founding role in the sacrificial event is thus pronounced, (and

[30] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 40-41.

apparently also emphasised in his name given 'Jephthah' means 'he opened' - יִפְתָּח).[31] Through his daughter's response the text accentuates that it is he who has ultimately caused the pending sacrifice to come about, and he will be the one to perform it.

Yet, Jephthah's daughter also signifies the androcentric enculturation that gives rise to distinctive experiences of gendered victimhood. On one hand Jephthah's daughter explicitly voices the human, male-centred origins of the sacrifice to come, while on the other hand she illustrates the qualities of enculturation that render women as a category of victim within androcentric societies. Firstly, that she operates out of an inherited injurious consciousness is symbolised in her reiteration of Jephthah's beliefs in a militant masculine deity and a sacrificial economy comprising human offerings. Secondly, her character reflects subjectivity, desires, and agency moulded by androcentric codes of femininity - of what it is to be a 'good girl/woman', a 'good daughter' - that shape her victimhood. As Esther Fuchs states: "The narrator could not be more effective in constructing the perfect filial role model. Jephthah's daughter is the supreme image of the perfect daughter, whose loyalty and submissiveness to her father know no limits."[32]

For all the truth of her noble characteristics of loyalty and courage, Jephthah's daughter illustrates subjection to paternal, patriarchal power and victimisation. Without hesitation she wholly accepts her father's actions, will, and power to dictate her fatal demise. She puts up no resistance whatsoever to save her own life; without delay she accedes to be his burnt offering (עוֹלָה). She demonstrates embodiment of androcentric desires as she exemplifies a self-destructive, obedient response to her father's predicament and needs, while her own personal desires and yearnings for her future (worthy of two months of

[31] For further discussion on Jephthah's name and its derivation from the Semitic root פתח 'open', see Shemesh, "Jephthah," 127-128.
[32] Esther Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing: The Story of Jephthah's Daughter," *JFSR* 5, no. 1 (1989): 42, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/stable/25002095.

weeping for their loss 11:37) are rendered null and void. Her agency and will to power are distorted into a death wish to honour and aid her father through satisfying his desires and sense of obligation. Her willingness to be her father's sacrificial victim illustrates how women's subjectivity, desires, and agency influenced by androcentricity, come to mirror masculine power back to men and sustain their performance of violence.

This is not to deny that Jephthah's daughter exemplifies some aspects of self-possession, initiative, and agency. However, these are shown to be finally defined and/or circumscribed by androcentricity and the male-dominant culture. The agency Jephthah's daughter shows, for example, in her dancing to greet Jephthah, is nevertheless fashioned in accordance with androcentricity where girls and women relegated to the domestic sphere perform as a custom the glorification and celebration of publicly powerful men. Jephthah's daughter employs assertiveness as she directs her father to uphold his vow. But he has already expressed his intentions to regardless (11:35). Thus, her assertiveness is qualified as it is performed in alignment with what is already inevitable within a context of paternal and social headship – a context where it is improbable that she had any alternative options or escape routes should she have opposed her father, who is now also the head of Gilead. Jephthah's daughter certainly exercises agency as she petitions her father for a postponement of immolation, to let her go for two months with her companions into the mountains to weep over her 'virginity' – that is, her readiness for motherhood (בְּתוּלַי)[33] (11:35-37). Yet the success of this assertion of agency is entirely dependent upon Jephthah

[33] Though traditionally the term בְּתוּלַי has been translated 'virginity' there is wide consensus within contemporary scholarship that it more accurately encompasses a stage within the female life cycle denoting 'readiness for motherhood', 'nubility', or 'puberty'. Further to this, the period of lament may refer to a traditional female rite transitioning young Israelite girls from childhood into adulthood and marriage. See Peggy L. Day, "From the Child Is Born the Woman: A Story of Jephthah's Daughter," chap. 5 in *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, ed. Peggy L. Day (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 59-60; J. Cheryl Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 76; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 47; Hunt, "Who is Culpable?," 94n6.

giving permission. Jephthah does the sending, and the imperative in his instruction indicates his overriding authority: "And he said, go, and he sent her" (וַיֹּאמֶר לֵכִי וַיִּשְׁלַח אוֹתָהּ) (11:38). In short, Jephthah's daughter signifies the false agency that androcentricity inscribes that gives an impression of liberty but finally equates to deep-seated disempowerment. She comes to reflect how women's agency is conditioned and co-opted within androcentricity.

Jephthah's daughter exemplifies further how oppression becomes internalised and women come to speak and act out of the androcentric consciousness which the culture impresses upon them. As her subject formation and identity have been shaped via androcentric norms and expectations that influence and control women's social roles and sexuality, so she comes to speak and self-direct out of the phallogocentric symbolic system that reduces her to her sexuality. She weeps not in frustration at the thoughtless and selfish actions of men and the subsequent injustices that have robbed her of life; rather she weeps over her lost motherhood instead. Here, as Exum notes, Jephthah's daughter signifies the embodiment of androcentric culture that codifies within women that children and a husband make them somehow complete. Without them "they have not fulfilled their role as women… to have no children means to die unfulfilled."[34]

That Jephthah's daughter is mired within injurious androcentric enculturation appears affirmed also by the companions who accompany her and share in her two-month period of mourning prior to the sacrificial act. Seemingly they too embody normalisation to the androcentric world that privileges and empowers men over their lives, and shapes within them a dutiful consciousness oriented to realising men's desires. They give no effective counsel to Jephthah's daughter during her period of lament convincing her to value her

[34] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 32.

own life to the point of reconsidering her self-denying and deadly resolve. Thus, for all Jephthah's daughter enacts agency in agreeing to give up her life, there is no evident formation of any kind outside of the dominant androcentric discourse provisioning this young woman with an alternate, critical consciousness. Her subjectivity and identity are cemented within androcentricity and so alternative ways of thinking and acting are precluded.

Within this section of the narrative, which focuses intensely on the interactions between Jephthah and his daughter, the mechanics and gendered qualities of violence and victimhood are pronounced. Jephthah's daughter is a complex character, critical to the demystifying disclosure of androcentric violence that frequently plays out on girls and women caught in the middle of men's rivalry, conflict, and crisis. Her characterisation emphasises the primary human-centred sources of the violence in her father, the context of masculine rivalry, and a violent sacrificial consciousness. She also exemplifies the patterns whereby women are made distinctively susceptible to men's violence as their subjectivity, desires, and agency are shaped in androcentric ways that internally and externally diminish them and render them vulnerable to victimisation.

Jephthah Sacrifices his Daughter

The demythologising trajectory of this narrative reaches its climax in the next narrative phase (11:39). Jephthah's daughter is shown to be an explicit sacrificial victim who is murdered by her father in correlation with the wider context of men's rivalry, violence, and crisis. The text is clear and curt in its pronouncement that Jephthah made a sacrificial offering of his only child. There are no fantastical interruptions in the narrative, no supernatural manoeuvres or feats that disguise the violent act. The text is devoid of any such shrouding mythical overlays typical of sacrificial myths that conceal victimisation and murder. Some interpretations have endeavoured to alleviate the extreme violence in

the text and so acquit Jephthah of the charge of filicide. However, the narrative power of Jephthah and his daughter lies in realising their representation of mechanics of violence: Jephthah's daughter exemplifies a blatant scapegoat figure, while Jephthah conveys how murder is perpetrated under the guise of justified sacrifice.

Certainly, the element of human sacrifice in this narrative section has caused great consternation over the centuries. Some interpreters have suggested that the violence is not as terrible as it at first seems, advocating rather that Jephthah does not in the end fatally sacrifice his daughter. Twelfth-century grammarian, David Kimchi, for example, claimed Jephthah's vow made allowances for variables in relation to the sacrificial offering. This interpretation relies on translating the usually rendered 'and' (וְ) in its disjunctive state 'or' within v. 31 (וְהָיָה לַיהוָה וְהַעֲלִיתִהוּ עוֹלָה). The vow can then be taken as suggesting Jephthah would *devote* ***or*** *sacrifice* respectively a human or an animal depending on what came forth first. Further evidence that Jephthah's daughter was not sacrificed is then drawn from the textual recounting that she mourned her virginity - not her life (11:37). The additional declaration that she never knew a man (וְהִיא לֹא־יָדְעָה אִישׁ) (11:39) is taken to confirm that the sacrificial act Jephthah's daughter endured was lifelong virginity. Kimchi's midrash also included the viewpoint that she lived out her life in seclusion, praying and fasting in settlement of the vow.[35] This reading gained widespread approval as it solved several issues including dispelling the embarrassment of sacrificial violence and thus better aligning Jephthah with his honourable mention in Hebrews 11.[36] Some contemporary scholars continue to advance the perspective of perpetual virginity,[37] while others argue that the narrative is purposely constructed to sustain deliberate ambiguity around the act of

[35] Gunn, *Judges*, 141; Miller, *Tell It on the Mountain*, 74; David Marcus, *Jephthah and His Vow* (Lubbock: Texas Tech, 1986).
[36] Gunn, *Judges*, 141, 148-9.
[37] Solomon Landes, "Did Jephthah Kill His Daughter?," *BRev* 7, no. 4 (1991): 28-42; Pamela T. Reis, *Reading the Lines: A Fresh Look at the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 105–130.

sacrifice.[38] Fuchs, for example, contends this ambiguity serves the patriarchal ideology of the text as "part of a general strategy to defend the father at the daughter's expense."[39]

For a significant body of interpreters over the centuries, however, there is no ambiguity. The text is clear in representing that Jephthah's vow concludes with his daughter's immolation. For Josephus[40] and Pseudo Philo,[41] early Rabbinic writers of Talmudic and Midrashic texts,[42] for Church Fathers such as Origen, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and Ambrose of Milan, for Dante and Shakespeare,[43] and the majority of contemporary biblical scholars, the text is unequivocal in conveying that the fatal deed was done. As Exum summarises, "although there are dissenting views, scholarly consensus still holds that the text means what it says, 'he did to her according to his vow' (v.39)."[44]

Arguments purporting the perpetual virginity stance are problematic in several areas. Notably, there is a lack of evidence within ancient Israel for practices of voluntary celibacy and consecrating women.[45] As Alice Logan has stated, there is no evidence that the Hebrew term עוֹלָה denotes "anything other than a wholly consumed burnt offering."[46] Jon Levenson further stresses that "Jephthah's actions are intelligible only on the assumption that Jephthah's daughter could legitimately be sacrificed as a burnt offering to YHWH."[47] Notably, Jephthah's vow and the ensuing narrative design correlates with other biblical contexts and motifs that deal openly with the issue of sacrificing children as an עוֹלָה. For

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[38] Marcus, *Jephthah and His Vow*, 52*;* see also Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing," 35.
[39] Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing," 45.
[40] Josephus, *Ant.* 5.226. Noted in Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 123.
[41] Pseudo-Philo, *Bib. Ant.* 40.8-9. Noted in Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 115-117.
[42] *Genesis Rabbah*, 60:3; *Leviticus Rabbah*, 37:4. Noted in Gunn, *Judges*, 135. Mikael Sjöberg, *Wrestling with Textual Violence: The Jephthah Narrative in Antiquity and Modernity* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 72–118.
[43] Gunn, *Judges*, 137-140, 147.
[44] J. Cheryl Exum, review of *Jephthah and His Vow*, by David Marcus, *JBL* 107, no. 3 (1988): 515-517, doi:10.2307/3267591.
[45] Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," 666; Exum "Jephthah and His Vow," 516.
[46] Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," 666.
[47] Jon D. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 14.

example, Abraham's offering of Isaac (Gen 22), and Mesha's offering of his first-born son to the deity Kemosh in order to repel the devastating Israelite army (2 Kgs 3:26-27).[48] That this narrative accrues another disturbing corpse certainly fits the paradigm of appalling violence unfolding throughout the entire Book of Judges. As David Janzen has expressed, Jephthah's enactment of human sacrifice coheres with the pattern of Israel's moral decline and correlates with wider theological purposes, as it illustrates "that foreign sacrifice accompanies the exercise of foreign morality within Israel."[49] Exum also notes that the heightened suspense and dramatic momentum characteristic of this narrative, render notions that the author intended an ambiguous conclusion unlikely.[50]

Rather than affirming lifelong virginity, the emphasis placed upon Jephthah's daughter's sexual innocence strongly suggests the text denotes violent sacrifice. As the narrative stresses her virgin status so it also cogently conveys her as a quintessential female scapegoat. From the perspective of mimetic theory, not only does Jephthah's daughter's sexual status fulfil cultural codes of sacrificial purity, it also adheres with deep anthropological processes which have determined that optimum female scapegoats are virgins.[51] In this regard, female virginity serves the scapegoating process as it is intertwined with the subjection of girls and women to a distinctive cultural isolation that renders them viable victims, particularly at the hands of their own family. To be a virgin is to be unmarried and childless, and to have no husband or children is to be without any adequate defenders who might disrupt the consciousness that has justified their victimisation.[52] Further to this, the virgin status of female sacrificial victims gainfully

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[48] Monroe, "Disembodied Women," 35. See also 2 Kgs 16:3 17:17,31, 21:6, 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3, 33:6.
[49] David Janzen, "Why the Deuteronomist Told about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," *JSOT* 29, no. 3 (2005): 341, doi:10.1177/0309089205052681.
[50] Exum "Jephthah and His Vow," 517.
[51] René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 12-13.
[52] As Girard has described, anyone without an advocate makes a suitable sacrificial victim. *I See Satan Fall like Lightning*, trans. James G. Williams (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 189-190.

averts social aggressions from enduring given the reduced familial alliances that might prompt revenge. As Girard explains, married women do not make good sacrificial candidates as they retain ties to both their parents and husband's clans, either of which might consider the act of sacrifice to be murder and so pursue vengeance.[53] In short, virginity becomes an idiom of powerlessness that effects a form of isolating girls and women fit for scapegoating within androcentric societies.[54]

The narrative relays that this is the situation of Jephthah's daughter. She is wholly without a champion. In addition to having no husband, children, or siblings, there is also no mention of her mother let alone a defending word from her on her daughter's behalf.[55] No one from the household or the community challenges Jephthah's actions. The companions who accompanied her on her two months of mourning say nothing to alter events. In keeping with her cultural isolation, young age and lack of any alternate counsel or formation, she generates no defence for herself. Her willingness upon her return to fulfil the sacrificial role she earlier acquiesced to constitutes a key characteristic of scapegoating: scapegoats themselves frequently operate out of the consciousness that locates them as rightful sacrificial figures.[56] Though she voices no acceptance of the blame Jephthah cast upon her, she assumes the culprit position nevertheless in service of her father and the androcentric social order.[57]

Thus, in one sense, the sacrificial, androcentric ideology remains intact within the narrative. Ultimately, Jephthah is depicted as remaining a powerful figure whose

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[53] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 12-13; Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 32.
[54] Cooper, "Some Place to Cry," 183.
[55] For discussion of various conjectures around the absent mother see Miller, *Tell It on the Mountain*, 85.
[56] As Girard notes, "The victims of human sacrifice are always presented as very much in favour of their own immolation, completely convinced of its necessity." *Job: The Victim of his People*, trans. Y. Freccero (London: Athlone, 1987), 115. See also James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1991), 11.
[57] This includes nullifying the risk of potential violence from the rest of the community, should they have known of Jephthah's vow and he decided to have reneged on his pledge to YHWH.

patriarchal paternal authority plays out unimpeded.[58] Jephthah has exerted his agency in the sacrifice and so satisfies his desire to keep his vow. There is no indication of any post-sacrifice remorse or accountability on his part. As Trible expresses it: "The mighty warrior prevails uncensored; the violence that he perpetrated upon his only daughter stalks him not at all."[59] Indeed, there is no sense of tragedy crafted around the sacrificial feat itself at all; both Jephthah and his daughter had deemed the deed necessary, and thus it was functionally performed within the scope of justified, righteous devotion to the deity.

Yet, as the text explicitly shows this sacrificial consciousness in action, so it subverts it for the reader as the violent human core is exposed. Irrespective of the characters' justifications, they are shown to be bound up in human structures of violence that include conceptions of a sacrificial deity. The devastating implications of Jephthah's belief in a deity who values and requires bloody sacrifices are laid out – a deplorable act of filicide has taken place. Jephthah has exerted his agency within the patriarchal order, but he is exposed to the reader as a murderer.[60] Ultimately, his agency is shown to have been compromised by his subjection to and embroilment within an androcentric culture and the injurious attendant ideas of masculinity, including a constructed violent, masculine god. The androcentric culture is shown to have deeply shaped his desires, personal expectations, experience of conflict, and perceptions of integrity to honour his terrible vow. Yet the text is unmistakable in illustrating that this has led Jephthah to kill his only child, his innocent daughter, as a scapegoat deeply entwined within the social tumult caused by masculine rivalry, conflict, and crisis. As Hunt succinctly voices, in the end the narrative illustrates that "Israel's freedom is achieved at the expense of a faithful daughter's life."[61]

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[58] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 28.
[59] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 107.
[60] Ibid., 104.
[61] Hunt, "Who is Culpable?," 96.

Jephthah's daughter is critical to the narrative's exposure of the gendered patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. She emphasises both the androcentric basis of the violence and how women become caught in the momentums of men's rivalry and hostility. She exemplifies how androcentricity isolates and disempowers women, and so renders them vulnerable as conduits for men's violence as suitable scapegoats. She exemplifies also how girls and women become enculturated into injurious mindsets that internally violate them as they are induced to live out self-destructive distorted desires and co-opted agency in service of the androcentric order. Her acquiescence to be the victim exposes the injurious formation some girls and women receive as they are conditioned that to be 'good' is to be self-denying.[62]

Though some scholars have highlighted that the text relays Jephthah's daughter's culpability in the violent act,[63] there is a far deeper disclosure in play. The reader is positioned to comprehend that it is the injurious sacrificial consciousness and androcentric conditioning which Jephthah and his daughter have embodied and operate out of that is the primary issue. The demythologising and demystification of sacrificial myths is potently at work in these characters. As Girard notes within sacrificial myths, "The definition of victim as sinner or criminal is so absolute",[64] yet, in this narrative, as Jephthah's daughter is made a burnt offering by her father to his perceived violent, militant god, her innocence as a scapegoat figure is left arrestingly evident to the reader.

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[62] Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 100-102; Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch* (Great Britain: MacGibbon & Kee, 1970; London: Granada, 1981), 177-180; Sandra Lee Bartky, "Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds: Deference and Disaffection in Women's Emotional Labor," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (London: Routledge, 1990), 116-117.
[63] Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing," 36; Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 35-36.
[64] Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 36.

Scholarly Attributions of Blame

The reading proposed here suggests that this text facilitates raising awareness of the processes of scapegoating – of isolating a figure, and presuming their persecution justified upon branding them blameworthy for wrongdoing. However, throughout the long interpretive history of this narrative efforts have been invested to isolate the characters blameable for the despicable sacrificial act. As Logan conveys: "as many scholars, modern and ancient, were painfully aware, blame for the sacrifice must fall somewhere."[65] Jephthah particularly has borne the brunt over the centuries. He has been varyingly described as irredeemably guilty - as a foolish, ignorant, arrogant, and faithless man. For Pseudo Philo Jephthah illustrates how "fools are ensnared by the words of their mouth."[66] For significant early Jewish interpreters he represents a man culpable for his ignorance of the law given his vow could have been annulled.[67] For Trible, a girl lies murdered because of the "faithless vow uttered by her foolish father."[68] For Janzen: "Jephthah is not a tragic figure but a failure along the lines of Saul and Eli's sons, for like them he believes that any kind of sacrifice trumps the necessity of obedience."[69]

God also, despite various absolving efforts,[70] has been implicated by his absence and failure to act. As Deborah Sawyer expresses: "the one character able to negate the vow, or to offer an alternative, does not."[71] For Hunt, Jephthah's daughter "is abandoned by her

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[65] Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," 666.
[66] Pseudo Philo, *Bib Ant*, 40.4. Noted in Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 104.
[67] For discussion of additional midrash see Gunn, *Judges*, 135; Deborah F. Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible* (London: Routledge, 2002), 70-72; Susanne Scholz, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary, Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 113-135.
[68] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 104.
[69] Janzen, "Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," 355.
[70] As Josephus conveyed to his audience, God was angry at Jephthah's carelessness: "[It was] a sacrifice neither sanctioned by the law nor well-pleasing to God." Josephus, *Ant*, 5.226. In the case of Pseudo-Philo, God esteems the daughter and values her death, and acts to ensure Jephthah sacrifices her, so as to punish him for his careless vow. See Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 96-97, 105-107, 123. *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* tells of Jephthah's horrid, punishing demise. See Gunn, *Judges*, 135. For John Chrysostom and Ambrose of Milan, God permitted the sacrifice to set a cautionary deterring example. See Stewart, "Judges," 136.
[71] Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 74.

father and her God" in a context where the deity appears to accept the sacrifice.[72] Exum, among others, raises issue with the comparative lack of divine intervention portrayed: "There is no divine staying of the father's hand and provision of a ram as a substitute for the child, as was the case when Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac."[73]

The author too has not escaped culpability. As Exum continues: "There is no narratorial condemnation of the sacrifice either, no 'Now the thing that Jephthah had done was evil in the sight of the Lord,' such as we find in the framework of Judges."[74] She notes further the dominant phallogocentric authorial voice and ideology, where "Not only are the words spoken by the male characters deadly instruments of power over women, but the storyteller also uses the women's own words against them" as they acquiesce to their treatment.[75] Similarly, Fuchs finds the author "follows Jephthah's point of view, both perceptually and emotionally", such that the literary strategies serve "the interests of patriarchal ideology, the ideology of male supremacy."[76] Others have raised issue with the author's "neutrality on the subject of human sacrifice… he appears to neither condemn nor applaud the practice, preferring it seems to wrap himself in ambiguity."[77] As Levenson states: "What is missing in this story is any indication that child sacrifice… was inappropriate from God's standpoint."[78]

Yet, as mimetic theory frequently confirms, endeavours to determine culprits fall back into the scapegoating consciousness, which is what this text is perceptibly working to subvert.

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[72] Hunt, "Who is Culpable?," 99-100.
[73] Exum, "Feminist Criticism," 75.
[74] Ibid. As Mikael Sjöberg also notes, "the lack of moral judgement by the narrator stands out as exceptional in the context of the Deuteronomistic history, where the narrator constantly evaluates rulers according to their degree of religious orthodoxy." Sjöberg, "Jephthah's Daughter as Object of Desire or Feminist Icon," *BibInt* 15 (2007): 379, doi:10.1163/156851507X194233.
[75] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 17, 27.
[76] Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing," 45.
[77] Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," 667.
[78] Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 14.

This is not to suggest that there is no accountability to be had in acts of violence. But as others have also noted, locating figures to blame typically entails a viewpoint that disregards the intricate complexities and wider contributing factors that are in play. As Fewell and Gunn observe, Judges 11 overarchingly "is the story of two abused children, a boy and a girl."[79] As Exum also acknowledges of Jephthah and his daughter: "Both she and he are caught up in something beyond their control."[80]

The interpretation set out in this chapter suggests this 'something' is the mechanics of scapegoating concealed as they are within a sacrificial consciousness that channels violent mimetic aggressions in gendered ways within androcentric societies. Jephthah, though the enactor of the violent sacrificial act, is also a victim of it. As a scapegoat victim of his brothers, embroiled in men's mimetic rivalry and violence, and unwittingly ensnared in a profane sacrificial consciousness, he ends up slaying his only child and filial future.[81] His daughter, subject to the same flawed sacrificial consciousness, lays down her life without objection in accordance also with aspects of androcentric conditioning of women. Critically, as the deeper complexities of human embroilment in gendered patterns and processes of violence surface, it prompts a shift in consciousness away from the proclivity to attribute blame because this consciousness entails perceiving how blame is mobilised to serve scapegoating mechanics. The narrative of Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter then becomes a text that negates the logic of blaming, in this context of the young woman, her father, the deity, the author, men, androcentricity and the like. For the text moves its reader to realise and so subvert the clandestine patterns and processes of gendered violence

[79] Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, *Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 126.
[80] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 19, 36.
[81] Ibid., 36.

anchored in mimetic distorted desires that we are all varyingly, convolutedly, and inadvertently caught up in.

This is not to deny the androcentric ideology apparent within the text; however, this ideology is shown to be working against itself as it witnesses to the gendered patterns and processes of victimisation at work that finally coalesce upon an innocent woman. Furthermore, the deity's absence within the literary design of this narrative facilitates this disclosure. The absent deity emphasises the entirely human-centred and androcentric nature of violence and victimhood. As these patterns and processes of violence are wrested free from mythologising and mystification, they can be thwarted through the awakening of a liberated consciousness.

Comparing Parallel Narratives

Classical Mythology of Sacrifice: Agamemnon and Iphigenia

The awareness of scapegoating present in the Judges text can be further illuminated by comparison to a similar ancient narrative. Many commentators have observed the similarities between the narrative of Jephthah's daughter and the Greek myth of Agamemnon's sacrifice of his daughter, Iphigenia, to the goddess, Artemis. The similarities are so marked that Thomas Römer has contended that the author of the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter drew directly from the Iphigenia tradition, and thus the pericope is a Hellenistic inclusion.[82] While Peggy Day draws an association between the texts in proposing they reflect female puberty rites,[83] David Marcus' discussion of several versions of the Iphigenia myth finds little of significance to supplement comprehension of

[82] For Römer this pericope was included as a critique of the Deuteronomist theology and law against human sacrifice. Thomas C. Römer, "Why Would the Deuteronomists Tell about the Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter?," *JSOT* 23, no. 77 (1998): 27-38, doi:10.1177/030908929802307703. See also Monroe, "Disembodied Women," 38; Janzen, "The Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," 341.
[83] Day, "From the Child is Born the Woman," 58-74.

the corresponding Judge's material.[84] Typically, scholarship on Jephthah's daughter appears to refrain from extending discussion of the analogous Iphigenia myth beyond cursory acknowledgement of it. The following shows, however, that comparison of these two narratives affords a critical insight into discerning the biblical demystification of human patterns and processes of human violence. This insight rests upon the divergent representation of the deity in the context of sacrifice in each text.

Though there are numerous versions of the myth of Iphigenia, there is a consistency in the main narrative framework. Generally, the myth relays that the King of the Greeks, Agamemnon, offended the goddess, Artemis.[85] This offence occurs in some renderings by Agamemnon killing a deer in a sacred grove. Artemis then seeks vengeance upon Agamemnon, bringing pestilence upon his army and affecting the winds to prevent the king's fleet from sailing to war with Troy. As the plot progresses Artemis requires the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, which he eventually acquiesces to, so to alleviate the crisis.[86] In Euripides' play, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, Iphigenia is most like Jephthah's daughter in that she realises the necessity of her fate and agrees to be the sacrificial victim.[87] Yet in this version, as in most of the others,[88] the goddess effects a sleight of hand where, at the very moment of the sacrifice, Iphigenia is spirited away by the deity who supplants a deer in her place.[89] In some versions of the myth she is subsequently made into a priestess,[90] or a

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[84] Marcus, *Jephthah and His Vow*, 42-43.
[85] Artemis, whose Roman alias is Diana, is the goddess of the hunt, wild animals, wilderness, childbirth and virginity. Tobias Fischer-Hansen and Birte Poulsen, eds., *From Artemis to Diana: The Goddess of Man and Beast* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press University of Copenhagen, 2009).
[86] Thomas Bulfinch, *Bulfinch's Complete Mythology* (London: Spring Books, 1989), 152.
[87] Euripides, "Iphigenia at Aulis," in *The Bacchae and Other Plays*, trans. John Davie (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 216-217.
[88] "Īphigenīa," in *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, ed. John Roberts (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Oxford Reference Online, doi:10.1093/acref/9780192801463.001.0001.
[89] Euripides, "Iphigenia at Aulis," 222. Euripides, *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, trans. Moses Hadas and John McLean (New York: Bantam Dell, 2006), 294-295.
[90] In Hyginus' *Fabulae* she is enveloped in a mist, replaced by a deer and taken to the land of the Taurians and made a priestess in the deity's temple. Hyginus, *Fabulae Number 98* in *Apollodorus' Library and Hyginus' Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 130-131.

goddess.[91] As Cheryl Brown notes of this fantastical feat, "it is nearly universally understood that in the case of Iphigenia the goddess Artemis intervened to save her from actual death."[92]

The portrayal of the deity in the myth of Iphigenia exemplifies key features of sacrificial myths that are subverted in the narrative of Jephthah's daughter. Artemis is represented as an overtly autonomous and independently acting double-faced deity, who both causes and cures the crisis. In Judges 11 the crisis is shown to be entirely human generated. Artemis is said to require a human sacrifice and even to rejoice in it.[93] There is no such deity in the Jephthah cycle. Right at the moment of sacrifice Artemis works a magical feat obscuring the sacrificial act as Iphigenia is whisked away. No fantastical obscuring is apparent in the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter; she is shown as an obvious victim as Jephthah did to her according to his vow. By comparison, the demythologising momentum and demystification of scapegoat violence in the narrative of Jephthah's daughter is made strikingly apparent precisely through the absence of a deity. The obscuring features that veil real victims of human scapegoat violence behind double-faced deities in sacrificial myths are entirely absent in this biblical text. It is thus the narrative without a deity who intervenes in fantastical ways at the moment of sacrifice to rescue the victim, that challenges human consciousness to break with its processes of victimising grounded within a mindset comprising the violent sacred.

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[91] In Hesiod's *Catalogue of Women*: *Fragment 71*, Artemis transforms Iphigenia into the goddess Hecate. Hesiod, *The Homeric Hymns and Homerica*, ed. T.E. Page and W.H.D. Rouse, trans. H.G. Evelyn-White (New York: Macmillan, 1914), 205, https://ia802706.us.archive.org/32/items/hesiodhomerichym00hesiuoft/hesiodhomerichym00hesiuoft.pdf.
[92] Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 122.
[93] Euripides, "Iphigenia at Aulis," 220; Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 123.

Biblical Narrative of Sacrifice: Abraham and Isaac

What is more, this demythologising, demystifying trajectory apparent in the narrative of Jephthah's daughter functions in clear accordance with the negation of human sacrifice manifest in the text of Abraham's near sacrifice of his son, Isaac (Gen 22:1-19). Though the narrative of Abraham and Isaac may seem to reflect a deity equivalent to Artemis who also desires a human sacrifice and steps in at the last moment to save the sacrificial victim, by critical contrast there is no ambiguity whatsoever around the sacrificial act. There are no trickeries performed by the deity at the last moment that mystify the victimising performed at the sacrificial altar. There is no magical swapping of an animal, no transformations of Isaac into a priest or a god. Divine intervention stops Abraham from sacrificing his son, but it is Abraham who takes the ram he finds in the thicket and sacrifices it in clear substitution for his son.[94] The Genesis narrative therefore also challenges human consciousness to break with its processes of victimising anchored in the violent sacred via its representation of a deity who ultimately does not want human sacrifices. Scholars have certainly noted in detail the parallel features between the texts of Abraham and Isaac and Jephthah and his daughter.[95] However, they seem not to reflect on how these two narratives illustrate through their distinctive stylistic features, (that respectively depict an immolation stayed and another performed), the same fundamental shift in consciousness away from the violent sacred and conceptualisations of a deity that needs and values human sacrifices.

[94] While public imagination may hold that the deity provides the ram for Abraham, the text does not explicitly state this.

[95] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 101; Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 71-71; Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," 678; Shemesh, "Jephthah," 118-122; Moshe Reiss, "Jephthah's Daughter," *JBQ* 37, no. 1 (2009): 57-63, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A229303138/AONE?u=acuni&sid=AONE&xid=b549b485.

Judges 11:40 Ritual Act of Remembrance

The closing postscript of Judges 11 takes on intricate shades of meaning in light of the demythologising and demystifying of gendered violence evidenced in the narrative thus far. The narrative's closing verse recounts an annual ritual inaugurated after Jephthah's sacrificial act, where the daughters of Israel are said to go for four days each year to commemorate the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite (11:40). This is a perplexing passage, one open to considerable speculation and possibilities given its denoting of a ritual that is neither explained nor corroborated anywhere else. I suggest this segment might be perceived as filled with rich complexity that challenges the audience further to transcend a sacrificial consciousness and gendered patterns of violence and victimhood.

Positive and negative interpretations of this closing segment abound. Day has proposed this text as etiological for a ritual which transitions girls to womanhood.[96] For some the ritual is laudable insofar as it suggests a ceremony founded by women to commemorate a woman. Therefore, it signifies the integrity of the women who do not let an otherwise insignificant daughter, unnamed and unmarried, pass into oblivion.[97] For some this ritual is conjectured as implying women's skilled mourning practices, and a period of female bonding and positive shared experiences of catharsis.[98] For others, the ritual's negative connotations are clear. As Janzen finds, the ritual emphasises Israel's moral decline as it exemplifies Israel's approval of Jephthah's action and failure to realise "the evil of that sacrifice".[99] Fuchs conceives the ritual as part of the author's manipulation to moderate the negative portrayal of Jephthah. The author tags on the postscript, she suggests, "in the

[96] Day, *Gender and Difference*, 65.
[97] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 106-107.
[98] Miller, *Tell It on the Mountain*, 88-89. Renita J. Weems, *Just a Sister Away: A Womanist Vision of Women's Relationships in the Bible* (San Diego: LauraMedia, 1988), 66.
[99] Janzen, "Sacrifice of Jephthah's Daughter," 348-349.

interests of patriarchal ideology" to "counterbalance the daughter's horrid end."[100] For Exum too, the ritual serves to sustain the androcentric social order. Commemoration of Jephthah's obedient, self-sacrificing daughter is allowed as it poses "no threat to the patriarchal authority", rather it upholds it, as "her value to the patriarchal system as a model is underscored."[101]

Certainly, as earlier discussion has noted, the narrative shows androcentric ideology in action. Thus, the inaugurated ritual can be understood in one sense as portraying within the text ongoing androcentric enculturation. The characterisation of Jephthah's daughter has in one vein exemplified her as the perfect example of a self-sacrificing daughter. Furthermore, given all the characters including the women companions who lament alongside Jephthah's daughter, sustain a sense that her self-sacrificing response to her father was justified, it is logical to assume the post-sacrificial ritual carries connotations of ongoing conditioning of women to a detrimental androcentric consciousness. In other words, as the women remember Jephthah's daughter and her sacrifice, they valorise it, and so are inured to imitate the same injurious self-negating agency - the same distorted desires that renders women internally and externally vulnerable to violence. That such injurious, androcentric conditioning is possible of this ritual is attested to in its interpretive history. As Alexander Whyte noted regarding the commemorating women:

> [They] came back to be far better daughters than they went out. They came back softened, and purified, and sobered at heart. They came back ready to die for their fathers, and their brothers, and for their husbands, and for their God.[102]

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[100] Fuchs, "Marginalization, Ambiguity, Silencing," 45.
[101] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 33-34.
[102] Alexander Whyte, *Bible Characters: Gideon to Absalom* (London: Oliphant, Anderson and Ferrier, 1905). Quoted in Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 73.

Yet, given the androcentricity of the text has also been shown to work against itself as it discloses gendered scapegoating mechanics, it seems other liberatory insights are possible in relation to the text's declaration of an enduring post-sacrificial ritual. As mimetic theory illuminates, the advent of a ritual is an effect that stems from scapegoating. In contexts where a community is immersed in a worldview that includes the violent sacred this ritual will characteristically involve re-enactment of the original sacrifice.[103] The ritual denoted in Judges 11:40, however, does not replicate any re-enactment of the primary, male-performed, sacrificial event. Rather it repeats Jephthah's daughter's preceding interval with her women companions. Furthermore, rituals grounded in the mindset of the violent sacred rely on a consciousness that fails entirely to recall the true identity of the victim; yet the women are explicitly said to remember Jephthah's daughter, and recount (לְתַנּוֹת לְבַת־יִפְתָּח)[104] her story. Notably, there are no references to any recalling of transcendental elements or the deity Jephthah honoured. Strikingly counter to sacrificial narratives, the text's priority is to relay that the women retain and recollect the specific identity of a lowly, sacrificed daughter. Miller notes the uniqueness of this: "Unlike other annual rituals described in the Tanakh, it does not commemorate God's involvement in Israel's history, but rather a human being who is not linked with a significant historical event."[105]

Thus, this postscript reflects the complexity noted throughout the Jephthah sequence of Judges 11 as it both evidences androcentric, sacrificial ideology in action, though at once subverts it through exposing its mechanics. The enduring ritual conceivably relays to the reader the continuing formation and enculturation of women to an injurious androcentric consciousness. However, in light of the demythologising trajectory and the demystification

[103] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 89-92.
[104] The verb תַּנּוֹת has been interpreted as denoting 'to lament' or 'to mourn' in the Septuagint and the Vulgate. However, the only other place this verb occurs is in Judges 5:11, within the Song of Deborah and the context of recounting YHWH's victories. This strongly suggests the women are engaged in storytelling and reciting of Jephthah's daughter's story. Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 35; Hunt, "Who is Culpable?," 99.
[105] Miller, *Tell It on the Mountain*, 88.

of the processes of scapegoating, the women's annual gathering can also be perceived as remembering the victim in a way that resists and arrests the ritualised repetition of the violence of the primary sacrificial event. As the women refuse to forget the victim, and the ritual intimates a pacific, non-violent dimension,[106] the perpetuation of ritualised processes that sustain the violence of scapegoating are fundamentally confounded.

The phrase "she became a custom[107] in Israel" (וַתְּהִי־חֹק בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל)[108] (11:39) also takes on a marked complexity. Exum has persuasively argued this denotes the manner by which she served the patriarchal order as an ideal model of a self-sacrificing daughter. This, Exum reasons, is why "Jephthah's daughter's name is not preserved: because she is commemorated not for herself but *as a daughter*."[109] The importance of this argument remains given the sustained anonymity of the victim and this feature's testament to the androcentric ideology present in the narrative.[110] Yet, it appears logical to also conclude that, if the text was ideologically enforcing this dimension of patriarchy, surely it would have presented the sacrifice to its audience in a positive light. The narrative would not have exposed Israel's patriarchal judge and leader as so thoroughly a flawed figure, as one so caught up in idolatry to a violent militant deity that he flouts Israel's divinely determined, categorical opposition to human sacrifice. It would not have illustrated, as Frymer-Kensky finds of Judges 11, the devastating potential of patriarchy.[111] It seems reasonable to

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[106] Hunt, "Who is Culpable?," 99.
[107] Or 'tradition', see Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 106. Or 'example', see Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 34.
[108] As Phyllis Trible has explained this phrase has traditionally and legitimately been interpreted as 'it became a custom in Israel'; however, "grammar, content, and context provide compelling reasons for departing from this translation" given the focus on Jephthah's daughter. Trible notes Jephthah's daughter as the subject of the verb in the clause preceding, 'she had not known a man', and the feminine form of *be* or *become,* also rendering legitimate the translation 'she became'. (Both translations are possible due to Hebrew having no neuter gender). Trible, *Texts of Terror,* 106.
[109] Exum, "Murder they Wrote," 29 (italics in original).
[110] Adele Reinhartz proposes that the identification of the victim as a daughter, rather than by her name, suffices to draw attention to the injustices of the patriarchal household. *'Why Ask My Name?': Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[111] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 116.

propose then, in light of the demystification of sacrificial patterns and processes of gendered violence operative in the text, that the remembering of this particular victim as a custom might also make of her an example that impedes any repetition of such a child sacrifice.

Dangerous Interpretations

The complexity of Jephthah's daughter's witness to injurious sacrificial and androcentric enculturation raises wider issues as to how we as modern readers are to remember her and her victimhood. As the following discussion shows, this reading challenges dangerous, traditional interpretations that have appropriated the sacrificial violence and disseminated it in ways that have idealised women's experiences of violence. As David Gunn's discussion of the ancient and early-modern reception history of this narrative conveys, Jephthah's daughter has been praised within various literary works for her willingness to give up her life for father, religion, and country.[112] Jephthah's daughter has been cast as sad, not because she was to die, "but because my father was caught up in the snare of his vow."[113] She has been heralded as declaring "How beautiful a thing it was to die for God and for my sire!"[114] She has been portrayed as "a grateful victim",[115] one who smiled as she died.[116] Her example as the servile property of her parent has been proclaimed as the model for children to imitate. She has been acclaimed for exemplifying "a high and lovely ideal of womanhood."[117] She has been deemed an exemplar of virginity, blessed with an early death for that protected her innocence, and so "her pearl, delivered from all dangers, remained with her and consoled her."[118] She has been romanticised for her youth and

[112] For discussion of this element in Pseudo-Philo and Josephus see Gunn, *Judges*, 136, 166.
[113] Pseudo-Philo, *Bib Ant*, 40.4; quoted in Brown, *No Longer Be Silent*, 104.
[114] Alfred Tennyson, quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 163.
[115] Thomas Morrel, quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 148.
[116] Lord Byron, quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 163.
[117] Gunn, *Judges*, 163, 164.
[118] Ephrem the Syrian, quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 138.

beauty; and eroticised, painted kneeling, bound and blindfolded under her father's dagger, with mature bare breasts on display.[119]

The interpretation of Judges 11 realised in this chapter gives rise to the need for great caution as to how we perceive this female biblical victim and her representation of women's experience of victimhood. Significant interpretation over the centuries has regarded her in sacrificial and androcentric ways. This biblical text has been appropriated to reinforce injurious formation of girls and women through perpetuating diminishing gender codes that promote the idea that to be a 'good girl' or 'good woman' is to be a submissive, sexually pure, self-sacrificing one.[120] Romanticised and objectified portrayals have further served to veil the outstanding horror of her gendered victimhood as they have beautified and sensualised it. In short, such valorising of this victim and her victimhood lends to the consciousness that serves the enduring patterns and processes of gendered violence within androcentric societies. Such valorising contributes to the psychological and social conditioning of women as a victim group, which the narrative as read here through the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, conceivably turns us away from. The text is clear in its presentation of a pubescent daughter murdered by her father. As such, it challenges readers to become conscious of the deep-seated, enduring structures of gendered violence that influence men to become perpetrators of violence, and girls and women to be led like lambs to the slaughter. Accordingly, this reading illustrates how Judges 11 can be reclaimed beyond its portrayal of androcentric violence and injurious androcentric

[119] Gunn, *Judges*, 149; 154-157.
[120] Daly, *Beyond God the Father*, 100-102; Greer, *Female Eunuch*, 177-180; Bartky, "Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds," 116-117. Sheila Redmond notes the same kind of messages relayed in relation to Maria Goretti (1890-1902), who was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1950 and declared a model for all Roman Catholic girls. Murdered when she was 11 years old because she resisted rape – but living long enough to forgive her attacker and have her virginity confirmed - Redmond emphasises as deeply troubling, the teaching that such suffering and violence can be blessings in disguise. Sheila A. Redmond, "Christian 'Virtues' and Recovery from Child Sexual Abuse," in *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: A Feminist Critique*, ed. Joanne Carlson Brown and Carole R. Bohn (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1989), 74-76.

interpretation, as it renders women's victimisation perceptible in ways that challenge androcentric consciousness and its patterns of gendered violence.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated how the narrative of Jephthah and his daughter may be perceived, through the interpretive lens of mimetic and feminist theory, as subverting the textual patterns of sacrificial myths that have served to conceal real victims. This narrative indicates a demythologising momentum within the Book of Judges that demystifies the violent sacred and exposes the human causes and processes that sustain violence and victimhood. Jephthah's daughter has been shown to play a critical role within the text and Judges corpus as a figure who portrays how structures of violence are significantly shaped via enculturation into androcentric societies. When read through the combined lens of mimetic and feminist theory she becomes more than the sum of her suffering as she makes transparent how androcentric societies position women as a particular category of scapegoat. Subsequently, this narrative can be perceived as holding inherent liberatory potential as it undermines the obscuring structures that sustain gendered violence. I turn now to investigate this same potential within the narrative of Judges 19.

CHAPTER 7: THE UNNAMED WOMAN OF JUDGES 19

Demystifying and Demythologising Mob Violence

In this chapter I establish how the character and narrative of the unnamed woman of Judges 19 also advances the momentum within the Book of Judges to move human consciousness beyond frameworks of the violent sacred. This chapter illustrates that Judges 19 is devoid of any supernatural mystifying overlays, and this quality enhances exposure of the human-centred patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. Similar to Jephthah's daughter, the unnamed woman of this text becomes perceptible as instrumental to the disclosure of the gendered nature of these patterns and processes. She illustrates how women become caught in the dynamics of men's rivalry and violence, and how their vulnerable social location can render them as expendable bodies that absorb men's aggression with ameliorating effects for the androcentric order.

The following analysis begins with contextualising Judges 19 within the distinctive epilogue phase of the Book of Judges. The chapter then examines the unfolding events and characters of Judges 19 through the combined lens of mimetic and feminist theory. I explain how these passages work to demythologise and demystify the violent sacred as they explicitly convey the violent activities to be human-centred and male-performed. The character of the unnamed woman is shown to be critical to this disclosure as she is unambiguously portrayed as a sacrificial victim within a context of men's rivalry, conflict, and crisis. The analysis also extends to the associated narratives of Judges 20 and 21 and illustrates how demystifying elements in Judges 19 continue until the book's end. The chapter then illustrates the demystifying quality of Judges 19 through comparison with texts and themes in Greco-Roman mythology, and with the parallel biblical narrative of

Lot and the events at Sodom and Gomorrah. Overall, the narrative and character of the unnamed woman of Judges 19 is shown to have liberatory value as they undermine the obscuring and mystifying dimensions that sustain patterns and processes of gendered violence.

The Withdrawing Deity: Contextualising Judges 19

As I established in Chapter 5, the 'epilogue' phase of Judges (17:1-21:25) is markedly distinct from the previous two phases of the book (the 'prologue' and the 'era of judges'), and this distinctiveness is significant to the demythologising orientation of the book as a whole. Diverging from all that has gone before, the epilogue no longer includes the textual patterns of sacrificial myths.[1] That is to say, from the conclusion of the Samson sequence onwards, the cyclic pattern of Israel's fall into foreign oppression followed by suggestions of YHWH's liberation via an appointed judge, is entirely suspended. In the epilogue there are no foreign oppressing enemies and no judges who liberate and lead Israel for a time. Instead, these final narratives shift to emphasise the masculine rivalry and hostile tensions that lie *within* Israel, which have heretofore been represented as connected with Israel's external clashes.[2] Critically, as the trajectory of Israel's social and moral decline culminates in the epilogue, so does the book's testament to the deeper nucleus of violent conflict – namely the clandestine human-centred patterns and processes of violence that play out *within* the relational dynamics of communities. In these final narratives the reality of internal rivalry and hostilities within Israel come to the forefront. So too does the capacity for groups, threatened with escalating aggression, to alleviate their violence through channelling it upon segregated bodies within their own communities.

[1] See earlier discussion of this shift in the epilogue in Chapter 5, pp. 154-155, 179-180.
[2] For prior discussion of tensions within Israel as interrelated with external war see Chapter 5, pp. 188-189.

This demythologising momentum is pronounced within the epilogue phase, as Israel's degeneration into intertribal violence and victimhood is further marked by the near total absence of the deity. As previous discussion demonstrated, demythologising motifs are perceptible within the preceding phases of the book. Counter to the typical bold, autonomous performances of deities in sacrificial myths, allusions to YHWH's violent activities are rendered indistinguishable and synonymous with men's hostile will and justified enactments of violence. In addition, identification of the violence as human-centred and predominantly masculine has been accentuated via the textual rescinding of the deity within these earlier narrative sequences. This demythologising process modifies in the epilogue phase as intimations of a warring and peaceful deity withdraw even further. The effect of this withdrawal emphasises the wholly human-centred nature of the patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. In Judges 19 there are no insinuations of a violent double-faced deity causing and curing crisis. There is no evocation of divine justification for the brutalities that transpire. The violence and victimisation that unfolds within the androcentric context of the narrative are relayed as unequivocally human and male-performed.

Subsequently, there is an alternate way of conceptualising the absent deity beyond purviews grounded in the notion that YHWH deliberately withdraws as a consequence of Israel's disobedience and deterioration.[3] That is, YHWH's absence may be perceived as a textual feature intrinsic to destabilising the consciousness of the violent sacred. With no mystifying double-faced deity apparent in the narrative, Judges 19 attests to the significant rivalry and violence that occurs between men in androcentric cultures that have influenced

[3] As Dennis Olson expresses this broadly held theological view: "God has allowed Israel to experience the violent harvest of its long history of disobedience. Olson, "The Book of Judges: Introduction, Commentary and Reflections," in Vol. 2 of *The New Interpreter's Bible,* ed. Leander E. Keck, 12 Vols (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 2:888.

their subjectivity, desires, and agency to perform dominant masculinity – that is, to be men of strength and independence, with status, authority, and agency to control assets, self, and others. Furthermore, this narrative illustrates the vulnerable, expendable location of women as they are subjected to enculturation that undervalues and diminishes them as subsidiary to men. The female victim of Judges 19 poignantly evidences via her victimhood, the diminished and expendable quality of girls and women in such androcentric contexts, as through their victimisation rivalrous men can channel and alleviate their violent tensions.

Characters Within the Androcentric Context

Prior to the telling of the particular violent events that transpire in Gibeah, the first section of the narrative (19:1-10) establishes key themes of rivalry and tension within a structure that fosters suspense as it foreshadows the violence to come. The opening sequence tells of a young woman who leaves her Levite husband and returns to her father's house, and the Levite's subsequent excursion and sojourn in this house as he pursues his objective to recover her. As these events unfold the narrative conveys the androcentric world of the text, including the culturally diminished and vulnerable location of the young woman within it, regardless of her significant act of agency. These verses attest also to the complex and volatile relational dynamics between rivalrous men in androcentric contexts. Acts of bonding between the Levite and his father-in-law are shown to be interlaced with power struggles to perform masculine dominance. These dynamics ominously foreshadow the extreme conflict to come, as the growing threat of men's rivalry and violence towards other men continues to shape the narrative (19:10-20). Moreover, the perilous location of the young woman is accentuated. She is portrayed as helplessly caught within the volatile tensions between vying men and subject to their overriding desires and agency.

From the outset Judges 19 illustrates an androcentric, hierarchical context where men's ascendency over other men and women is culturally normative. Within the unstable and

volatile social climate that forebodes the chaos and violence to come, for "Israel had no king" (19:1), a man from the remote parts of Mount Ephraim is introduced as the primary subject of the narrative. This man is identified via his notable social status as a Levite, and thus with a priestly importance that positions him above many other men. He is also introduced as one who has exercised his power and privilege to legally take a wife of secondary rank (וַיִּקַּח־לוֹ אִשָּׁה פִּילֶגֶשׁ) (19:1), a *pilegesh* (פִּילֶגֶשׁ),[4] traditionally and problematically translated as 'concubine'.[5] In contrast to the protagonist's identification as a figure socially elevated above other men, the young woman is identified by her personal affiliation to men and by her inferior status in relation to other women/wives. She is demarcated as her father's daughter, and the Levite's *pilegesh* - hence by her extra-subsidiary marital location as a wife of secondary status.[6] Seemingly also in contrast to her husband, the text emphasises her youth. Repeatedly she is acknowledged to be a נַעֲרָה, a girl (19:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9). Her cultural subordination is underscored by the additional textual designation of her husband as 'lord/master' (אֲדֹנָי) over all within his household (19:11, 12,

[4] J. Cheryl Exum, "Raped by the Pen," in *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1993), 177.

[5] The traditional English translation of the Hebrew noun '*pilegesh'* as 'concubine' is problematic in its contemporary allusion to an unmarried woman akin to a mistress. The woman of Judges 19 is married, as is apparent in the references to her as the Levite's wife (19:1, 26, 27; 20:4); to the Levite as her husband (19:3; 20:4), and to her father as the Levite's father-in-law (19:4, 7, 9). Roger Ryan, *Judges* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 142; J. Cheryl Exum, "Feminist Criticism: Whose Interests Are Being Served?," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 83.

[6] Numerous scholars have noted that while the exact social status of '*pilegesh'* is unclear, it is nevertheless a term that differentiates wives within the patriarchal household and signifies them as subsidiary. Abraham, Gideon, David, and Solomon, for example, have both wives and *pilegeshs* (Gen 25:6; Judg 8:30-31; 2 Sam 5:13; 1 Kgs 11:3). Rachel gifts her handmaid, Bilah, also termed a *pilegesh*, to Jacob as a wife (Gen 30:3-4 and 35:22). Abimelech's mother is defined as both a *pilegesh* and an *'āmāh* (אֲמָה) 'handmaid/slave girl' (Judg 8:31; 9:18). See for further discussion Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 66; Ryan, *Judges*, 142-143; Gale A. Yee, "Ideological Criticism: Judges 17-21 and the Dismembered Body," in *Judges and Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, ed. Gale A. Yee (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 161. Mieke Bal has proposed that *pilegesh* refers to a patrilocal wife, that is, a woman who stays in her father's house after marriage. However, Cheryl Exum has remarked that such an interpretation does not align with most biblical occurrences of the term. Mieke Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1988), 80-84; Mieke Bal, "Dealing/With/Women: Daughters in the Book of Judges," in *Women in the Hebrew Bible: A Reader*, ed. Alice Bach (London: Routledge, 1999), 324-326; Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 177n13.

26). Though none of the characters within this narrative are named,[7] in these ways the text conveys from the beginning the elevated cultural agency and power afforded to the Levite over his wife – a disparity indicative of the normalisation of masculine power over girls and women in this androcentric culture.

It is in relation to the contravening of this normalised disparate power arrangement, however, that the narrative advances. The point of tension that moves the plot forward generates from the young woman's counter-cultural independence and agency. She extricates herself from her husband of her own accord and, evidently unaccompanied and via her own efforts, she returns to her father's house. Though the precise reason for her departure is not disclosed, her exertion of significant autonomy is unmistakable. This display of personal power is made all the more striking for its enactment within a contextual milieu that has emphasised her young age and subjection to double subordination not only as a wife but one of lesser rank.

The precise circumstances within which the young woman enacts her performance of agency are open to speculation. Two manuscript traditions provide differing broad motives for her departure. These traditions respectively position either the Levite or the *pilegesh* as prompting the spousal unrest. The MT's employment of the verb *zanah* (זָנָה) carries the denotation that she had prostituted herself, including inferences also to having committed adultery.[8] The LXX, however, reads "and she became angry" with him (καὶ ὠργίσθη), an

[7] I share Pamela Tamarkin Reis' position that regards the namelessness in the narrative, which extends henceforth to the conclusion of the Book of Judges, as indicative of the amplified dehumanisation and degeneration within Israelite society. Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "The Levite's Concubine: New Light on a Dark Story," *SJOT* 20, no. 1 (2006): 127, doi:10.1080/09018320600757093. I suggest also, that given these are times when 'every man did as he saw fit', the anonymity of the characters serves to signify the encompassing nature of social unruliness, where the characters represent anybody and everybody within Israel.

[8] Olson, "Book of Judges," 875. Reis translates the segment, traditionally perceived as the *pilegesh* played the whore *against* him (עָלָיו), as "his concubine whored *for* him". In other words, the woman was working for the Levite as his prostitute. According to Reis this accounts for why the woman absconded, why her father receives her, and why the Levite sought to reclaim her. See Reis, "Levite's Concubine," 128-129. For critique of this position see David Z. Moster, "The Levite of Judges 19-21," *JBL* 134, no. 4 (2015): 724n8, http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.15699/jbl.1344.2015.2909.

interpretation likely based on the near consonantal equivalent Hebrew verb *zanakh*.[9] This modification adjusts the scenario as it infers the Levite initiated the discord and gave the young woman good reason to leave.[10] English translations differ based on these divergent manuscript traditions. The KJV reads she "played the whore against him," while the NIB and NIV relay her infidelity more moderately stating, "she was unfaithful to him". Alternatively, the NEB, NJB, and NRSV incorporate the LXX reference to anger as instrumental to her departure.

Irrespective of these textual differences, both traditions render the grounds for her departure as secondary to the act of absconding itself. The MT is not concerned with laying emphasis on the young woman's promiscuity by way of providing any further details. Nor is the LXX concerned with detailing what exactly the Levite did to cause her anger.[11] The element that is of primary narrative significance to both the Hebrew and Greek texts is the *pilegesh's* act of agency in abandoning her husband. It is this element and action that is central and directs the ensuing course of events.

In conjunction with the unresolvable ambiguity as to the particulars that triggered the incident, considerable contemporary commentary has rightly pressed for more nuanced interpretations of the term זָנָה beyond those that indict the woman for promiscuity and infidelity. Many scholars, for example, consider it implausible that a daughter caught up in prostitution would hasten back to her father's house, and similarly, that the Levite would go to such efforts to retrieve such a dishonourable wife. A promiscuous Hebrew wife is

[9] Lauren A. Monroe, "Disembodied Women: Sacrificial Language and the Deaths of Bat-Jephthah, Cozbi, and the Bethlehemite Concubine," *CBQ* 75, no. 1 (2013): 45n46, https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/stable/43728107. See also Susanne Scholz, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom, Sharon H. Ringe, and Jacqueline E. Lapsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2012), 124.
[10] Olson, "Book of Judges," 876; Ryan, *Judges*, 143. David M. Gunn, *Judges* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 244-245.
[11] Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 178.

culturally heinous and humiliating for parents and husband alike.[12] For many there is a more discriminating reading to be drawn in relation to the patriarchal moral frameworks and laws that comprise the context. Given the legal prohibitions preventing wives from instigating divorce, the woman's action of leaving her husband is alone grounds for indictments of unfaithfulness and adultery.[13] As Mieke Bal and Cheryl Exum explain, the critical issue surrounding her absconding lies in relation to the dominant androcentric ideology that deems female bodies and sexuality the preserve and property of men. Exum notes in this regard: "A woman who asserts her sexual autonomy by leaving her husband – and whether or not she remains with him – is guilty of sexual misconduct."[14] Fundamentally, the young woman's behaviour, her enactment of זָנָה, is discernible as a serious infraction of the androcentric order and one marked by great severity. To be identified as an unfaithful wife positions her as legally punishable by death.[15]

While the specifics eliciting the woman's departure remain uncertain, the gravity of such a counter-cultural action on her part are clear. This gravity suggests that her action of absconding was driven by desperation and urgency. Given the significant personal risk associated with her action, including potential subjection to the worst of legal punitive measures, it is conceivable the woman was escaping a man who had seriously wronged her. As Danna Fewell remarks in association with the Levite's later destructive treatment of his wife, "one might easily imagine a scenario of abuse."[16] That this young *pilegesh* fled

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[12] Robert G. Boling, *Judges: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 273; Victor H. Matthews, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19," *BTB* 22, no. 1 (1992): 7, doi:10.1177/014610799202200102; Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 178; Yee, "Ideological Criticism," 162.

[13] Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 81-82; Scholz, "Judges", 876; Yee, "Ideological Criticism," 162; Ryan, *Judges*, 143; Ilse Mullner, "Lethal Differences: Sexual Violence as Violence Against Others in Judges 19," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 138.

[14] Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 179; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 86.

[15] As Gale Yee notes, under the law an unfaithful wife is subject to the death penalty (Lev 20:10, Deut 22:22). "Ideological Criticism," 162.

[16] Danna Nolan Fewell, "Judges," in *The Women's Bible Commentary*, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 81. See also Olson, "Book of Judges," 876. David Gunn also remarks

in desperation appears likely, given her determination to hazard trekking back to her father's home alone, in times the narrator has emphasised as dangerously unstable where "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:7, 21:25). Irrespective of the lack of contextual details, the opening sequence conveys that the woman is embroiled in a grim state of affairs; one that has compelled her to defy the behaviour the culture expects of her as a wife, and to chance dire reprisal for mobilising her agency to separate from her husband.

Following the woman's exertion of a degree of personal power, the narrative progresses with intimations that the Levite crafts a wily strategy to recover her from her father's house. The text relays that after the *pilegesh* had been gone for four months, the Levite journeys to her father's house with the intention of "speaking to her heart to cause her to return" (לְדַבֵּר עַל־לִבָּהּ (לַהֲשִׁיבוֹ) [לַהֲשִׁיבָהּ]) (19:3). For some this might infer the Levite as an upright man with honourable intentions and tender affection for his wife. Yet the narrative appears to generate a wariness in relation to this character. Such intentions have been expressed before by a villain who would presume to sway his victim. In Genesis 34:3 Shechem is described as endeavouring to persuade Dinah to marry him by speaking to her heart (וַיְדַבֵּר עַל־לֵב הַנַּעֲרָ) *after* he had raped her.[17] That the Levite's intent is bereft of any sincere affection for her appears further evident in his long delay before seeking her out, and in his failure to acknowledge his part in the estrangement.[18] In light of his later abuse of his wife, preliminary impressions of the Levite as a man of integrity and tenderness become flavoured with deception. Accordingly, his intention to speak to her heart suggests more his designs to manipulate, charm, and cajole.

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that the classical Jewish sources generally deem that the woman fled unbearable treatment from a harsh husband. *Judges*, 246.

[17] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 67. As ensuing discussion will show, the Levite's own experience of 'having his heart spoken to' is one of subjection to coercive power and control.

[18] Yee, "Ideological Criticism," 162.

There is yet another angle to the Levite's planned performance of amiable reconciliation with his wife, which is informed by the patriarchal location within which it is anticipated to occur. Given it is in his father-in-law's home where he must endeavour to achieve his objective, creating an impression of graciousness becomes a shrewder strategy for success. The Levite is alone in a town far from his own home with no tangible resources to safeguard and enforce his primary intent to reclaim his father-in-law's daughter. A disposition of cordiality becomes more strategically advantageous than risking the wrath of the patriarch of the household with exertions of righteous indignation and claims to his entitlements. Such forethought and contriving appear to be reinforced by the succeeding sequence of events. The text turns to centre precisely upon the dynamics of control and persuasion between these two men and the intricacies of masculine rivalry and power that play out under the father-in-law's roof.

Intricacies in Male Bonding and Rivalry

Though the Levite has returned to his father-in-law's house with the primary purpose of recovering his wife, she barely features in the ensuing segment at all (19:3-10). There is no scene or suggestion that the Levite ever 'speaks to her heart' in an effort to convince her to return. Although the text states the woman took the Levite into her father's house upon his arrival (וַתְּבִיאֵהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ) (19:3), there is no sense that she welcomes her husband's appearance. Rather it is her father who expresses elation at the sight of his son-in-law as he greets him with rejoicing (וַיִּרְאֵהוּ אֲבִי הַנַּעֲרָה וַיִּשְׂמַח לִקְרָאתוֹ) (19:3). Contrary to the initial impression of a warm reception by the woman's father, what follows are scenes depicting his efforts to exert dominance over the Levite within a complex context that interweaves generous hospitality and male bonding with the interplay of rivalrous men positioning for control.

This narrative phase unfolds over a period of five days and, amidst the demonstrations of male bonding that take place, the rivalry evident between the Levite and his father-in-law becomes increasingly pronounced. The segment commences with an understated exercise of dominance as the father-in-law reroutes the Levite's apparent plans to promptly collect his wife and leave. The woman's father successfully "prevails" (וַיֶּחֱזַק־בּוֹ) upon the Levite to stay three days. During this time, they engage in acts of bonding as they eat and drink together (19:4). When the Levite arises on the fourth day intending to depart, the father-in-law again detains him, now with resolute sway and a directive. He first insists with imperative force that the Levite support his own heart with a morsel of bread (וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִי הַנַּעֲרָה אֶל־חֲתָנוֹ סְעָד לִבְּךָ פַּת־לֶחֶם) before declaring "then you can go" (וְאַחַר תֵּלֵכוּ) (19:5). After they have feasted together again - just the two of them (שְׁנֵיהֶם יַחְדָּו) - and the Levite makes to leave, he is again successfully "pressed" (וַיִּפְצַר־בּוֹ) by the master of the house to spend another night (19:7). With speech coercively intoned with the particle of entreaty, נָא, the father-in-law insists that extending his stay one more night will be good for his heart/wellbeing (הוֹאֶל־נָא וְלִין וְיִטַב לִבֶּךָ) (19:6-7).

Come the morning of the fifth day, any impression of genuine bonding between the two men falters as the Levite vies to exert his own self-control and agency against the coercions of his host. The father-in-law once more endeavours to manipulate the Levite to stay a little longer, until the afternoon. With imperative intensity he appeals to him to "support your heart" (סְעָד־נָא לְבָבְךָ). This sets the men quarrelling (וְהִתְמַהְמְהוּ) for most of the day (19:8),[19] before they dine once more together, just the two of them. (19:8). For the last time the host vigorously tries to delay the Levite yet another night. Twice employing the interjection typically translated 'behold'(הִנֵּה), he pressures him to stay put and be good

[19] Robert Boling interprets the Hebrew *htmhmhw* as "they argued back and forth"; or literally "they (said) to one another: What? What?" Boling further notes the Hebrew as expressing delay, as well as consternation and confusion. *Judges*, 87, 275. See also Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 69.

to his heart, reasoning now that the Levite ought to delay his departure as the day was nearly over (הִנֵּה נָא רָפָה הַיּוֹם לַעֲרֹב לִינוּ־נָא הִנֵּה חֲנוֹת הַיּוֹם לִין פֹּה וְיִיטַב לְבָבֶךָ) (19:9). The mood, however, has markedly changed as it is laced with friction and escalating rancour. Not only have the men argued long through the day, but the father-in-law's exhortation includes seemingly mocking the Levite's property of residence. While the host's abode has been specified as a 'house' (בֵּית) (19:2, 3), and one observed for its excessive hospitality, his directive to the Levite that tomorrow he can leave to go back to his *tent* (וְהִשְׁכַּמְתֶּם מָחָר לְדַרְכְּכֶם וְהָלַכְתָּ לְאֹהָלֶךָ) (19:9) carries the air of a deliberate insult.[20] Any impressions of sincere bonding between the two men have dwindled as coercions have given rise to tension and antagonism. By the fifth day of the Levite's stay, as Phyllis Trible succinctly concludes: "Rivalry between the males has replaced unity."[21]

Regardless of the dangers of the late departure, the Levite is determined to be manipulated no longer. He exercises his agency and leaves with his possessions; the young male attendant (וְנַעֲרוֹ) and the pair of donkeys that originally accompanied him (19:3), and with his *pilegesh* in tow (19:10). As this narrative segment closes it remains unconcerned with specific reasons as to why the father-in-law sought to delay his daughter's husband.[22] What has been of paramount concern is the depiction of increasing tensions between the two men who have courted aspects of bonding within a climate of coercion and control. This narrative segment has centred wholly upon the two men and emphasised a power struggle between them with regards to performing dominant masculinity. The host successfully

[20] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 69; Boling, *Judges*, 275.
[21] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 69.
[22] Some scholars have offered various possibilities. Fewell and Gunn wonder if the father is motivated by a reluctance to have his daughter return to an environment of abuse. Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 133; Roger Ryan shares this supposition, but also hypothesises that the father may have been seeking to compensate for his daughter's embarrassing conduct; or perhaps was simply lonely and hoped to prolong the company. *Judges*, 145.

controlled his guest's movement for a time under the guise of exaggerated hospitality,[23] but the Levite finally recovers not only his wife, but also his self-directing masculine independence as he manoeuvres beyond the constricting manipulations of the patriarch of the house.

Though the woman does not appear at all in the scenes of male bonding and rivalry,[24] this segment intimates that she is nevertheless intrinsic to their psychosocial tug-of-war. Originally the object liaised between these former trading partners, she is once again the figure who has elicited their encounter. To some extent both men signify a degree of cultural power over her as a testament to their masculinity. Legally she is the marital property of the Levite. But contextually she is the filial dependent of her father, the patriarch of the house to which she has returned to and stayed at for four months. The text seems acutely concerned with stressing this latter aspect of the rivalry between the men, as time and again the host is referred to as 'the father of the girl' (אֲבִי הַנַּעֲרָה) (19:3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9). As the father obstructs the Levite's desire to depart, so he prevents him from exerting his masculinity in relation to reclaiming his female property. Consequently, the father hinders the Levite from restoring his former marital state and thus assuaging issues of emasculating embarrassment associated with his *pilegesh's* act of desertion.[25] That the young woman is the object caught in the struggle of men's will to power - that is, their competition to embody masculine codes of independence, authority, and agency to control

[23] As Gale Yee has noted, "the host-guest relationship is essentially one of unequal power relations. The flamboyant display of generosity by the father-in-law toward the Levite symbolizes the moral and conceptual subordination of the guest to the host." Yee, "Ideological Criticism," 163. See also Koala Jones-Warsaw, "Toward a Womanist Hermeneutic: A Reading of Judges 19-21," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 175n2, 180-181; Fewell and Gunn, *Gender, Power and Promise*, 133; Michael Herzfeld, "'As in Your House': Hospitality, Ethnography, and the Stereotype of Mediterranean Society," in *Honour and Shame in the Unity of the Mediterranean*, ed. David D. Gilmore (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1987), 77.
[24] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 68.
[25] Yee, "Ideological Criticism," 163.

assets, self and others - is apparent. The Levite's eventual and adamant departure includes taking the woman with him as one of his possessions.

As this segment of the narrative unfolds, it signifies the vulnerable location the woman is in. Her husband's character becomes more questionable as the anticipated scene of reconciliation with her never takes place. As the above discussion has signalled, whether the young woman stays longer in her father's house, or whether she leaves with the Levite, is entirely dependent upon the outcome of the contentious pressing for control between the two men who hold a claim to her. How the woman feels and what she desires for herself are evidently of no concern. As the text depicts, she is objectified and depersonalised, and her voice is silenced entirely. Postulations that perhaps she assented to leave with the Levite are unconvincing as her agency in the situation is severely compromised. The dictates of marital law held she had to leave with her husband regardless of her own feelings and convictions.[26] Thus, she had no capacity to exercise legitimate consent. At best, her agency appears to extend only to her choice to go quietly and refrain from risky and futile struggle.

That she leaves with her husband against her deepest desires appears most probable, as her departure from her father's house is at odds with all her earlier independent actions. It is at odds with her initial resolve to desert the Levite, and with her determination to seek no reconciliation herself during the four months of estrangement. It is at odds with her lack of demonstrative welcome to her husband upon his arrival, and with her seeming inaction to convene any occasions for reunification herself during his stay. As such, her vulnerability is pronounced for her initial independent action, momentous though it was, is made ultimately inconsequential by the overriding dominant power culturally invested in men.

[26] Tikva Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible: A New Interpretation of Their Stories* (New York: Schocken Books, 2002), 120.

Her power to self-direct is rendered illusory in the end. The narrative illustrates that she is subjected to the superseding desires and agency of men while her own are made null and void. The segment illustrates that, irrespective of what her heart truly yearns for, this one-time autonomously acting figure is finally constrained to conform to what the androcentric order prescribes of her as a female and a wife of secondary status.

Far from being a sequence that "appears to be a storyteller's indulgence", and an "unnecessary story" replete with "unnecessary details",[27] this segment sets down key thematic elements that underpin the rest of the Judges 19 text. This segment depicts the cultural privileging of men in androcentric societies that generates episodes where men engage in complex and precarious dynamics of male bonding, rivalry, and antagonism. As this section imparts the menace of men's violence, it foreshadows the forthcoming intensification of these volatile dynamics, where male bonding and the drive to prove dominant masculinity give rise to extreme violence. Furthermore, as this section accentuates the vulnerable location of the young woman, including her diminished social position and entanglement in men's rivalries, so it forecasts her powerlessness and subjection to the male-performed victimisation to come. This segment cements that this is a narrative critically concerned with the volatile power struggles between rivalrous men and the vulnerable situation of women who are caught within them.

Men's Fear of the Violence of Other Men

As the plot progresses so does the sense of foreboding related to the threat of violence men pose to each other. Contextually, the next segment (19:10-14) relays the shifting narrative location as the Levite and his small retinue journey from Bethlehem to Gibeah. Thematically, however, these passages disclose a wary Levite, carefully determining his

[27] Ryan, *Judges*, 145.

movements in accordance with his apprehension of other men, and with an awareness of the vulnerability of being an isolated figure in a strange, unpredictable environment. This segment heightens the suspense and dread of the imminent episode of violence to come in Gibeah, as the scenes take place with the coming of darkness and the sinking of the sun (וְהַיּוֹם רַד מְאֹד) (19:11; 14).

The text depicts that while en route to Gibeah the Levite must again determine how best to act in relation to the power and threat of other men. His resolution to break with his father-in-law's coercion, even though it meant an imprudent late departure, gives rise to the new dilemma of where to secure safe alternative lodgings for the night. With the urgency of nightfall fast approaching, the Levite's young attendant entreats his master to turn aside to the city of the Jebusites (וַיֹּאמֶר הַנַּעַר אֶל־אֲדֹנָיו לְכָה־נָּא וְנָסוּרָה אֶל־עִיר־הַיְבוּסִי) (19:11), that is Jebuse.[28] The Levite's adamant refusal to stop in a foreign city (19:12) transmits his reckoning that the risk of hostility and violence in Jebuse is too high. He is unwilling to be an 'outsider' within a foreign community capable of uniting aggressively against him. The scene is laden with the menace of mob dynamics against defenceless, vulnerable others. The scenario relays that the Levite makes his ill-fated decision to press on to Gibeah in a context imbued with trepidation of falling prey to other men's brutality. The dramatic irony is marked as it is his very hope to avoid such violence that sets the course of the extreme male mob violence to come.

This striking textual irony performs a significant function within the narrative and epilogue phase of Judges. It redirects the reader's focus away from conceptualisation of the danger of external enemies, to consider the threat of violence *internal* to communities. While much of Judges heretofore has been concerned with Israel's conflicts with foreign

[28] A pre-Israelite name for Jerusalem. Boling, *Judges*, 275.

Canaanite groups, the interconnected depiction of the volatile tensions *within* Israel here moves strongly to the fore. This transition towards the dynamics of internal violence occasions a significant shifting of consciousness, for the reader is moved to consider more closely the dangerous undercurrents of rivalry and hostilities internal to social groups. What is more, readers are positioned to consider the reality that communities embroiled in escalating aggressions are also prone to channelling their violence upon isolated victims within their groups who are marked as distinctive - even upon figures that reason might expect would be exempt from such victimisation, such as a fellow Israelite and Levite.

The suspense of pending internal violence continues to mount as the Levite and his retinue reach Gibeah. Upon arriving they are forced to wait exposed and vulnerable in the 'open place', or 'town square', where no man extends them hospitality (וְאֵין אִישׁ מְאַסֵּף־אוֹתָם הַבַּיְתָה לָלוּן) (19:15). The inimical, forbidding setting magnifies their powerlessness and susceptibility to molestation and maltreatment. Yet, it is the young *pilegesh* in this scene that impresses a particularly acute vulnerability. She is the most vulnerable of them all. Her principally diminished and devalued social locale remains conspicuous as a corollary to the text's focus upon the men. She has been accorded no occasion to speak. She has been omitted from all conversation and decision making. She has not uttered a word. There has been no intimation that her husband values her in any way beyond that of depersonalised property.[29] There remains no indication that she has any capacity for meaningful self-direction free of the confines of her husband's overriding desires and agency. Her enhanced vulnerability in this ill-disposed setting is commensurate with her amplified powerlessness as a female and a wife of secondary status. Not only is she vulnerable within hostile Gibeah, she is vulnerable within the patriarchal domain of her husband's household.

[29] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 70; Gunn and Fewell, *Gender, Power and Promise*, 134.

Escalating Threat of Men's Violence

The next narrative segment (19:16-20), while effecting another shift in location, builds tension in association with the threat of men's extreme violence. An elderly man eventually notices the Levite, engages him, and offers him and his retinue lodgings for the night. So, the setting shifts in due course from Gibeah's hostile 'open place' to the host's abode. The unfolding segment continues to evidence complex dynamics between men in association with the need to procure safety from the potential violence of other men. In the following scenes the Levite is depicted as carefully and strategically negotiating his place in relation to the host, so to establish facets of bonding and thus protection from Gibeah's menacing males. Though the young *pilegesh* remains entirely silenced, her vulnerable location is accentuated in a manner that portends her expendability as a transactional object over which men may unite.

As the segment concentrates on the dialogue between the Levite and the elderly man, it showcases the Levite's shrewd verbal manoeuvring to secure the shelter and security he needs. Responding to the old man's enquiry as to where he is going and where he has come from, the Levite sets about establishing his own respectable status, employing cajoling enticements also, to charm his interlocutor. The Levite emphasises his priestly standing as he incorporates into his reply that his travels from Bethlehem to his home in Mount Ephraim include returning to the 'house of the Lord' (וְאֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה אֲנִי הֹלֵךְ) (19:18).[30] As Robert Boling notes: "That he is going home to a 'tent' (v.9) is here suppressed, as he puts his best foot forward."[31] The Levite goes on to emphasise his respectable resources and independence as he explains he has sufficient straw and fodder for his donkeys, and victuals enough for his retinue (19:19). He weaves cajoling into his discourse as he

[30] As Boling notes, that is presumably the tabernacle in Shiloh. *Judges*, 275.
[31] Boling, *Judges*, 276.

positions the elderly man as his superior and he and his fellow travellers as the old man's servants (עֲבָדֶיךָ) (19:19).[32] The Levite entices his would-be host through particular proffering of his *pilegesh* for him to consider as his own handmaid (וְלַאֲמָתֶךָ) (19:19).[33] As the Levite's speech concludes, the text illustrates that his agency has been fashioned and deployed according to specific needs for male assistance within a context of subjection to the potential hostile will of other men. Within this context of need, the Levite's agency has also objectified the woman and positioned her as a specific instrument for brokering unity and rapport between men.

The elderly man's hospitable response to the Levite includes stressing the dangerous environment he is in, and intimations of disorder and deep unrest simmering amidst the men that inhabit the place (בַּגִּבְעָה וְאַנְשֵׁי הַמָּקוֹם בְּנֵי יְמִינִי) (19:16). While it is unclear whether the old man intended good will from the outset or is persuaded by the Levite's cajoling efforts, his actions are influenced by recognition that the Levite's situation is grave indeed in relation to the rumblings of malice and violence in the town. The old man extends peace and lodgings to the Levite, with concern that the Levite extricate himself from the volatile location he is in, saying "only in the open space do not lodge" (רַק בָּרְחוֹב אַל־תָּלֵן) (19:20). The elderly man confirms that things are far from right with the men of Gibeah. Deeply held customs of providing hospitality towards others, customs designed to sustain peace and protect strangers, have broken down and ceased.[34] This collapse of honourable codes of conduct bespeaks a place troubled by corruption, a place seething with

[32] Here I read the complexities of v.19 as denoting the Levite details he has enough bread and wine for himself (לֶחֶם וְיַיִן יֶשׁ־לִי), and for his wife whom he locates as the host's property (וְלַאֲמָתֶךָ); and for his attending boy (וְלַנַּעַר), whom he locates along with himself as the host's servants (עִם־עֲבָדֶיךָ).
[33] See prior footnote. Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 72; Boling, *Judges*, 275.
[34] The Benjamites' contravening of covenantal codes (Ex 22:21; 23:9), and law (Lev 19:33-34; Deut 10:18-19; 16:14; 26:12), which directs Israel to show generous hospitality to Levites and to strangers, signifies the severe corruption and degeneration of pacific social patterns afflicting Gibeah. See also Olson, "Book of Judges," 876.

ill will, hostile tensions, and ignoble characters ready to unleash their aggressions upon those who are unprotected.[35]

The narrative also indicates the Levite's subjection to the menace of the local men as he tarries in the town square. Hostile Benjamite men have obviously passed him by on their return from their day's labours and sourly observed him with the elderly man; for, as the next segment illustrates, they know exactly who they are looking for and where to find him. In the meantime, though tensions are escalating towards open violence, the Levite has found some degree of protection in his host. The old man takes the Levite into his home and they engage in acts of bonding - washing their feet and eating and drinking together (19:21) and making merry their hearts (הֵמָּה מֵיטִיבִים אֶת־לִבָּם) (19:22). That the Levite and not his *pilegesh* is an honoured guest in the old man's home is made explicit in the next episode, as the host proffers her to the violent mob to pacify their aggressions.

Experiences of Mob Violence

In the ensuing episode (19:22-26), the explicit and extensive masculine violence that has been brewing in previous scenes finally transpires, and as it does so it reveals its gendered victimising qualities. As this segment unfolds, the text is clear that the Levite's wife is made an explicit sacrificial victim within the wider context of men's rivalry, violence, and crisis. A mob of violent Benjamite men cut short the merriment the Levite and his host are enjoying. They pound on the dwelling's door demanding that the old man give up his male guest so they can sexually violate him. It is the young *pilegesh*, however, who is cast out and made to suffer their torture and outrages the rest of the night. There are no supernatural interruptions or interventions by the deity that disguise the violence perpetrated upon her as anything other than the brutal performance of men. This episode illustrates the narrative

[35] In mimetic theory frames this is precisely the type of cultural breakdown that generates the need for new scapegoat victims to reconstruct order.

power of the unnamed *pilegesh* as one who represents the vulnerable and expendable location of women within androcentric societies, where women configure as a category of substitute victims upon which men can channel and alleviate their violent tensions.

The context of masculine rivalry, violence, and crisis is foremost in this narrative segment in association with the dynamics of some men bonding together over against other men. The text illustrates that on this particular night, a mob of volatile Benjamite men have banded together with a common distorted desire in mind: to violently degrade and humiliate another man who is an outsider in their town. The narrative emphasises the mob's wholly corrupted and vile nature as it underscores the baseness of their sadistic intent by describing them as "sons of Belial" (בְּנֵי־בְלִיַּעַל) (19:22),[36] that is, as 'worthless' and 'wicked' men. As the debauched character of this collective is accentuated, so the text transmits the thoroughgoing scale of social sickness and unrest amidst the men of Gibeah.

This sickness and unrest in turn intimates the internal tensions that go hand in hand with groups of belligerent and aggressive men. As researchers of contemporary masculine violence note, such men procure degrees of self-assurance and identity through the collective power substantiated by violent coalitions.[37] But hierarchy and degrees of rivalry are also characteristic of violent male communities. So too, is the subsequent need for members to establish and maintain self-esteem and a protective formidable reputation by repeatedly proving their violent capacities.[38] As the depraved sons of Benjamin seek to

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[36] The iniquitous character of the Benjamite men is signified in their association with "Belial", a malevolent figure of the mythic underworld. Boling, *Judges*, 276.

[37] Paul B. Stretesky and Mark R. Pogrebin, "Gang-Related Gun Violence: Socialization, Identity, and Self," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 36, no. 3 (2007): 85-114, doi:10.1177/0891241606287416; Bryan F. Bubolz and Sou Lee, "Putting in Work: The Application of Identity Theory to Gang Violence and Commitment," *Deviant Behavior* 40, no. 6 (2018): 690-702, doi:10.1080/01639625.2018.1437655; Adam Baird, "Becoming the 'Baddest': Masculine Trajectories of Gang Violence in Medellín," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 50, no. 1 (2018): 183-210, doi:10.1017/S0022216X17000761.

[38] Paul J. Fleming et al., "Men's Violence Against Women and Men are Inter-related: Recommendations for Simultaneous Intervention," *Social Science and Medicine* 146 (2015): 251, doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2015.10.021; John Archer, "Violence Between Men," in *Male Violence*, ed. John Archer (London: Routledge, 1994), 127-129; Stretesky and Pogrebin, "Gang-Related Gun Violence," 85-114.

abuse and humiliate the Levite, the text conveys the logic that this act of victimisation grants the mob a distinctive opportunity to channel and expel internal tensions for a time. This outsider provisions the socially dysfunctional men of Gibeah an occasion to perform and experience their masculine power collectively via a violent act of bonding.

This violent bonding act is evidently concerned with demonstrating the qualities of dominant masculinity - of power to control self and others, including other men. That the old man offers his daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* to the mob, and they eventually abuse the latter throughout the night, substantiates this is not a crisis stimulated by homosexual men seeking to satisfy their sexual hankerings. Rather, this is a mob roused by distorted metaphysical desires to garner degrees of fulfilment and identity through a performance of destructive masculine power. Such yearnings for fulfilment and identity are deemed best satisfied in these circumstances by subjecting the male stranger among them to emasculating abuse and shame through the sexual violation of 'knowing him' (וְנֵדָעֶנּוּ) (19:22).[39] The Benjamites are not interested in abusing the host, who is also classifiable as an Ephraimite 'outsider' (19:16). His much-emphasised elderly age (19:16, 17, 20, 22) has placed him beyond the standing of a potent male rival. Nor are they interested in molesting the women (19:25). These prospective victims are, in contrast to the Levite, socially inferior figures upon which to affirm dominant masculine identities. The Levite, however, configures as a man with the particular masculine potency that comes with being in his prime; and so he is the prize target upon whom the men of Gibeah can demonstrate and experience masculine supremacy.[40] The Levite may be an abhorrent character by the

[39] As numerous scholars have noted, men affirm their masculinity through the act of penetrating another. So, the mob intends to exert their dominant masculine power over the Levite through penetrating him - an act that negates the Levite's manhood as he is rendered akin to a culturally normative subordinate female. Michael Carden, *Sodomy: A History of a Christian Biblical Myth* (London: Equinox, 2004), 90; Scholtz, "Judges," 125; Exum, "Feminist Criticism," 85. Boling also remarks that while the term 'to know' carries some ambiguity, and the idiom 'to lie with' is more commonly used to refer to sexual intercourse, the offer of the young women to the Benjamite men resolves the ambiguity with its sexually violent intent. *Judges*, 276.
[40] Frymer-Kensky, *Reading the Women of the Bible,* 124.

narrative's conclusion, but his subjection to terrorization and the threat of victimisation from other men is unmistakable. He is an exceptionally vulnerable figure, in a situation experientially marked by tremendous distress and fear.

The dynamics of men uniting in response to the threat of other men is also apparent in the actions of the host. The old man endeavours to protect his guest from violent assault by shaping his entreaty to the mob with rhetoric designed to ingratiate and sway. The elderly man commences his response to the Benjamites' request for access to the Levite with an effort to diminish his guest's distinctiveness and isolation as a stranger. He endeavours to draw the Levite under a protective banner by subtly avowing his own 'insider' fraternal status. The host hails the mob as "my brothers" (אַחַי), before petitioning them not to do their intended abomination (הַנְּבָלָה) for the man is staying in his house (19:23). In accordance with an androcentric consciousness normalised to the sexual objectification and exploitation of women, the host then attempts to protect the Levite through redirecting the mob to satisfy their violent urges upon his virgin daughter and his guest's *pilegesh* instead. Indeed, his desire to protect the Levite is so strong he exhorts the mob to abuse the women: "humiliate them and do to them whatever you please" (וְעַנּוּ אוֹתָם וַעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם) (19:24). The crisis retains its climatic urgency, however, as the mob are unwilling to accept any substitution for the male stranger (19:25). The scene is set for alternative actions to be employed by the men of the house to mollify the mob and defuse the crisis.

In what follows, the narrative unmistakably depicts the Levite's *pilegesh* caught within the dynamics of men's violence. Though the host has offered two women to assuage the mob, the narrative moves quickly to relay that "the man grabbed his *pilegesh* and caused her to go out to them" (הָאִישׁ בְּפִילַגְשׁוֹ וַיּוֹצֵא אֲלֵיהֶם) (19:25). There is ambiguity here in relation to exactly which man did the casting out, an ambiguity heightened by the Levite's earlier

positioning of his wife as the old man's possession.[41] For some scholars it is the Levite who performs the act as he is the primary character of the narrative.[42] For others, it is the host as he is the one immediately liaising with the mob.[43] Irrespective of the precise agent, the young woman is represented as entirely subject to the social and physical power of the men who are the 'lords' of their households (19:11, 12, 22, 26), with the power to do as they please with their property. Regardless of whether it is the Levite who casts her out or the host, the text shows that neither intervenes on her behalf to prevent the other from dispensing her to the mob. Consequently, although the woman is completely external to the wider conflict and threat, by the actions of the men of the house she is forced to be central to it.[44]

The scene that follows represents that, within the dynamics of men's mimetic rivalrous aggressions, the young woman is made the innocent sacrificial victim whose victimhood alleviates the crisis. The scene first relays the capricious nature of mobs to coalesce against any isolated other who serves as an adequate victim upon whom to channel explosive hostilities. Though the men of Gibeah did not want the women, in the fervour of violent crisis they instantaneously seize upon the *pilegesh* and they "raped her and tortured her all of the night" (וַיֵּדְעוּ אוֹתָהּ וַיִּתְעַלְּלוּ־בָהּ כָּל־הַלַּיְלָה) (19:25).[45] It is significant in the context of mimetic theory that the mob's embroilment in chaos, in the 'undifferentiation' of mimetic

[41] See footnote 32 above detailing the Levite's earlier offering of his wife to his host.
[42] As Reis notes: "Translators invariably render איש as 'man' in these verses, but translating איש as 'husband,' which is equally correct, would both dispel ambiguity and emphasise and reprove the Levite's craven lack of gallantry." Reis, "Levite's Concubine," 138n42. See also Boling, *Judges*, 276; Bal, *Death and Dissymmetry*, 93; Alice Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women and Violence in Judges 21," in *Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 155.
[43] Ryan, *Judges*, 146; Moster, "Levite of Judges 19-21," 727.
[44] As Susan Niditch remarks, irrespective of who the exact evictor was, "A most troubling feature of the Israelite version of the tale type is the apparent willingness of the men to hand over their women to violent miscreants". *Judges: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 193.
[45] As Trible explains, the phrasing "and they knew her" (וַיֵּדְעוּ אוֹתָהּ) loses any ambiguity, and the signification of rape is accompanied by another verbal phrase (וַיִּתְעַלְּלוּ־בָהּ) that denotes brutal abuse. *Texts of Terror*, 76.

violence, is symbolised in the darkness and 'blindness' that encapsulates the scene.[46] Under the veil of darkness, within the indistinctiveness it signifies, these men have become undifferentiated copies of each other as they reproduce one another's violent performance in their enactments of torture and gang rape. Within this dynamic the woman becomes the channel through which the crisis is finally alleviated. The mob regains a degree of internal order as they come to discharge their aggressions and distinguish themselves in relation to their victim.

Over her tortured body a catharsis is achieved that finally re-establishes a phase of calm. She absorbs the men's hostile tensions as they purge them upon her while also collectively affirming their dominant, violent machismo and thus the androcentric order. Initially segregated via the power of the men of the household, she has been made the surrogate victim for the Levite, and all those who lie safe within the old man's house. Her victimisation has served to alleviate the hostile tensions between the Benjamite men and the host and his guest. The text repeatedly and emblematically depicts that the crisis is now over as the darkness has been transmuted with the coming of daylight (19:25, 26, 27). In the sobering clarity of this new dawn the text emotively emphasises the one who has been made to endure great suffering as the conduit for instigating the calm. The Benjamites are said to have assaulted her all of the night until the morning. They then sent the woman away with the coming up of dawn (19:25). With the onset of morning she returns to the doorway of the house that expelled her and falls in the doorway (19:26), where her husband eventually finds her with her hands upon the threshold (19:27).

Though none of the characters view the events as a depraved act of violence against the woman's personhood, readers of the narrative are positioned otherwise. For readers the

[46] James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1991), 133.

overarching context of masculine aggression is clear, as is the woman's subjection to the unmitigated violence of men. The reader is positioned to see that within the androcentric world of the text, the young woman was subjected to a particular social isolation that marked her out for victimhood. The androcentric order cemented her extra-subordinate status and subjection to the supremacy of men as it codified her as a secondary wife and the property of her husband. The text illustrates that her own desires and agency were rendered null and void as she was made entirely subject to the desires and agency of men. The narrative depicts that the patriarchal household in this androcentric world and context meant the woman had no one to advocate for her safety, and no collective power from any other women to draw protective agency from.[47] Out of the two women mentioned in this narrative, and out of all the characters in the text, she was the one most culturally diminished. With no apparent familial relations present to pose the threat of revenge upon those responsible for disposing of her, she filled the profile of a socially appropriate, expendable victim.[48] And so, the reader is situated to see with great clarity and poignancy her subordination, and in turn, her sacrificial location within the violent dynamics of men. The text moves the reader to be appalled and aggrieved on behalf of this sacrificial victim as it closes the segment with an arresting scene that emphasises the abject suffering of this violated woman. With nowhere else to go to seek refuge, she returns to the lords of the house that ejected her to save themselves, and there she lies barred and broken in the doorway with her hands upon the threshold.

[47] There is no mention of her mother in the earlier setting at her father's house, nor is there mention of the Levite having a 'first' wife.

[48] Girard notes that married women do not usually suffice as suitable victims due to their wider familial connections who might rally for revenge. René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. P. Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 12-13. But in this case the unnamed *pilegesh* has been depicted as a figure particularly isolated from her family and her ultimately ineffective father.

Dismemberment and Dissemination

In the final phase of the narrative, more disturbing events unfold in relation to the young woman that continue her representation as a sacrificial figure. In this last sequence (19:27-30), in association with the Levite's additional dreadful actions, her violated body becomes evident as a complex symbol that exposes the *cyclic* quality of androcentric patterns and processes of violence. In the scenes that conclude Judges 19, her mutilated corpse is made a catalyst that commences a new round of conflict and victimisation with the Benjamites. Yet, through this event, the woman becomes discernible as a figure that undermines the processes that obscure and thereby sustain patterns and processes of violence.

As Judges 19 progresses towards its conclusion, attention returns to the male protagonist and amplifies his deplorable character. Seemingly the Levite slept through the night[49] and had not expected his wife to return from her ordeal. He perfunctorily arises in the morning and makes to leave for his home with no show of concern for his wife or her whereabouts (19:27). The Levite's apparent remorselessness is punctuated further in his choice of words when, upon opening the door to leave, he finds her collapsed in the doorway. Here, at the only time in the narrative he speaks to his wife, he orders her to "get up, and let us go" (קוּמִי וְנֵלֵכָה) (19:28). The Levite is no longer in a context that necessitates a shrewder discourse from him and a show of tender disposition towards her. The *pilegesh's* isolation from the aid of others remains absolute, and her husband reasserts his power and agency over her body as his possession. When she does not respond to his instruction, he hauls her body onto his donkey and heads for home - a body so manifestly objectified and depersonalised it elicits no compassionate response or treatment from him.

[49] Reis suggests the Levite's sleep is no doubt influenced by a drunken stupor given all the merry-making of the prior evening. "Levite's Concubine," 145.

While the LXX makes clear that the woman did not respond to the Levite's words "for she was dead" (ὅτι ἦν νεκρά), the MT suggests that the Levite plays a definitive role in ending her life. The Greek text conveys that the men of Gibeah grievously abused the woman, and she expired in the doorway of the host's house. The Hebrew text, however, allows for assuming the unresponsive woman was still alive until her husband performed a final act of murder. Upon reaching his destination the Levite seized (וַיַּחֲזֵק) upon his *pilegesh* (19:29) - the verb denotes the same rough grappling with which she was seized (וַיַּחֲזֵק) and cast out to the mob (19:25)[50] - and "cut her up according to her bones in twelve pieces" (וַיְנַתְּחֶהָ לַעֲצָמֶיהָ לִשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר) (19:29).

The narrative colours the Levite's actions as engaged in sacrificial treatment of a human body. The textual detail that describes the Levite "took **the** knife" (וַיִּקַּח אֶת־הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת) (19:29) prior to dismembering the body, associates him with Abraham's near sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22:10). As Trible notes regarding the exactitude of this linguistic arrangement where both verses employ the definite article, "in all of scripture only these two stories share that precise vocabulary."[51] Lauren Monroe also notes the verb נתח, which designates the Levite's dismemberment of the corpse, is otherwise only used in the context of preparing an animal as a burnt offering,[52] with one pertinent exception - Saul's scattering of oxen flesh to muster troops for battle (1 Sam 11:7). Boling further remarks that the Levite's cutting up of the woman's corpse into twelve parts shares affinity with "pre-Israelite and non-Israelite use of twelve-piece sacrifice for ritual healing".[53]

[50] Olson, "Book of Judges," 877-878.
[51] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 80.
[52] For example, Ex 29:17-18; Lev 1:6, 12; 8:20; 1 Kgs 18:22. Monroe, "Disembodied Women," 45.
[53] Boling, *Judges*, 276. Theodor Gaster suggests that the dismemberment of the woman's body into twelve parts is more likely to pertain to ancient beliefs that the human body consisted of twelve parts, rather than any association with the twelve tribes of Israel. (This would make sense of the incongruity that the tribe of Benjamin was also presumably sent a body part in the muster to assemble forces against Benjamin.) Gaster explains further that the ancient perception of the body as comprised of twelve parts is evident in the Hittite healing ritual where twelve limbs of a sacrificed animal were used to magically treat and cure a patient's

The text relays additional damning evidence in the next chapter of Judges, that implicates the Levite in a final act of sacrificial homicide. The Levite is described "as the husband of the murdered woman" (אִישׁ הָאִשָּׁה הַנִּרְצָחָה) (20:4). This ascription of 'murder' closely aligns with the Levite's actions, not those of the men of Gibeah. While the Benjamites may have anticipated the woman might not ultimately survive her torture, she did make it back to the host's house alive. By contrast, the Levite's actions of 'seizing' her and 'taking **the** knife' and systematically dismembering her body, carry connotations of deliberate acts of killing. Whether or not the Levite is a murderer, the text illustrates that he – an official of ritual by Levite status - intentionally and sacrificially manipulates his wife's corpse and sets about reproducing the power of a victimised body to unite another multitude of men.

As his *pilegesh* had earlier been dispensed to the pack of Benjamite's as the focal point around which they could violently converge, so the Levite distributes her corpse to all of Israel for the purpose of rallying another assemblage of zealous and aggressive men. Just as Saul parcels out dissected chunks of oxen meat to summon the Israelite tribes to battle the Ammonites (1 Sam 11:7), the Levite disseminates a portion of the woman's divided carcass to every territory of Israel with inciting implications. Accordingly, Israel perceives in these grisly parcels "a message of outrage and an excuse for war".[54] The closing verse of Judges 19 conveys a people scandalised by what they have seen, and forcefully impelled to respond: "And all who saw it said, 'Such a thing has never happened or been seen from the day that the sons of Israel came up out of the land of Egypt until this day'. Put to

sickness. Other twelvefold Hittite rituals included funeral proceedings of placing twelve loaves alongside a cremated corpse and offering twelve fleeces from unblemished sheep to the gods. Rituals for expelling pestilence and evil spirits also included offerings of twelve loaves of bread. Theodor H. Gaster, *Myth, Legend, and Custom in the Old Testament: A Comparative Study with Chapters from Sir James G. Frazer's Folklore in the Old Testament* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 444, 538.

[54] Fewell, "Judges," 82.

yourselves upon it, take counsel, and speak." (וְהָיָה כָל־הָרֹאֶה וְאָמַר לֹא־נִהְיְתָה וְלֹא־נִרְאֵתָה כְּזֹאת לְמִיּוֹם עֲלוֹת בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה שִׂימוּ־לָכֶם עָלֶיהָ עֵצוּ וְדַבֵּרוּ) (19:30).

Via the Levite's actions his wife's bloody body parts become the catalyst that stirs the disturbing forces of forthcoming masculine, violent conflict. As Girard has noted within the psychodynamics of ancient communities, the spectacle of blood is affiliated with unchecked violence, and its manifestation within communities awakens fears and turbulence as it "proclaims murder and announces new upheavals to come".[55] These particular parcels of female flesh serve to rouse the deeper drives of masculine rivalry, vengeance, and crisis located in the interrelatedness of sex and violence. The *pilegesh's* severed body parts elicit threatening and enraging intimations of men's emasculation by other men through the abuse of their female property. These fragments of female carcass signify the brutal acts of men upon women such as "abduction, rape, defloration and various sadistic practices".[56] Thus, they signify the chaos and threat of the failure of boundaries that mark men's subjectivity in the patriarchal world.[57]

The text illustrates that, at the defiling hands of one of Israel's priests, the woman's body becomes an acceptable vehicle for igniting and spreading the contagion of violence throughout the Israelite territories, in order to pursue the re-establishment of patriarchal subject boundaries.[58] This is not a Levite avenging his abused and murdered wife in her own right, for this is not a man who has respectfully and appropriately attended to her corpse and grieved for her destruction. Rather this is a man whose subjectivity and sense of

[55] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 14.
[56] Ibid., 15.
[57] Martha J. Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives: Kristeva on Women and Violence* (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1997), 30.
[58] Girard has noted at length the complex psychosocial interrelationship, apparent in primitive cultures, between real corpses, notions of impurity, and the spread of violence as a contagion within communities. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 28-33.

self has been threatened by the Benjamites.[59] He subsequently ignites this threat in other men as he broadcasts his experience.

As Martha Reineke has explained, in psychoanalytic terms, such a context as this elicits men to revisit developmental moments in early childhood that include the woman's body as a preferential site for re-establishing patriarchal subject boundaries. Through a Kristevan perspective, Reineke explicates that female bodies bear the marks of the maternal body over against which nascent subjects form as they violently wrest themselves free. When this subjectivity is threatened again, the female form figures as an optimum site upon which to retrace subject formation.[60] Furthermore, the violence of first subject formation etches a particular pathway to the murderous and the macabre – a phenomenon that explains the mutilation of the *pilegesh's* corpse. As Reineke states: "These first lessons in violence teach them that, should they ever find themselves back at the very threshold of meaning because of life-threatening conflict, if they hold close to the flesh of the victim and probe it, they will be able to summon the very powers of life itself from within its somatic depths."[61]

The female figure of this narrative thus becomes identifiable as a complex symbol that discloses androcentric patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. The text identifies the *pilegesh* explicitly as a substitute victim who is murdered and sacrificially dispensed with by her husband. It exposes women's vulnerability to men's persecution as a way of cathartically appeasing their rivalrous, hostile aggressions. The way the text outlines her explicit maltreatment illustrates the infectious, destructive, and cyclic nature of

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[59] As Reis highlights in "Levite's Concubine" (144), his later recounting of the violent events is "replete with references to himself".
[60] Reineke, *Sacrificed Lives*, 30, 32.
[61] Ibid., 89. See for further discussion Martha J. Reineke, "Sacrifice and Sexual Difference: Insights and Challenges in the Work of René Girard," in *Studies in Violence, Mimesis and Culture: For René Girard: Essays in Friendship and in Truth*, ed. Sandor Goodhart, Jorgen Jorgensen, and Tom Ryba (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2009), 252. ProQuest Ebrary.

androcentric patterns and processes of violence and victimhood. Her surrogate and scapegoated body has been shown to alleviate an immediate violent crisis for a time in Gibeah, but her violated corpse signifies that new crises inevitably arise that necessitate repeating the remedy of a violent, communal sacrificial act. The period of calm following the Gibeah outrage is only temporary. The next chapter of Judges continues to showcase Israel's social and religious decline as the men of Israel are caught up again in androcentric violence. In Judges 20 the leaders of all the tribes of Israel respond to the Levite's bloody call to muster. A new crisis unfolds as a great military assembly gathers ready for retributive war against the Benjamites upon hearing the circumstances that led the Levite to distribute his gruesome packages.

Intertribal War

While the narrative specifically concerning the unnamed *pilegesh* has come to an end, the effects of her rape, murder, and dismemberment continue to underpin the rest of the Book of Judges. These concluding chapters (Judg 20 and 21) signify to the reader another cycle of men's violent conflict and crises prompted by the events that concluded in the *pilegesh's* death. It illustrates that the subsequent violence and victimisation of Israel's intertribal war with Benjamin is grounded in a sacrificial consciousness that justifies its perpetration. Additionally, the text relays to readers once again that a resolution to male-generated crisis is found in the distinctive victimising of young women who, like the *pilegesh* before them, are helplessly caught in the dynamics of men's rivalry and aggression.

As Judges 20 begins, so does the momentum of large-scale violence as divergent factions of fighting men from across the tribes of Israel gather together as a unified militant mass. The text narrates that all the Israelites from Dan to Beersheba, and from the land of Gibeah, "came out as one man" (הֵעָדָה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד) (20:1). Similar to the scene of bonding between Jephthah and the elders of Gilead, these men also assemble "before the Lord in

Mizpah" (20:1; 11:11), thus before the YHWH shrine.[62] Like Jephthah and the Gilead elders, they too have marshalled under the presumption that war is imminent. The text describes the military mass as comprising four hundred thousand soldiers armed with swords (20:2). The narrative generates a further heightened atmosphere of imminent battle as it conveys that the Benjamites know the legions have assembled (20:2-3).

The text again illustrates to the reader the ignobility of the Levite. He sets about crafting a partial account of the Benjamites' violation to provide this war-ready crowd with all the justification they need to take 'righteous' retribution against them. The Levite explains to his audience via half-truths and embellishments the shameful act the Benjamite men of Gibeah committed in Israel (20:6). He details how they came after him, surrounding the house where he lodged, though he refrains from any acknowledgment of their intensions to sexually abuse him. The Levite embroiders his account instead by relaying that these men posed the utmost threat to his life – he declares to his listeners they meant to kill him (20:5). His further testimony, that "they raped my *pilegesh*, and she died" (20:5), is void of any acknowledgement that his *pilegesh* was in fact cast out to them for assault. Thus, the Levite conceals his own involvement in the violent proceedings that lead to her abuse and death. This lack of detail intimates to the amassed legions of Israel that the Benjamites took the girl from the house themselves before raping her to death. Following the Levite's incriminating account of the Benjamites, he goes on to rationalise his own scandalous treatment of the woman's body in light of all that had been done to *his pilegesh* (20:4, 5, 6). In a manner intended to justify his own macabre behaviour, he recounts that he dismembered and distributed her body because what the men of Gibeah did was "lewd and disgraceful" (20:6).

[62] Alice Logan, "Rehabilitating Jephthah," *JBL* 128, no.4 (2009): 673-674, doi:10.2307/25610213. Logan also discusses the commonality of Jephthah's social position and actions with King David's.

The reader is positioned, however, to observe the Levite's manipulation of the young woman's suffering and death to propel the warrior-men assembled to avenge the assault to his male honour. By means of his slanted account of events, the Levite exploits the woman's fragmented body to reaggregate himself into the safety of the wider community and to commence a new cycle of violence anchored within men's desires to prove and defend their masculinity over against other men. Via her dismembered carcass, men from across the tribes of Israel bond further together "as one man" (הָעֵדָה כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד) (20:8, 11) against the solitary tribe of Benjamin. Within a collective consciousness that has sanctioned another sequence of violence and victimisation, the assembled throng vows to "give them what they deserve for all this vileness done in Israel" (לַעֲשׂוֹת לְבוֹאָם לְגֶבַע בִּנְיָמִן כְּכָל־הַנְּבָלָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל) (20:10). When the Benjamites fail to deliver up the specific perpetrators so the united tribes can put them to death and purge the evil from Israel (20:12-13), conflict escalates to enmity with all of Benjamin. Notably, it is only after Israel has made their resolute decision to exact their own ideas of justice that they consult YHWH and determine that Judah shall be first into battle (20:18). As detailed earlier, the rest of this sequence witnesses to the calamitous crisis and near absolute genocide of Benjamin that is devised and implemented by Israel's warring men.[63]

Though the battle with Benjamin is over by the end of Judges 20, the element of crisis endures for the men of Israel. They come to realise the magnitude of the self-inflicted damage done to Israel as one of their tribes has been pressed to the brink of extinction. The resolution they find reveals again to the reader how women configure as a category of victims with ameliorating properties for men in crisis. Israel's remedy is realised through a new course of victimisation of women. This course is startling for its re-enactment of the type of abuse they had blamed and persecuted Benjamin for, though now sanction

[63] See for discussion of this segment, Chapter 5, pp. 181-182.

according to a transmuted consciousness that justifies it. As Peggy Kamuf states: "When Israel stops short of annihilating Benjamin, when the extinction of one of its members by the whole is at last understood as a form of self-mutilation, it achieves resolution by twice *repeating* Benjamin's crime."[64] That is, by seizing and raping young women. Israel assures Benjamin's future by violently appropriating four hundred virgins from Jabesh Gilead as wives for them, and by authorising the remaining Benjamite men to capture the virgins at Shiloh for themselves. The dramatic irony emphasises the embroilment of Israel's men in a sacrificial consciousness, as Israel "averts the threat to its unity and continuity as a whole by prescribing the crime that it had to avenge in the first place".[65]

The text relays that the men have justified their violent actions as necessary to the survival of Benjamin. However, the reader observes that the crisis is resolved at the expense of abused women - virgins substituted for the other daughters of Israel whose fathers had vowed them prohibited to the men of Benjamin. The reader is positioned to perceive that the personhood of these innocent women is utterly denied as, objectified and made subject to the overriding desires and power of men, their bodies are usurped and broken to suit the restorative, reordering designs of men.

The narrative's disclosure of the sacrificial treatment of these female figures is augmented by other textual elements that depict Israel's thorough entanglement in a sacrificial consciousness which justifies their perpetration of violence and victimhood. That the Israelites practice a destructive and violent theology is accentuated in relation to their sacrificial oath-taking noted in this final Judges chapter. The narrative relays that when in Mizpah the assembly had made a solemn vow to put to death anyone who failed to attend

[64] Peggy Kamuf, "Author of a Crime," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 193 (italics in original).
[65] Kamuf, "Author of a Crime," 193.

the gathering (21:5). It is in accordance with this vow, made of their own accord with no confirmation from the deity, that Israel then determines the families of Jabesh Gilead justifiably murdered and their virgin daughters stolen (21:8-10). Israel's self-serving and violent theology is also underscored in association with the Shiloh abductions. In one breath the Israelite men sustain ideas of integrity towards YHWH as they resolutely uphold another Mizpah vow to refuse Benjamite men their daughters in marriage (21:18, 20:1, 7). Yet, in the next breath, they openly urge acts of sacrilege as they induce the Benjamites to steal the women while they dance at a "festival of the Lord" (21:19-21).

In keeping with the cyclic patterns of sacrificial violence and victimhood observed in Judges, it appears reasonable to conclude that the presumed period of peace attained at the book's end is only temporary. The suggestion of new hostilities and conflict emerging are evident in the final passages. The men who held familial claim to the abducted women are noted as certain to respond heatedly to the attack upon their female property, and by inference their manhood. The leaders of Israel anticipate their resentment and devise a ready response: "When their fathers or brothers come to contend with us, we will say to them, 'Do us the favour of helping them, because we did not get wives for them during the war. You will not be guilty of breaking your oath because you did not give your daughters to them'" (21:22). Given all that the reader has observed before over the course of Judges, it appears doubtful that such a response will soothe the ire of those whose masculinity has been so wounded. Though the tribes and clans are noted to return to their homes and inheritances (21:24), the final verse reiterates that the volatile climate blighting Israel remains unchanged. The book closes with the same pronouncement with which the epilogue commenced its telling of Israel's amplified degeneration: "In those days Israel had no king; every man did as he pleased (אִישׁ הַיָּשָׁר בְּעֵינָיו יַעֲשֶׂה) (21:25).

Over the course of the narratives of the Levite and his *pilegesh*, and of Israel's ensuing internecine warfare, the Book of Judges evidences for the reader, via the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, the cyclic and self-destructive patterns and processes of human-centred violence and victimhood. Furthermore, these texts attest to the gendered characteristics of these patterns and processes. They depict men caught up in violent rivalry influenced by desires to perform normative, dominant masculinity. They show the distinctive vulnerable location and disposable quality of women as ready vehicles for channelling and resolving such conflicts. As the narratives disclose these patterns and processes, they destabilise the textual patterns of sacrificial myths. In the epilogue phase of Judges, the extensive human and masculine face of violence has been substantially unmasked from mystifying overlays, as denotations that YHWH is the cause and cure of the crises that plague Israel are disrupted. The reader is positioned to see that a transcendental entity is not responsible for the violence and victimhood that has transpired. Rather the reader is situated to ponder that the "God of Israel", to whom Israel attributes the violent devastation and to whom they cry bitterly "why has this happened to Israel?" (21:3), is not this kind of god.

Comparing Parallel Narratives

As with the narrative of Jephthah's daughter, scholars have been troubled by the absent deity and the lack of any intervention on the deity's part to rescue the Levite's *pilegesh* from her suffering and death, the likes of which occurs in the parallel text of Lot and the events at Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:1-29).[66] However, as previously shown, the absent deity is a crucial demythologising textual feature that is made all the more striking by comparison with Greco-Roman mythology. In such mythology, sexual victimisation of

[66] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 80; Sawyer, *God, Gender and the Bible*, 77-79.

women is recurrently depicted as the domain and privilege of deities, and a device that signifies "the enormous sexual prowess of the gods."[67] Furthermore, the significance of the absent deity and lack of divine intervention in Judges 19 is also demonstrated by comparison with the narrative of Lot, as it illustrates the biblical wresting away from conceptions of the violent sacred that are manifest in the Genesis text.

Classical Mythology, Deities, and Rape

The absent deity within the narratives of victimised women in the epilogue phase of Judges stands in stark contrast to the multitude of narratives in classical mythology that showcase male deities as primary instigators and performers of female abduction and rape. As Froma Zeitlin notes, the motif of male gods raping female gods or mortals "is one of the most characteristic features of classical mythology."[68] While such myths and their multiple variations are too numerous to explore in detail within this chapter and dissertation, a cursory gloss of some core storylines exemplifies the prevalence of positive representations of aggressive phallic power in association with male deities who rape females. As the following examples depict, the engagement of male deities in violent sexual acts are frequently favourably marked as they are shaped as supernatural *dalliances* that lead to prosperous outcomes, such as the birth of magnificent offspring and significant founding figures and events.[69]

In this regard, the supreme divinity, Zeus, stands out as a primary instigator and performer of abduction and rape. Among his many victims are Leda, Antiope, Callisto, and Europa. In each of these myths Zeus performs a fantastical feat of transformation to gain access to the object of his desires so to have his way with them. He rapes Leda in the form of a

[67] Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic," 150.
[68] Froma Zeitlin, "Configurations of Rape in Greek Myth," in *Rape*, ed. Sylvana Tomaselli and Roy Porter (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 122.
[69] Zeitlin, "Configurations of Rape," 125.

swan, Antiope in the form of a satyr, Callisto in the form of her beloved goddess, Artemis, and he abducts Europa for his later procreative pleasures while manifest as a handsome white bull. The result of these deceptions and outrages are prodigious births that lead to momentous events. Leda's rape yields an egg that issues forth the beautiful Helen, in relation to whom the Greeks eventually prove their military might against Troy.[70] Antiope births twin sons, Amphion and Zethos, who go on to achieve fame as founders of Thebes.[71] Callisto births Arcas, a legendary king of Arcadia, who is lauded as the country's greatest huntsman and for teaching his people weaving and breadmaking;[72] and Europa births the first Cretan king, the mighty and respected Minos.[73]

In Roman mythology the demigod, Romulus, (born of Rhea Silvia and Mars, the god of war),[74] also orchestrates the abduction and rape of women to serve significant founding enterprises. The narrative popularly known as *The Rape of the Sabine Women*, relays how in response to the refusal of surrounding tribes to grant Romulus and his ruffian men their

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[70] Homer, *Odyssey* 11.298–300; Ps.-Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women* 23a and 176 M-W; Euripides, *Helen* 16–21, 213–16, 256–9; Apollodorus 3.10.5–7. See Jennifer R. March, "Leda," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/leda/0. See also Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 51; Kenneth McLeish, "Leda," in *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/bloommyth/leda/0.

[71] Homer, *Odyssey* 11.260–5; Apollodorus 3.5.5, 3.10.1; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 6.110–11; Hyginus, *Fabulae* 7 and 8. See Jennifer R. March, "Antiope (1)," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/antiope_1/0; Kenneth McLeish, "Amphion and Zethus," in *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/bloommyth/amphion_and_zethus/0; Christopher Collard, Martin J. Cropp and J. Gibert, eds., *Euripides: Selected Fragmentary Plays*, Vol. 2 (Oxford: Aris and Phillips, 2004), 259-329; Keuls, *Reign of the Phallus*, 343.

[72] Euripides, *Helen*, 375–80; Apollodorus 3.8.2; Pausanias 1.25.1, 8.3.6–7, 8.9.2–4, 8.35.8, 10.31.10; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*. 2.405–531; Fasti 2.155–92. See Jennifer R. March, "Callisto ('Most Beautiful')," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/callisto_most_beautiful/0; Jennifer R. March, "Arcas," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/arcas/0.

[73] Homer, *Iliad*, 14.321–2; Ps. Hesiod, *Catalogue of Women*, 140–1 M-W; Apollodorus 2.5.7, 3.1.1–2, 3.4.2; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.836–75, 6.103–7. See Jennifer R. March, "Europa," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/europa/0.

[74] Kenneth McLeish, "Romulus and Remus," in *Bloomsbury Dictionary of Myth* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/bloommyth/romulus_and_remus/0.

daughters in marriage, Romulus contrives a plan to take them by force. He holds a great festival to which he invites the neighbouring tribes, then during the festivities the men of fledgling Rome chase off the unarmed Sabine men and take their daughters for themselves. In this myth, the initially terrified women quickly and happily acquiesce to their new position as wives and procreators for the emergent city, as Romulus assures them of proper marriage and they are wooed with romantic words from their captors.[75]

In Girardian terms these myths, which underpin the Greco-Roman cultural frameworks of antiquity, constitute sacrificial myths. That is, they function to conceal real victimhood behind the performances of duplicitous deities who engage in violent acts that effect beneficial outcomes. These accounts enabled Greco-Roman communities to explain and obscure their violence through narrative transformations that simultaneously mythologised and concealed the violence at its core.[76] While the double-faced deities of classical mythology evidence the phenomenon of double transference that accompanies the deification of scapegoated victims,[77] there is also another facet to the revealing and concealing of victimhood in these narratives. In one sense these legends signify the extensive violation of women within their narrative frames and thus within the social and cultural fabric of classical antiquity.[78] However, the reality of this violence is also substantially masked as it is rendered the behaviour of magical and mighty male deities.

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[75] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 1.9. See Jennifer R. March, "Romulus and Remus," in *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Oxbow Books, 2014), https://search-credoreference-com.ezproxy1.acu.edu.au/content/entry/oxbocm/romulus_and_remus/0.

[76] For discussion of the facets of scapegoating within classical Greco-Roman mythology, and the movement away from conceptions of mythic deities in the works of classical figures such as Plato, see René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Y. Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 76-94. See also Williams, *Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, 11.

[77] See Chapter 2, p. 67, for discussion regarding the advent of double-faced deities and the phenomenon of double transference, which accompanies the deification of scapegoated victims as figures who cause and cure crisis.

[78] The sacrificial nature of these texts is historically apparent within the cathartic dynamics of the Colosseum. As Jack Holland notes: "Some women were raped to death in the arena during the recreation of mythological scenes, usually enacting one of Zeus' numerous assaults in animal form on a mortal female." Jack Holland, *A Brief History of Misogyny: The World's Oldest Prejudice* (London: Robinson, 2018), 66.

The violence is minimalised and veiled insofar as it is depicted within erotic contexts that tell of the deity's 'amorous pursuits' rather than his will to exercise rape as a brutal weapon of masculine power.[79] The violence is further minimalised and veiled insofar as the beneficial outcomes of the assault suffice to offset the deity's deceit and violence, even to the point where the victimised women are represented as satisfied too with the end result of their molestation.

By contrast the Book of Judges lays bare the reality of men's enactment of violence upon women as a facet through which they alleviate hostile masculine rivalry and aggression and sustain the androcentric order. There are no extended eroticised scenes in which a fantastical, promiscuous, and sexually aggressive deity mystifies the reality that it is Israel's men who enact violent assault upon innocent women within their communities.[80] There are no textual depictions of any happily acquiescing victimised women who are ultimately satisfied with the effects of their abuse, that diminishes the deplorable nature of the assaults exacted upon them.[81] There are no overarching favourable outcomes that sufficiently and divinely offset the shameful male-performed abuse of women that the final chapters of the book attest to. Rather, these narratives depict that Israel has degenerated into cyclic patterns of violence and victimhood in accordance with a sacrificial

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[79] In this regard, Zeus' performance is fashioned according to his passionate admiration of beautiful women and relayed in erotic frames that moderate the violence. For example, it is while Leda strokes the swan's neck to soothe and revive it that Zeus penetrates her, and it is while Callisto is kissing the presumed Artemis that Zeus takes her. Europa caresses the handsome bull, adorns it with flowers and climbs atop him before Zeus abducts her to Crete where he later bestows gifts upon her.

[80] The brevity with which the acts of rape and abduction are recounted in Judges 19-21 precludes pornographic or voyeuristic effects. Certainly, there is violent pornographic narration within the Bible that metaphorically signifies the deity's involvement in, and justification of, the sexual abuse of female/feminised victims. But this is not so of the Book of Judges. See for detailed discussion of such pornographic imagery in the prophetic books, J. Cheryl Exum, "The Ethics of Biblical Violence Against Women," in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies, and M. Daniel Carroll R. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 248-271, ProQuest Ebook Central.

[81] Though this element has certainly been reflected in some commentaries. For Rashi, Saul was one of the Benjamite men instructed to abduct a dancing virgin for himself, though his shyness prevented him from doing so. One of the maidens pursued him, however, allowing him to capture her. Nicolas of Lyra supposed the abducted virgins 'probably" consented to marry their captors before they were 'known' by them. And Martin Luther also presumed that, like the abducted Sabine women, the abducted virgins of Shiloh too would have consented making the marriage valid. See for discussion Gunn, *Judges*, 249, 270.

consciousness that justifies alleviating male-generated crisis at the expense of women victims. In this way, the characters and narratives of female victims in the epilogue phase of Judges function entirely counter to the intricate victim concealing dynamics of Greco-Roman mythology. They expose not only the human-centred nature of the violence and victimhood that lies behind constructs of double-faced divinities, but also the gendered nature of this violence that plays out in distinctive ways upon women within androcentric societies.

Biblical Narrative: Sodom and Gomorrah

Similarly, the lack of divine intervention in Judges 19, which is probably the most prominent divergent feature that distinguishes it from the parallel narrative of Genesis 19, is representative of the biblical shift away from the textual patterns of sacrificial myths and the consciousness of the violent sacred. Though these two narratives hold much in common they markedly deviate as one continues the course of sacrificial myths while the other does not. Both narratives relay scenes of rising masculine conflict, undifferentiation, and crisis. In both accounts, travellers arrive into town at night-time and are offered hospitality by men who are not original inhabitants of the place (Gen 19:1-3; Judg 19:14-20). In each text scenes of hospitality and bonding are interrupted as local 'wicked' men surround the hosts' homes and pound upon their respective doors demanding they deliver up their male guests for sexual violation (Gen 19:3-5; Judg 19:22). Both Lot and the elderly Ephraimite protest against such evil intentions and endeavour to protect their male visitors by offering the aggressors two women upon whom they may redirect their hostilities (Gen 19:6-8; Judg 19:23-24). In both accounts the mob rejects the offer (Gen 19:9; Judg 19:25). It is at this point, however, that the narratives diverge as one abides by the patterns of sacrificial myths whereas the other destabilises them.

While Judges 19 depicts the surrogate/scapegoat victimhood of the *pilegesh* as central to alleviating the crisis and restoring order to the undifferentiated mob, Genesis 19 conceals these patterns of human violence behind an autonomously acting, violent deity. In Genesis 19 the deity influences the undifferentiation and violent crisis unfolding. Lot's guests are supernatural figures, angel-agents representing YHWH, and they effect a fantastical feat as they strike the ramping mob with blindness (Gen 19:11).[82] Though Lot offers substitute victims to appease the mob and thereby conclude the crisis, it is not them but rather supernatural intervention that cures the calamity. Similar to the myth of Noah, Lot (and his family) are singled out and spared annihilation. The angels safely usher them out of the city before the autonomously acting, destructive deity destroys it with burning sulphur rained down from heaven (Gen 19:16, 24). Thus, this narrative correspondingly reflects the version of patterns of sacrificial myths evident in the founding narrative of Noah and the flood – undifferentiation, conflict, and crisis, which is alleviated in association with a distinguished figure and an autonomous deity that both effects and cures the crisis through supernatural feats.[83]

Though there are numerous parallels between these two narratives, Judges 19 by comparison evidences the biblical wresting away from such conceptions of the violent sacred that conceal the dynamics of human violence and victimhood.[84] The narrative and figure of the Levite's *pilegesh* contravenes any mystification of violence behind mythical overlays centred on the violent, fantastical activities of a destructive and restorative deity. Consequently, as with the narrative of Jephthah's daughter, it is the very absence of an

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[82] See page 268-9 above for discussion on blindness/darkness as symbolic of violent undifferentiation.
[83] Girard has also noted in relation to the underlying mechanics of scapegoating evident in the narrative that, in addition to Lot as the sole survivor, "Lot's wife, who is changed into a pillar of salt, brings back into this story the motif of the single victim." René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, trans. S. Bann and M. Metteer (London: Athlone, 1987), 143.
[84] The dangerous conceptualisation of the violent sacred in association with the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative, continues in contemporary perceptions that understand the narrative as indicating God condones intolerance of homosexuals.

intervening deity in this Judge's narrative that works to stimulate a liberated consciousness as it discloses the mechanics of scapegoating - in this case, how the victimisation of women serves as a means for channelling men's violence and resolving masculine conflict and crisis.

More Dangerous Interpretations

Though Judges 19 perceptibly demystifies and exposes men's deplorable victimisation of women, the interpretive history of this text has included dangerous appropriation and dissemination of the *pilegesh's* experience of victimhood. Androcentric interpretive practices have perpetuated the sacrificial consciousness the text conceivably works against, as they have continued a perspective that condones and obscures her victimisation. The interpretive history of Judges 19 certainly reflects universal condemnation of the gang rape of the Levite's *pilegesh*.[85] However, the parameters of the young woman's domestic victimisation have frequently been shrouded by positive representations of the Levite and damning assessments of the *pilegesh*. In contrast to Jephthah's daughter who has traditionally been upheld as a positive model of feminine innocence and martyrdom, the unnamed woman of Judges 19 has frequently been condemned for infidelity to her honourable husband.

As David Gunn's systematic compilation of this narrative's ancient, medieval and early modern reception history shows, much interpretation over the centuries has aligned with the Levite's condemnation of the men of Gibeah and veiling of his own involvement in the outrage.[86] For Josephus and Pseudo Philo there is no casting out of the woman to the mob; rather the Benjamite men forcibly enter the host's home and seize her themselves. Josephus further portrays a tender Levite endeavouring to wake his dead wife, unaware of

[85] Gunn, *Judges*, 244.
[86] Ibid., 243-275.

the extent of her ordeal, to offer consolation in light of the fact she had not consented to the men's treatment of her.[87] The impression of the Levite as a caring husband has been rendered in various artworks that depict, for example, his efforts to prevent his wife's abduction under the threat of being beaten himself, and his distress and grief upon finding her fallen in the doorway.[88] The Levite's benevolent disposition has been further underpinned by sentiments that regard his act of retrieving his shameful wife from her father's house as an act of great mercy.[89]

For others, including Pseudo Philo, the Jewish scholar, Ramban (1194-1270), Nicolas of Lyra (1270-1349), Joseph Hall (1574-1656), Thomas Morgan (d. 1743), and Thomas Scott (1747-1821), there is no issue concerning the woman's abuse and death per se, for she had transgressed against her husband by playing the harlot.[90] For Nicholas of Lyra, the moral lesson to be deduced is that sensuality should be ruled by reason, as a wife should be ruled by her husband.[91] For Hall, the Levite's actions of casting the woman to the mob are indicative of his noble character. Certainly, he loved her or he would not have bothered to recover her after such depravity on her part; however, his honourable contempt for the 'unnatural wickedness' of the men of Gibeah surmounted his affection for her. John Kitto (1804-54) similarly relays that the threat of homosexual rape justifiably governs the Levite's conduct. It was "as a last resort" and "in the hope of diverting them from their abominable purpose" that the Levite put his wife out to the throng of aggressors.[92]

Some go further to contend that God actualised her just punishment by way of these violent men. As Hall explains: "She had voluntarily exposed herself to lust, now is exposed

[87] Ibid., 246.
[88] Ibid., 256-258.
[89] Ibid., 251-253.
[90] Ibid., 245-246, 254.
[91] Ibid., 246.
[92] Ibid., 255.

forcibly. Adultery was her sin; adultery was her death."[93] As Morgan sees it, her rapists merely gave her "too much of what she had liked but too well before."[94] For Scott: "Adultery was punishable by death: this woman having committed adultery, was about to escape; but in this dreadful manner her iniquity found her out, and she was punished in kind; yet this by no means implies that she did not repent and find mercy."[95] In such ways, the interpretive history of this narrative has perpetuated the woman's violent sacrificial treatment. It has masked the Levite's accountability and validated the woman's experience of violence as divine justice and fitting punishment reasonably administered through the violence of men. Accordingly, this manner of interpretation has served the androcentric social order as it has reinforced the expected roles and behaviour of women and wives, and validated men's use of violence upon women who transgress these expectations.

Authorial Blame

For those contemporary interpreters who have taken issue with the Levite and his violent actions,[96] there is similar concern to that discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the lack of any condemnation of the violence by the narrator.[97] Within feminist scholarship there has been a strong inclination to view the author's neutrality and lack of reproach of the abusers, as part of a wider agenda that continues the victimisation of women and their enculturation to delimiting androcentric codes of behaviour. As Trible has expressed, this is a narrative that "justifies the expansion of violence against women."[98] Hence, new ways of reading are required, for "to speak for this woman is to interpret against the narrator, plot, other characters, and the biblical tradition because they have shown her neither

[93] Quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 254.
[94] Quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 252.
[95] Quoted in Gunn, *Judges*, 254-255.
[96] Gunn notes also some historical commentary from Denis the Carthusian (1402-71) and Thomas E. Miller as interpreters who maintain the Levite's culpability. See for discussion Gunn, *Judges*, 246, 255.
[97] Monroe, "Disembodied Women," 45; Moster, "Levite of Judges," 728.
[98] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 83.

compassion nor attention."[99] For Exum, though the narrator positions the reader to feel moral outrage at the behaviour of the men of Gibeah and the Levite, the text nevertheless reinscribes phallocentric ideology that serves androcentric interests to control women's bodies and sexuality.[100] Exum contends that the text effects a "narrative punishment" that implicitly imparts warnings of terrible consequences to women who would endeavour to exert sexual autonomy.[101] For Alice Bach, the rape of the *pilegesh* suffices to thwart the much more serious offense of homosexual rape, thus it elicits no expression of moral outrage from the narrator.[102] The narrator also naturalises women's experience of rape, as the abduction of virgins as wives for Benjamin is also represented as necessary and natural. For Bach, these features illustrate how the biblical narrators "inscribe a rationale of oppression, violation, and exploitation within the very discourse of the biblical text" that promotes "an asymmetrical relationship between women and men, coding sexual violence in ways that make it culturally acceptable."[103]

Such critical positions remain imperative for their capacity to challenge the injurious potential of androcentric biblical narratives and interpretations that continue to obscure and sustain gendered violence. Yet, the reading proposed in this chapter suggests the narrative of Judges 19, and those of Judges 20 and 21, may also be read as countering the androcentric ideology they represent via their witnesses to the human-centred, gendered structures of violence and victimisation. As with the text of Jephthah's daughter, I have shown that the narration of Judges 19 paints a lucid picture of men's deplorable victimisation of a woman in a wider context of men's scandalous behaviour and violence. Thus, as other scholars have also concluded, the lack of explicit expression of

[99] Ibid., 86.
[100] Exum, "Raped by the Pen," 177.
[101] Ibid., 172, 200.
[102] Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic," 156-157.
[103] Ibid., 145, 153.

condemnation of this violence on the narrator's part, does not equate to impartiality or the condoning of it.[104] Like the narration of Jephthah's daughter, the biblical author here evidently presents the men of Israel and their violent actions in a negative light, while refraining from expressions that motivate blame and accusations - in other words, the fundamental dispositions that inspire and instigate the cyclic nature of scapegoat violence.

Instead, the narration lays bare the patterns and processes of sacrificial violence in a manner that would thwart them. The narration facilitates a liberated consciousness alert to the processes of sacrificial/scapegoat victimhood which unfold in gendered ways within androcentric contexts. With the textual patterns of sacrificial myths disrupted in Judges 19, the dynamics of distorted desire that lead to rivalry, crises, and restored order through victimisation become discernible. This narrative can be determined for its witness to the significant violence men pose, and do, to each other according to constructs that influence their subjectivity, desires, and agency to perform dominant masculinity. Critically, the female biblical victim of this narrative - the betrayed, tortured, raped, murdered, dismembered, and dispersed woman - can also be perceived as far more than the sum of her suffering, as she is instrumental to the disclosure of women as a scapegoat category and the demystification of gendered patterns and processes of violence and victimhood that underly and sustain androcentric societies.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has demonstrated how, through the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, the narrative of Judges 19 may be perceived as undermining the textual patterns of sacrificial myths and the consciousness of the violent sacred that conceals victims. This chapter has established the pivotal role the victimised woman plays within the text and Judges corpus,

[104] Reis, "Levite's Concubine," 126. Stuart Lasine, "Guest and Host in Judges 19: Lot's Hospitality in an Inverted World," *JSOT* 9, no. 29 (1984): 38, doi:10.1177/030908928400902903.

as a liberatory figure who exposes women's distinctive vulnerability to violence as a particular category of scapegoat victim within androcentric contexts. Hence, this chapter has established how Judges 19 can be redeemed beyond its androcentric violence and history of detrimental androcentric interpretation, as a text that challenges androcentric consciousness and structures of gendered violence through its exposition of women's victimhood.

CHAPTER 8: LIBERATING FEMALE SCAPEGOATS

Experiences of Female Scapegoats

In light of the prior readings of the narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh*, the following discussion sets out further implications for comprehending the liberatory potential and contemporary relevance of these texts of extreme masculine violence. In particular, I explicate the significant import of female biblical victims as affective narrative figures with the potential to induce a liberating momentum within human consciousness through their witness to gendered violence. Lastly, I discuss in further detail how these narratives and female victims may be read as capable of influencing readers to move beyond androcentricity and its structures of violence so women and men might live in richer relationship with each other.

Androcentric Biblical Texts of Extreme Violence as Liberating

Central to this dissertation has been investigating if androcentric biblical texts that depict men's extreme victimisation of women can be reclaimed for any inherent positive value. The findings of this dissertation have realised that such texts do possess intrinsic liberatory significance when read and understood through the lens of mimetic and feminist theory. This interpretive model engages the androcentric language and content of violent biblical narratives as it explicitly stands in the primary text, including their alignment with the oppression of women and women's experience. It also effectively probes the deeper substructures of androcentric enculturation that cause and sustain gendered patterns of violence. In particular, this interpretive model illustrates that recognising the androcentric context is integral to the liberatory momentum of violent biblical narratives, as it is in relation to this context that women's victimhood is so strongly exposed. As this

dissertation has shown via the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, these androcentric narratives may be perceived as effecting a critique of androcentric culture. They witness to the complex and volatile relational dynamics arising from hierarchical gendered enculturation that locates men as superior to women. They also accentuate the devastating predominance of men's violence and the potential of this violence to be channelled upon women.

Through this dissertation's interpretive lens, the texts of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* become identifiable as narratives that attest to gendered patterns and processes of victimisation within their androcentric settings, and thus by extension within androcentric cultures. Certainly, there are complex variables in different androcentric societies that shape structures of violence.[1] Yet, these biblical narratives and their female victims disclose, in accordance with their commonality with contemporary girls' and women's experiences of men's violence, the deeply rooted socialising structures of androcentric cultures that underpin this form of violence. In other words, these biblical narratives and female victims exemplify the fundamental organisation of androcentric societies according to gender norms that systematically devalue femaleness itself. This is a devaluation that continues to mark girls and women out for victimisation by men and influence their experiences of violence and victimhood.[2]

Critically, these narratives and female victims illustrate that the patterns and processes of violence in androcentric societies are divergently experienced by women and men due to gendered socialisation. At one level, these narratives signify the volatile human dynamics of imitated, distorted desire that gives rise to rivalry, conflict, and crisis, and how such

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[1] Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Feminist Theory: A Philosophical Anthropology*, ed. Ann E. Cudd and Robin O. Andreasen (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 146-47.
[2] Alan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 24.

resultant disorder is overcome through the phenomenon of redirecting hostilities onto isolated figures. At another level, these narratives demonstrate that these patterns and processes of violence are gendered as enculturation into androcentricity's hierarchical binary gender consciousness influences women's and men's subjectivity, desires, and agency in divergent ways. These, in turn, influence and accustom men to be performers of violence and women to be vulnerable to that violence.

The narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* illustrate that men's experience of violence is significantly constructed in relation to the foremost androcentric discourse that influences men to embody and perform characteristics of dominant masculinity deemed normative for males. This enculturation induces men to desire and pursue ways of being that embody strength, independence, status, and power, with the agency to control resources, self, and others. Yet, these biblical narratives additionally represent how this enculturation positions men to be in rivalrous relationship with each other and to be drawn into violent performance with other men as they vie to substantiate their dominant masculine subjectivities and identities. These biblical narratives accordingly accentuate prevailing features of violence in androcentric cultures: men are characteristically socialised to believe that performing violence is a way of demonstrating masculinity, and men overwhelmingly configure as both perpetrators of physical violence and as victims of men's violence.[3]

These narratives also illustrate that girls' and women's experiences of violence and victimhood is substantially constructed in relation to the foremost androcentric discourse that influences men to perform and embody dominant masculinity. The narratives

[3] Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 4; John Archer, "Violence Between Men," in *Male Violence*, ed. John Archer (London: Routledge, 1994), 121; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Study on Homicide 2013: Trends, Contexts, Data* (2013), 13, https://www.unodc.org/documents/gsh/pdfs/2014_GLOBAL_HOMICIDE_BOOK_web.pdf.

examined in this dissertation exemplify that the dominant discourse renders girls and women distinctively vulnerable to violence, as in androcentric cultures they are subject to socialisation that locates them as normatively subsidiary in relation to men. Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* illustrate that androcentric enculturation which codifies and conditions women as secondary and subject to men's authority, also positions them as distinctively susceptible to victimisation through degrees of devaluation, disempowerment, and isolation. Jephthah's daughter also exemplifies how girls and women are socialised to participate in their vulnerability and victimisation as they are habituated to perform delimited subjectivities and identities. These identities are formed with distorted desires and agency that have been influenced and co-opted in detrimental, self-sacrificing ways in service of the androcentric order. The Levite's *pilegesh* represents further how androcentric cultures can come to constrain girls' and women's desires and agency even to the point of nullifying them completely as they are made subject to the desires and agency of men. These two biblical victims thus illustrate how androcentric societies configure girls and women, irrespective of their social standing,[4] as exploitable objects within a category of expendable victims.

Further to the interpretive vantage point of mimetic and feminist theory, these biblical narratives foster deeper conceptualization into *how* and *why* gendered violence against women transpires as it does, even in present-day societies where sincere efforts have been mobilised in some domains to alleviate it. These narratives signify *how* men's enculturation and embroilment in androcentricity generates distinctive distorted desires that lead men into rivalry and conflict with other men in pursuit of performing dominant masculinity. These narratives exemplify through their female biblical victims *how* this

[4] Both victims were 'insiders' to their communities; however, while one was located as subordinate to other women/wives as a 'secondary' wife, the other held higher status as the daughter of the head of Gilead/Israel.

destructive masculine violence attains a mode of resolution through cathartically redirecting it upon socially subordinate and segregated female bodies. Consequently, these female biblical victims signify *why* this form of gendered violence transpires and prevails as it does, as it stems from, and functions to alleviate, calamitous masculine aggression. Put another way, in light of these narratives and their female victims, the prolific and enduring quality of men's victimisation of women becomes perceptible as intrinsic to the preservation and stability of androcentric cultures, as this victimisation enables men to channel and vent their aggressions and reassert the androcentric social order.

Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* also represent how the subsidiary location of women in androcentric societies serves as a socially encompassing means of channelling and containing violence. Jephthah's daughter illustrates how women are located within the *private* domestic domain as viable sites for cathartically absorbing the *individual, personal* pressures and aggressions of fathers, and by inference husbands, brothers, uncles, or masters, as men strive to fulfil the distorted binary expectations of normative masculinity.[5] The Levite's *pilegesh* exemplifies further how women are situated beyond the domestic sphere as expedient locales for absorbing the violence that transpires between men at a *communal, public* level.[6]

As this dissertation has shown, the narratives and characters of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* bring to light, through their explicit demystification of victimhood, the distinctive scapegoat location and function of women within androcentric societies. Subsequently, reading biblical narratives of men's extreme violence against women through the dialogical lens of mimetic and feminist theory, facilitates understanding how

[5] Michael Kaufman, ed., "The Construction of Masculinity and the Triad of Men's Violence," in *Beyond Patriarchy: Essays by Men on Pleasure, Power, and Change* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1987), 12.
[6] Patricia Klindienst, "Intolerable Language: Jesus and the Woman Taken in Adultery," in *Shadow of Spirit: Postmodernism and Religion,* ed. Philippa Berry and Andrew Wernick (London: Routledge, 1992), 229, 230.

these texts convey to humanity, contra to other contemporaneous mythology, the dynamics of violence and victimhood so humanity might move beyond subjection to them. These narratives and their female victim characters become highly relevant, as they draw us to comprehend our embroilment in gendered patterns and processes of violence, and thus to foster a consciousness that enables us to wrest ourselves free from them.

Female Biblical Victims Cultivating Liberating Imaginations

Further to understanding how female biblical victims stimulate a liberatory consciousness is comprehending their ability to affect their audience in ways that foster a 'caring imagination'[7] and an empathic responsiveness towards the victimised other. As Maurice Hamington has discussed at length,[8] philosophers such as David Hume,[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty,[10] Adam Smith,[11] and Edith Stein[12] have stressed that the imagination is critical to cultivating the human capacity to empathise with others. It is via the imagination that persons can transcend their own experiences and contexts to encounter the subject positions and experiences of others.[13] Accordingly, the female biblical victims as read in this dissertation, may be discerned as figures that stimulate the cultivation of such an

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[7] For extensive discussion on this topic and term see Maurice Hamington, who notes: "The term *caring imagination* explicitly acknowledges the sympathetic element of the imaginative." Maurice Hamington, *Embodied Care: Jane Addams, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Feminist Ethics* (Baltimore: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 66.

[8] Hamington, *Embodied Care*. (See especially chapter 3.)

[9] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd ed, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978). See also James Engell, *The Creative Imagination*: *Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

[10] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 1994); Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, ed. Claude Lefort, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

[11] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie (London: Oxford University Press, 1976).

[12] Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. Waltraut Stein (Washington: ICS, 1989); See also Debra Shogan, *Care and Moral Motivation* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1988); Mark Johnson, *Moral Imagination*: *Implications of Cognitive Science for Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon, 1995).

[13] As Adam Smith has explicated in *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (9), it is via the imagination that we may place ourselves in a sufferer's situation and "enter as it were into his body and become in some measure the same person."

imagination as they illuminate women's experience of victimhood. These characters and their experiences are intrinsic to narrative dynamics and imagery that entail the capacity to provoke sensory embodied affects within the reader. Thus, they induce the reader to imagine and experience, as best they can, their social context and distinctively gendered experiences of victimisation.

As the previous chapters of exegesis have shown, the biblical witness to the violent victimisation of women at the hands of dishonourable men is striking in its frankness. What is more, the narratives of Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* construct highly poignant scenes capable of producing affective experiences within the reader as they underscore this victimisation as lamentable tragedy. The reader is situated, for example, to painfully register the victimisation to come as Jephthah's daughter dances out in all her joy and youthful innocence to greet her father, and so seals her fate to be murdered by him to uphold his ill-conceived vow. The reader is also positioned to feel deeply disturbed and aggrieved at the sight of the Levite's *pilegesh*, who is made an abject victim in a world determined by men who closed ranks against her and left her to lie tortured, raped, and deserted in a doorway with her hands upon the threshold. If we perceive these poignant scenes as integral to narrative design, and constructed to emotively move those who engage them, then these female characters become potent figures. They become potent in their capacity to foster a caring imagination as they draw readers into sympathetic relationship with them as victimised women through the sensory/emotional/embodied experiences that narrative dynamics relay and inspire.[14]

[14] For extended discussion on the capacity of literature and their characters to move readers' emotions, and therefore cultivate moral imaginations in ways that advance social ethics see Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*. For discussion on sensory experience generating 'sympathetic relation' with others see Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 227-230.

As read through the lens of mimetic theory, the affective dimension of these female victim characters is located within the biblical momentum that works to demythologise the violent sacred. In this regard Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* impress upon their readers scenes of human-caused and perpetrated scapegoat violence. These narratives work free from mystifying depictions of an interfering, fantastical deity. Correspondingly, they are devoid of traces of the human phenomenon of deifying victims. As such, these two murdered figures signify 'flesh and blood' female victims and their male victimisers. Though Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* are marginal figures, they transcend their peripheral location as the narratives and male characters within them come to orbit around their vulnerable and victimised bodies. Subsequently, these victims are no longer vague, remote entities but pivotal and central individuals. They become girls/women with faces, presence, and personhood that hold continuity with the rest of womankind and humanity; and so, they may elicit an empathetic response from those who encounter them. In Levinasian terms, they become women with faces that 'speak' to us and demand an ethical reaction from us to do all that we can to prevent such suffering and murder.[15]

Within the demythologising momentums of these texts, these female biblical victims subsequently suffice to urge human consciousness to move beyond all mythology that conceals and sustains patterns and processes of violence and victimhood.[16] This encompasses the mythology that underpins and sustains the hierarchical consciousness of androcentric cultures and their patterns of gendered violence. These female victims may be read as countering the androcentric mythic fabric that upholds men's superiority over women as natural and normal. For they draw the reader through and beyond their

[15] Emanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburg: Duquesne University Press, 2015), 197-201.
[16] Though myths in Western culture no longer conceal human violence through the deification of victims, myths do still endure and function according to the same fundamental dynamic - the convictions and will of the dominant group/crowd.

namelessness and silencing to comprehend how they have been socialised into a world that has inscribed an inferior status upon them. These victimised women subsequently challenge the delimiting quality of gender specific socialisation that androcentricity deems natural and normal for females. They expose as they exemplify the tendency of this socialisation to distort and deny women's desires and agency, and to devalue, disempower, and isolate them in ways that leave them vulnerable to victimisation.

These female victims also confront the androcentric consciousness that tolerates, justifies, and obscures men's violence as a natural and normal expression of masculinity. They illustrate via their explicit victimhood that such enculturation also distorts men's subjectivity, desires, and agency. Androcentric enculturation influences men to objectify and exploit women, and to enact destructive performances of power as oppressors and perpetrators of abuse. These female biblical victims disrupt the myriad of auxiliary myths that androcentric consciousness engages to justify and obscure women's experience of violence and deny responsibility for it. Insofar as they expose the violence of androcentricity's hierarchical binary consciousness, they also challenge the hierarchical binary structures that systematically disempower others deemed different and inferior – people of colour, of ethnic and religious minorities, the poor, the disabled, children, and non-heterosexual persons. Thus, these female biblical victims can be perceived as 'imploding the text from within'. They draw women (and men) to cultivate new language and discourses that expose, disable, and transform the hierarchical, mythic structures that sustain injurious androcentricity which have denied the diversity of human experience.[17]

[17] Rita M. Gross, *A Garland of Feminist Reflections* (California: University of California Press, 2009), 57; Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," trans. Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen, *Signs* 1 (1976): 875-893, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173239. See also Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 6, 94; Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), 180-190.

When read through the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, these female biblical victims become foremost figures who prompt us to stand attentively and empathetically alongside them. In doing so, they encourage readers and listeners to cultivate an awareness of the enduring and hidden patterns and processes of gendered violence that ensnared these women and continue to trap girls and women today. This awareness is liberating, for as these patterns and processes are demystified and demythologised, they lose their hidden quality and thus the means by which they most effectively operate. In this regard, female biblical victims and their narratives mobilise a platform capable of stimulating an empathetic imagination and a resultant disruptive new knowledge with the potential to curtail victimizing structures inherent in androcentric societies. As these female victims rouse their audience to perceive how hierarchical consciousness shapes gendered violence, they stimulate a liberating awareness that facilitates women and men to resist injurious androcentric enculturation and move beyond androcentricity itself as the dominant social ordering paradigm. Overarchingly, these female victims signify how both women and men are distinctively, though also communally, dehumanised when they are positioned through hierarchical binary gender differentiation to be in distorted, inequitable relationship with each other.

Empowering, Generative Victim Consciousness

In light of the capacity of female biblical victims to confront us with enduring patterns of gendered violence, these characters transcend their victimisation and suffering to become potent and powerful figures. These figures inspire a transformative victim consciousness that realises the deep hurt and injury that is done to the self, and to other girls and women, by androcentricity. This is not a consciousness of victimisation that renders the self

perpetually stigmatized and crippled in its effects.[18] Rather, this victim consciousness is empowering and positively generative as it unearths the hidden processes that covertly sustain androcentric enculturation and gendered violence, so they might be transformed. As Sandra Bartky expresses of the intelligibility of a victim consciousness for women: "To apprehend oneself as victim is to be aware of an alien and hostile force outside of oneself which is responsible for the blatantly unjust treatment of women and which enforces a stifling and oppressive system of sex-role differentiation…. The consciousness of victimisation is immediate and revelatory; it allows us to discover what social reality is really like."[19]

Through their explicit victimhood, Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* prompt women to consider how androcentric enculturation has shaped their own subjectivities, identities, desires, and agency in adverse ways, and rendered them vulnerable to victimisation and layers of oppression. The potency of these characters lies in their capacity to press women to contemplate who they might more authentically become if they could exceed the dominating and punitive androcentric conditioning that has held their bodies, desires, and agency in check for so long.[20] They motivate an empowering, generative victim consciousness that urges women to mitigate their vulnerable social location through unifying, reclaiming, and retaining their power to self-determine and

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[18] Scholars are of course right to be wary of the allocation of the term 'victim' to women, as it manifests disempowering connotations that reduce women to their experiences of violence and infers they will perform a certain diminished powerlessness for the remainder of their lives. For discussion of the term 'victim' as applied to women see Ilse Mullner, "Lethal Differences: Sexual Violence as Violence Against Others in Judges 19," in *Judges: A Feminist Companion to the Bible (Second Series)*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 126-127; Joel Best, "Victimization and the Victim Industry," *Society* 34, no. 4 (1997): 13, https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy2.acu.edu.au/docview/61434396?accountid=8194.

[19] Sandra Lee Bartky, "Toward a Phenomenology of Feminist Consciousness," in *Femininity and Domination*: *Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (London: Routledge, 1990), 15-16.

[20] Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," *Whole Earth Review*, no. 63 (1989): 66, http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/A7675165/AONE?u=acuni&sid=AONE&xid=34db47dc; Cixous, "Laugh of the Medusa," 880; Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 63-82.

direct their own lives in ways that resist, disrupt, and transform androcentric enculturation and its patterns of violence. This includes building relationships and alliances between women of diverse ages, abilities, nationalities, sexualities, ethnic, religious and class backgrounds, and thereby challenging androcentricity's hierarchical structures that have oppressed some women's lives more extensively than others.

Conceptualising female biblical victims in this way, via the lens of mimetic and feminist theory, accentuates the capacity for the female gaze to be mobilised as a privileged site of difference and deconstruction of the dominant culture. Importantly, this platform is not one that lays blame upon men - a position that reasserts the typology of binary oppositionalism between men and women via an inverted sexism.[21] This lens conceptualises that androcentricity functions in association with humanity's need for social ordering,[22] and lamentably distorts boys' and men's subjectivity, desires, and agency in service of such order. Subsequently, these female biblical victims positively challenge men to come to terms with the distinctive nature of men's violence and victimhood. They encourage them to journey out of androcentric consciousness through reimagining who they might more authentically be if they were not subject to the enculturation androcentricity deems normative for them. This challenge is distinctive, however, insofar as it urges men to critically comprehend their privileged and empowered social location within androcentricity's gender hierarchy. It challenges them to reflect on how their self is diminished by androcentricity, as well as their relationships with women and other men.

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[21] Susan Nowak, "The Girardian Theory and Feminism: Critique and Appropriation," *Contagion* 1 (1994): 27, doi:10.1353/ctn.1994.0000; Tina Chanter, *Gender: Key Concepts in Philosophy* (London: Continuum, 2006), 111-112; Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, *Signs* 7, no. 1 (1981): 27, http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173503.

[22] For discussion on Girard's concept of the process of hominization, and control of violence, as contingent on the cultural manifestation of social differentiation and hierarchical structures that become 'naturalized by culture,' see Chris Fleming, *René Girard: Violence and Mimesis* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), 73. For discussion of patriarchal culture, hierarchical binary conceptualisation of males and females, and the undergirding belief "that hierarchy is the only alternative to chaos…" see Johnson, *Gender Knot*, 38.

These potent and empowering female biblical victims consequently inspire the formation of alternate personhoods that are positively counter-cultural and generative of richer relationships. As these female figures destabilise the mythology that sustains androcentric norms, they open spaces for human formation according to different mimetic models who motivate other ways of being and flourishing in the world. From a liberating awareness of our embroilment in clandestine patterns and processes of gendered violence, we become freer to intentionally choose alternative models to relate with. These models can positively influence the formation of our desires, our life-force, our *jouissance*, so as to live more authentically and harmoniously in the world. We become capable of enacting our journey of becoming in ways less prescribed by drives anchored in a sense of 'lack of being' - a sense of lack that is vulnerable to the sway of the dominant discourse and its impressing of desires to seek identity in androcentric gender norms. We become freer to make our unique journey of human becoming with the awareness that we do not need to strive after culturally contrived notions of normative being, for we already hold unmitigated and eternal being in and before a holy, pacific and loving God.

Perceived in this way, these female biblical victims press for an awareness that communal life is impoverished when it is constructed and confined according to an androcentric worldview. Subsequently they urge humanity to cultivate new non-hierarchical ways of ordering and harmonising society beyond a single subject/male-centred reality, that realises the latent potential for mutual enrichment and relationality between two equally valued subjectivities - female and male. Yet further than this, they challenge humanity to organising principles that honour and are enriched by *multiple* imaginings, that respect the needs of diverse personhoods to live authentically and to flourish through active participation in a collectively negotiated world.

Conclusion

In view of the above, shining a light upon the female scapegoats rendered so explicit within particular biblical narratives, enables their wider liberating potentialities to be realised. In other words, once we liberate these female figures from vantagepoints confined by androcentric textual features and interpretation, and give them due attention as characters that confront us with girls' and women's experience of oppression in a male-centred world, they may become liberating figures for us. As this dissertation has shown, such narratives of men's extreme violence against women are redeemable. They hold intrinsic, liberatory value primarily through their explicit witness to gendered victimhood and exposure of women as a particular scapegoat group. Such violent narratives may be reclaimed in a manner that recognises them as highly relevant to contemporary times and the enduring issue of men's prolific performance of violence that frequently targets girls and women. Through their example, Jephthah's daughter and the Levite's *pilegesh* perceptibly expose humanity's enduring entanglement in gendered patterns and processes of violence. Thus, they proffer a new space for a liberated consciousness to take effect with the faculty to mitigate against these structures.

This dissertation has demonstrated how reading violent biblical narratives through the interpretive model of mimetic and feminist theory becomes a viable and valuable heuristic tool for women and men who wrestle with the detrimental gender constructs in the Bible and in wider society. This model offers people a way to perceive a liberation dynamic operative within biblical texts that have appeared contrary to any such liberating thrust. Notably, this dissertation has illustrated that biblical narratives that portray persecuted women must not be side-stepped, sanitized, or disclaimed. For they hold the capacity to challenge our deep-seated cultural conditioning and violent practices in ways that draw us into positive relationship with each other and with a pacific and loving God.

The viability of this lens, as determined in this dissertation, signifies the potential of its ongoing application to biblical texts of violence. This would seem especially worthwhile in light of this model's capacity to generate readings that challenge and guard against the misappropriation of biblical content to sustain the subsidiary and vulnerable location of girls and women. Other non-canonical and mythological texts telling of persecution could also be explored for their intricacies and expressions of gendered violence. Lastly, this interpretive model and theoretical framework provide conceptual tools relevant to researchers, policy writers, and practitioners who work to comprehend and stem structures of violence and support survivors of abuse. Subsequently this analytical lens merits application to contemporary social contexts, so as to facilitate deconstructing gendered violence and developing enhanced responses to curb it.

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