

# LOGOS

2020/2021  
#6



ANDREWS | CÔTÉ | HUNTER | LYNCH | POGUE | ROGAK

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We would like to begin by acknowledging that the land on which we gather is the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the **xwməθkwəy̓əm** (Musqueam), **Skwxwú7mesh** (Squamish), **Stó:lō** and **Səlílwətaʔ/Selilwitulh** (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

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# PREFACE

As editor-in-chief, it is my pleasure to introduce the 2020-2021 issue of LOGOS. LOGOS is the undergraduate journal of the Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies Student Association, and their continuous support is the reason our journal is now in its sixth year of publication.

It is difficult not to mention the current status quo of the world that we live in and the range of difficulties it has brought upon all of our lives in this introduction; for all their effort and dedication into this issue while the global pandemic rages on, I would like to begin by thanking the editorial board—Clare Horner, Chris Young, Grace Guy, Katarina Shaw, Kristina Shishkova, Layal Farah, Sarp A. Demiral, and Thea Bergh Skeide. I also offer my gratitude towards Chief Submissions Officer Ashley Samsone for facilitating communications and her adept organization of near fifty submissions this year. Our editorial team is in turn indebted to the members of the CNERS faculty whose advice, supervision, and assistance were pivotal in the publication of this issue. In particular, the unexhausting aid and support of Odessa Cadieux-Rey for not only LOGOS but all of us students throughout our undergraduate degree, cannot be put into words. I am also grateful towards Graham Butler for allowing the use of his design template for the fifth issue and to those who helped me wrangle InDesign into shape. On behalf of the whole LOGOS team, I thank all those who submitted papers to LOGOS this year and you, the reader, who downloaded this paper. I hope this issue not only continues to highlight the diversity of the Ancient Mediterranean but also the diversity of those who are fascinated by its rich history.

This year, I am delighted to introduce to you six essays. In “A City of Brick and Marble: The Tumultuous Life of Monuments in Republican and Imperial Rome,” Isabeau Andrews examines the contrast in purposes behind alterations to the Roman Forum and Curia during Republic and Imperial Rome. Anisa Côté brings a site report through her experience excavating as part of a fieldschool offered by our department in partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at Horvat Midras. Her “Written Report: Horvat Midras” sets precedence as the first site report published in LOGOS and it explores the excavational and diverse history of the site. In “All the King’s Horses: The Role of the Horse in Alexander the Great’s Legacy,” Kiara Hunter takes us to the time of Alexander the Great as she explores the history of the ideological and practical importance of the horse and their relationship with humankind. Tyler Lynch argues that Paul conceives his power and authority through his weakness in his mystical experiences in his essay, “Made Perfect in Weakness: The grounds of Pauline authority in weakness and mystical experience.” In “Flowers and Serpents: Reading Gender and Sexuality in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel,” Finlay Pogue reexamines the roles of Potiphar’s wife and Tamar in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel through feminist and gender theory to provide insight into gendered imbalances and sexuality as social currency. Pippa Rogak concludes this issue with their essay on “Like a Natural Woman: Iron Age Contexts for the Representations of Female Characters in Judges 4 and 5” by examining cultural and literary precedents in Iron Age Syro-Palestine for the women of the Hebrew bible, in particular, Deborah and Jael of Judges 4 and 5, to argue that there is a wider tradition of female authority in the Iron Age Mediterranean.

As I end my term as editor-in-chief, I am honoured to pass the baton to Ashley Samsone, editor-in-chief for Logos’s seventh issue. I look forward to seeing the continued brilliance of the students of our department.

I again thank everyone involved from the bottom of my heart, and without further ado, I welcome you to the sixth issue of LOGOS.

Lorrieya Zhang  
*Editor-in-Chief*

# A CITY OF BRICK AND MARBLE: THE TUMULTUOUS LIFE OF MONUMENTS IN REPUBLICAN AND IMPERIAL ROME

ISABEAU ANDREWS

**Abstract:** This essay argues that, while individuals within the Roman Republic used sites, such as the Forum and Curia to portray personal glories to gain political power, these sites were overall made to emphasize the glories of the state and its people. In contrast, the emperors of Imperial Rome altered the public spaces of Rome to further portray personal glories and create an environment of spectacle, stripping away the meaning held by public sites within the Republic, just as power was essentially stripped from the people of Rome with the rise of the emperor. The Roman Forum and Imperial Fora will be used to demonstrate the changing connection between public space and power during the Republic and Imperial age. This will be followed by a comparison of the Curia, the site of democratic debate and action, and the Imperial Palaces, the vast living complex for the later emperors of Rome. These examples will demonstrate how the nature of monuments within Rome altered along with the political outlook of the age.

The common sites brought to mind by the phrase Ancient Rome are those of vast stadiums and grand bathhouses, stately villas and organized military camps. To many the concept of Rome is a picture of an imposing marble city frozen in history. This image is however misleading. Rome was not a static entity, and its important monuments were constantly changing. There has never been one grand marble site which encompasses the idea of Ancient Rome. Roman Historian Diane Farvo states that the huge variety of grand monuments create a “collective sense of grandeur, minimizing the distinctiveness of any single object to stand as a metonym for the urban whole.”<sup>1</sup>

As Rome developed its power dynamics altered and caused its symbolic sites to alter in meaning. The city itself became a museum for its own past glories through its abundance of monuments even within other monuments, to the extent that the history of the Romans was “encapsulated in every inch of Rome.”<sup>2</sup> Rome was, through both the Republic and the Empire, a constantly changing environment, reflecting the values of the time. Therefore, Ancient Rome cannot be encapsulated as the liberty evoked by the senate house or the violence

portrayed in the Colosseum. Rome presents a multiplicity of changing meanings attached to the city. The emperor Augustus once stated that he found Rome “a city of bricks and left it a city of marble.”<sup>3</sup> But Rome was always in the process of advancement, with each age ushering in the feeling of a new city with different values. This paper argues that the city of Rome was not a static entity composed of timeless monuments but rather its political spaces altered in meaning and usage as Rome shifted from a Republic into an Empire, causing the key monuments of Rome to shift away from representations of the state and its power to instead emphasize the glory and authority of the emperor.

## The Concrete and the Intangible

Ancient Rome’s thousand-year dynasty has left an unmistakable mark on the world. The Latin language remains on various currencies and Roman architecture remains prevalent in many state buildings. Rome itself to this day is referred to as a symbol for intellect, liberty, and progress, as well as being a symbol of violence, oppression, and brutality. To discuss how one city came to be symbolic of so many different concepts, the idea of symbolism needs to be clarified. A symbol is defined as “a concrete reality...

that communicates something intangible.”<sup>4</sup> Thus a Roman temple could be an empty building, but it communicated to its visitors the intangible feeling of the power of their gods.

## The Forum Romanum and the Imperial Fora

During the age of the Republic the Forum Romanum was dubbed the “heart of the city,”<sup>5</sup> however with the rise of the Empire it was increasingly overshadowed by the new Imperial Fora, which concealed the values of Republican Rome behind the opulence of Imperial competition. This is not to say that the Republic was free from displays of power and wealth, the late Republic was marred by competition and Augustus’ rise was seen by many as a retreat to a calmer more unified Rome. However, this unification was the result of consolidated power, where once many people could promote themselves to gain political power, in the Empire the emperor reserved the sole ability to display his greatness and attempt to outdo his predecessors. This switch resulted in the state itself becoming more intimately connected to the emperor. In the days of the Republic the glories of the state were

1. Diane Farvo, “The iconiCITY of ancient Rome,” *Urban History* 33, no. 1(2006): 31.

2. Diane Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34.

3. Donald Dudley. *Urbs Roma. A source book of classical texts on the city and its monuments.* (London: Phaidon Press, 1967), 123.

4. Jerome Monnet, “The symbolism of place: a geography of relationships between space, power and identity,” Trans. Angela Verdier, *European Journal of Geography*, (2011).

5. Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 50.



represented as the product of Rome and its peoples' greatness. The Empire caused the glories of the state to be inseparable from the glory of the emperor. This transition away from the state towards the individual is seen most prominently in the fall of the Forum Romanum and rise of the Imperial Fora.

Diane Farvo, via *The Roman Forum and Roman Memory*, discusses the concept of a "*genius loci*," or "the spirit of a place."<sup>6</sup> She explains that for the Romans every site had a symbolic meaning that drew from its physical environment and could be experienced by the Roman public, just as the building of a church comes to represent to the viewer the belief system within. Farvo states that the "*genius* of the Forum was the *genius* of the State."<sup>7</sup> In essence, the Forum Romanum was a physical site that represented the ideals of the state, causing the spirit of the Republic to be reflected in the spirit of the Forum.

The *concrete reality* or physical representation of the Forum was a complex of buildings that were often used within Roman daily life. In *Urbs Roma* the Forum is described as the "centre of the life of the Roman republic, political, legal, commercial, cultural, and to a large extent, religious."<sup>8</sup> The Forum contained various temples, such as those of Vesta and Saturn, which were used for religious ceremonies. The Forum housed the Comitium, a public space similar to the Greek assembly forums, intended for ceremonies and public speaking. The Forum also contained the Curia, the senate building which held official senate meetings. In the early centuries the Forum Romanum was described as a public space more closely resembling a market. During the age of Plautus, around 200 BCE, "the Forum was a good spot to pick up a prostitute or shop for groceries," however in the time of Cicero, between 100 and 50 BCE, the Forum had been redeveloped as "a space of *dignitas* devoted mostly to politics."<sup>9</sup>

The *intangible* aspect of the Forum Romanum changed throughout the Republic and into the Empire. Initially the Forum was a space of action and a symbol of the political life of Rome. Russel states that the Forum Romanum was one of the most influential political spaces, in which "crowds gathered to listen to political speeches, vote on laws and in some elections."<sup>10</sup> The Forum Romanum also evoked the *intangible* concept of the city's history. The buildings within the Forum were often a commemoration of great Roman achievements, by walking through the Forum one was essentially surrounded by monuments highlighting the glories of past Republican triumphs. The significance of the history presented in the Forum as well as the architectural grandeur of the site were used specifically to embrace the *genius loci* of the Forum, a place of political demonstration and action. As Russel states the physical aspects of the Forum were used "to draw attention to the role of citizens in political activity."<sup>11</sup>

The combination of the Forum being an important political symbol as well as an ode to past Republican glories resulted in the Forum Romanum eventually being used by politicians to exert power and influence. In 44 BCE Mark Anthony used the Forum Romanum to stage a political rebuke against Julius Caesar, a decision recorded by Cassius Dio as intending to use the significance of the Forum to ensure that Caesar "be made ashamed by the very places."<sup>12</sup> Caesar, however, had already begun to exert his power within the Forum, creating a clear change in the meaning of the space. Russel discusses this change stating that it was "the triumph not of the political community but of the individual, as Julius Caesar's building programme created a new Forum entirely dominated by his personal power."<sup>13</sup> This marked the transformation of power from the Forum Romanum into the new Imperial Fora.

The Imperial Fora began with the Forum Iulium, the project of Julius Caesar, and continued for the next one hundred

and fifty years until the death of Trajan. It progressed in five stages, with various emperors each adding to the Fora attempting to exceed the last in grandeur. The first stage was the addition of the Forum Iulium which included a new Curia, the Curia Iulia, as well as a temple to Venus Genetrix. Aside from bearing his name, this environment was symbolic of Julius Caesar through the selection of a temple for Venus, the Roman goddess of love. Dudley states that the choice of Venus was an active reinforcement of Caesar because it was believed by the contemporary Romans that the "*gens Iulia* descended from Aeneas,"<sup>14</sup> the son of Venus and founder of Rome.

The emperor Augustus continued this tradition of celebrating the individual through the creation of his Forum Augustum. This Forum further expanded the Imperial Fora and included a temple to the god Mars Ultor. The emperor Vespasian then built the Temple of Peace, which was followed by the creation of the Forum of Nerva. The final stage was that of Trajan who built the Forum of Trajan to celebrate his victory in Dacia. The Forum of Trajan was unique in its structure and was seen as "the supreme achievement of city planning in Rome."<sup>15</sup> It did not use the same set up as the previous Fora but rather pulled together various complexes "symmetrically disposed among spacious courts... so as to form virtually a city-centre in itself."<sup>16</sup>

These Imperial Fora were conceived with the intention of connecting the Forum Romanum to the Campus Martius. While they were used in the same way as the Forum Romanum, their symbolic meaning, their "intangible" quality, differed greatly from the older Forum. These Fora were no longer a symbol of political action, or a tribute to the state, they were a tribute to individuals. However, this transition kept them in line with the *genius loci* of the state itself which came to focus more on the individual of the emperor than on the achievements of the people of Rome.

The rise of the Imperial Fora was nominally a result of a growing population and need for a larger urban center, however

6. Diane Farvo, "The Roman Forum and Roman Memory," *Places* 5, no. 1, (1988): 17.

7. Farvo, "The Roman Forum and Roman Memory," 17.

8. Dudley, 76.

9. Amy Russell. *The Politics of Public Space in Republican Rome*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 45.

10. Russell, 44.

11. Ibid, 45.

12. Farvo, "The Roman Forum and Roman Memory," 18.

13. Russell, 45.

14. Dudley, 120.

15. Ibid, 134.

16. Ibid.

the emperors held an underlying concern about the *genius loci* of the Forum Romanum. Farvo states that the motivation for the Imperial Fora was to ensure that “the emperors did not have to compete with the republican memories so strongly felt in the old Forum,” and to provide a place for the emperors to “orchestrate their own manipulated, imperial memories.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed the Imperial Fora were built to replace the administrative duties held by the Forum Romanum, as well as visually replace the Forum Romanum by becoming “the most celebrated and highly visual spaces in Rome.”<sup>18</sup>

This transition of power thus resulted in a change of the *genius loci* of the Forum Romanum. As political, legal, and economic power shifted out of the Forum Romanum the site gradually became, as Farvo states, “a museum of history and art, not a stage for contemporary action.”<sup>19</sup> The Imperial Fora maintained public space and elements of political life as a charade. This was reflected in the fact that decisions made within the Senate lacked legal power unless approved by the emperor. Farvo states that during the Republic the public spaces of the Forum Romanum were necessary for providing space for public debate, during Imperial times there was no reason to “preserve an unencumbered open space for lobbying and voting.”<sup>20</sup> This architecture thus reflected the privatization of power, and the Forum Romanum became gradually less important for contemporary action. The Emperor Caligula, around 37 CE, created a bridge to connect the Palatine to the Capitoline hill, and thus bypassed the site of the Forum Romanum altogether.

#### The Curia and the Imperial Palaces

Rome’s past of political autonomy was represented strongly in the site known as the Curia, the senate hall where standard meetings were held. There were three main

Curia throughout the Republic, the Curia Hostilia, Curia Cornelia, and finally the Curia Iulia, the latter designed by Julius Caesar. These Curia held the *genius loci* of political freedom and the opportunity to openly discuss matters of the State. Indeed, the Curia were described as having a literal open doors policy, which “allowed people to sit outside and listen if they wished.”<sup>21</sup> Public records of the meetings were also kept and published, although this practice was stopped under the emperor Augustus as political activities gradually became more orchestrated. The Curia Iulia continued to function for senate meetings under Augustus, however its decisions were highly influenced by the desires of the emperor. As the power of the Republic declined a new seat of power for the Imperial Age began to grow, that of the Palatine.

The Palatine Hill was a site of great symbolic significance for the Romans. It was the location of the *Casa Romuli*, the “House of Romulus”, and the place Aeneas was rumored to have first spent a night on Roman ground. The Palatine was an already popular location for the wealthy citizens of Rome to live, however Augustus chose the site due to its *genius loci*, as a site symbolic of Rome’s origins. Dudley records Augustus’ decision to move to the Palatine as an attempt to connect himself to the “origins of the Roman race.”<sup>22</sup>

However, the creation of Augustus’ house, the *Casa Liviae* (“House of Livia”), on the Palatine was not only a symbolic transition of power. Around 30 BCE the site of the Palatine was struck by lightning, allowing Augustus to claim the area as “public property dedicated to Apollo.”<sup>23</sup> Following this, the people of Rome gifted a house near the sacred site to Augustus, out of their gratitude for his faithfulness to the gods. Augustus then made part of his holdings public property, to satisfy the religious requirements of becoming the Pontifex Maximus, the Romans’ most powerful religious position. This title would normally have required Augustus to move to the *Domus Publica*

(“Public House” in the Forum Romanum, however Augustus circumvented the rule with the deprivatization of his own home. This thus allowed Augustus to physically transfer religious power away from the Forum Romanum, which was in the process of being replaced by his Imperial Fora, to the Palatine hill and his own home.

While part of Augustus’ home had become public property, the transition of power was entirely from the public to the private sector. This was seen most vividly in the following years of the Empire and the creation of the Imperial Palaces. These Palaces built off of the *Casa Liviae* and expanded in grandeur. The *Casa Liviae* itself was designed to portray humility. Farvo declares that the *Casa Liviae* was contrasted to the “*opulentia*” of the homes of the nobility, and “*parsimonia* or simplicity was carefully cultivated” in the designing of Augustus’ home.<sup>24</sup> The successors of Augustus did not follow that trend. The building of the Imperial Palaces lasted over two centuries, and the Palaces grew in scale to eventually cover much of the Palatine Hill, making the entire site into a “Palace Quarter.”<sup>25</sup> These Palaces expanded to include various private and public amenities. Plutarch wrote of Domitian’s Palace in his *Publicola*: “If anyone marvels at the extravagant expenditure on the Capitol, let him look at a single feature of Domitian’s Palace...”<sup>26</sup>

The *genius loci* of the Imperial Palaces shifted over time, often to reflect the values of the ruling emperor. For example, the emperors Nerva and Trajan avoided increasing the luxury of the Imperial Palaces and were admired by the people due to their humility. Whereas the Imperial Palaces became marred by scandal during the later Julio-Claudian emperors and were “associated in the public mind with the vices” of these emperors.<sup>27</sup> Indeed the Imperial Palaces became more private overtime as power shifted further from the senate. The Palaces were often the setting of various political murders and coups. Farvo states that the “residences of powerful politicians are often the flashpoints of political conflict,”<sup>28</sup>

17. Farvo, “The Roman Forum and Roman Memory,” 20.

18. John Senseney, “Adrift towards Empire: The Lost Porticus Octavia in Rome and the Origins of the Imperial Fora,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 70, no. 4 (2011): 422.

19. Farvo, “The Roman Forum and Roman Memory,” 22.

20. Ibid, 19.

21. Joshua Mark, “Ancient Rome,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, 02-09-2009, <https://www.ancient.eu/Rome/>

22. Dudley, 165.

23. Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 100.

24. Dudley, 165.

25. Ibid, 173.

26. Ibid, 166.

27. Ibid, 174.

28. Farvo, *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*, 30.

this carried on and became more violent during the age of the emperors.

For example, Tacitus wrote of the killing of Agrippa Postumus by the emperor Tiberius: “They waited for a night when the false Agrippa was off his guard: then with a suitable force they dragged him, bound and gagged, to the Palace... Tiberius did not dare to punish him openly, but ordered him to be put to death in the private part of the Palace, and the body to be carried away in secret.”<sup>29</sup> This statement demonstrates the privatization of power, with the Palace being the seat of Imperial power where political decisions were carried out solely by and for the benefit of the emperor, in contrast to decisions being debated publicly and decided for the benefit of the state. This scene of violence can also be contrasted to the murder of Julius Caesar, which, while the ringleaders planned the assassination privately, they carried out the action in a public space during a senate meeting.

This transition of power away from sites of Republican symbolism, specifically the Curia, to the Palatine Hill and Imperial Palaces added to the movement of power from the Forum Romanum. It was also reflective of Augustus’ attempts to promote his personal heritage. The choice of the Palatine for the *Casa Liviae* was strongly based on the hill’s *genius loci* as the location of the founders of Rome. By connecting himself to this symbolic space Augustus portrayed himself and his line as a second coming of founders and justified his move through his own public house and his transition of religious significance to the hill. Thus, Augustus intertwined the history of Rome with his own history, providing him and the following emperors evidence of their right to rule.

#### A City of Eternal Construction

Rome was not built in a day, but rather everyday Rome was being altered to fit its contemporary values. The Republic, which has been seen throughout history as a symbol of political action, emphasized sites which highlighted the state and its people. Buildings such as the Forum Romanum and the Curia were symbolic of the political

environment, one of debate and open decision making. Republican monuments were testaments to the glory of all, the collective civilization and the higher state which they served.

While the Republic placed the state as a central feature the Imperial period blurred the lines between state and emperor. The monuments became less about the glories of the state but rather symbols of the glorious emperors. Power moved to new dominating sites, such as the Imperial Fora and the Imperial Palaces, and it moved consequently away from the people. The history of Rome, as the home of Romulus and land of Aeneas, became intertwined with the history of the ruling emperors, emphasizing their connection to and right to rule over the state.

It was through the two-thousand-year process of change and advancement that Rome came to represent such a variety of concepts. The city, while it at all times maintained aspects of violence, liberty, intellect, and oppression, circled through times emphasizing certain values more than others. The city thus circled through monuments, which rose and fell according to the city’s own contemporary power dynamics. The *genius loci* of the city was one of frequent change, and this was reflected through the sites within. Rome was constantly being rebuilt by the powerful actors of the time, with each change presenting Rome not as the static image of an *urbs aeterna* but as a city eternally changing.

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29. Dudley, 166.



## WRITTEN REPORT: HORVAT MIDRAS

ANISA CÔTÉ

**Abstract:** The site of Horvat Midras was excavated by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in partnership with the University of British Columbia during the summer of 2018. Another excavation with both schools was scheduled to take place during the summer of 2020, however this was canceled due to the onset of the Covid-19 global pandemic. The site itself is located in the Shfela region of Israel, which was inhabited from the Persian period (539-322 BCE) up until the end of the Ottoman period. This report details a brief overview of the site and its history of excavation beginning in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Following are the objectives of the 2018 season are outlined. This includes a great focus on the elements of Jewish heritage that are preserved at the site, such as the possible conversion of the Idumeans to Judaism, the possibility of the site being the home of King Herod's family, and the site's significance for the Bar-Kokhba revolts. Lastly, the findings of the 2018 excavation are presented. This season focused on three separate areas, Area A, Area B, and Area D. This report provides an in-depth focus on Area D, which was the location of a *nefesh* (monumental burial marker) pyramid. The final interpretation of this report critically explores the season's goals, as the great focus on Jewish heritage glosses over the many other communities that have lived at this site and share its history. Ultimately, this gains significance when the political history of archaeology and Zionism is emphasized.

## Descriptions of the Site:

The site of Horvat Midras is situated in the agriculturally rich Judean lowlands, otherwise known as the Shfela region, and runs parallel to a Roman road that connects Jerusalem to Gaza and Ascalon.<sup>1</sup> The site covers the surface of two hills with two wells located at their shared base. Unlike most archaeological sites of this period, such as Khirbet Burgin, in which dwellings are usually located higher up on the slope and burials and public buildings located lower down on the slope, Horvat Midras is the opposite with its dwellings located on the lower part of the hill and its burials and public buildings situated higher up.<sup>2</sup> The reason for this is not entirely known, leading to speculation that a lack of conflict in the region may have resulted in not requiring a defensive position higher up, and that simply living lower on the slope provides better access to the two wells at the base of the hills.

The name for this site was Khirbet Dru-siya, taken from the Arab name dating back to the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The name can

also show the link between ancient Israel and the Roman imperial family, as King Herod named the site after Augustus's adopted son Drusus.<sup>4</sup>

The site was first established in either the Persian (539-322 BCE) or the Early Hellenistic period (332-167 BCE). It reached its full zenith as a Jewish settlement during the Early and Middle Roman periods, as seen by the many buildings that remain from this period including dwellings, mikveh, a columbarium and burial complexes, as well as other smaller findings such as pottery and coins.<sup>5</sup> The Jewish settlement was destroyed during the Bar-Kokhba revolt which took place during 132-135 CE, and was then resettled by the Romans followed by a small Christian community during the Byzantine period. From this period there remains a burial chamber, a basilica and a Church with white mosaic floors and four massive pillars with Christograms.<sup>6</sup> The Christian community was replaced by Islamic settlements, first during the Mameluke period and then during Ottoman period, and during this time the site was used for limited agricultural activity.

## History of the Excavation of the Site:

This site has gone through many different excavations over the years. In the late nineteenth century, certain public buildings, dwellings, and a columbarium were recorded by Victor Guerin. During this same time, caves and water reservoirs at the site were also recorded by Claude Conder and Horatio Kitchener. During the 1950s, the pyramid and burial structure, today located as Area D, was sketched by Lezy Yitzhak Rahmani.<sup>7</sup>

In 1976, a salvage excavation was carried out by A. Kloner, who examined two burial caves with large rolling stones blocking their entrance, one dating to the early second century CE and the other dating to the Byzantine period.<sup>8</sup> Kloner also excavated a series of refuge systems in 1981 which date to the Bar-Kokhba Revolt. These refuges were cut out of pre-existing cisterns, columbarium, mikveh, and tunnels.<sup>9</sup>

In 2010-2011, an excavation of the Byzantine church took place by A. Ganor and A. Klein. They were able to identify seven different occupation phases and determine that the church was damaged by an earthquake in 749 CE. Unfortunately, the exposed mosaic floors of this church were

1. Bein Haim, Asaf. *The Shfela - The Judaen Lowland*. Lecture, 2018 ; Shatzman, Israel. "Herod's Childhood and the Idumaeen Provenance of his Family: Marisa or Horvat Midras?" *Scripta Classica Israelica*, 32, (2013): 123.  
2. Peleg-Barkat, Orit. *Horvat Midras Excavation Season 2018*. Lecture, 2018.  
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5. Ganor, Amir, Alon Klein, Rina Avner and Boaz Zissu. "Horbat Midras," 2.  
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9. Ibid, 1042.

vandalized, causing the site to be covered up with geo-textile, soil and beach sand.<sup>10</sup>

Prior to Summer 2018, the most recent excavation that took place at the site was in 2017. At that time, three different areas were excavated. The first, Area A, is a Roman period ashlar structure. The goal for this excavation was to better date the structure, and so the focus was on excavating around the podium.<sup>11</sup> The excavators were able to date the podium to the first half of the second century CE, changing their interpretation of the structure from that of a synagogue to a Roman temple. They also found evidence for Mameluke and Ottoman occupation of the building.<sup>12</sup>

The second area is Area C, which is a large household and quarry waste dump from a Hellenistic settlement, with large retaining walls to hold in the waste. The many pottery, stone and organic fragments found in the refuge indicate a strong cultural link between Horvat Midras and the nearby site of Marisa.<sup>13</sup>

The final area excavated during the 2017 season was Area D, comprising of a burial cave and a pyramid *nefesh* (monumental burial marker). The excavators were able to document the collapse and expose the bedrock in a small section of the southern side of the pyramid-structure where there was no solidified chalk conglomerate. In doing so, a moulded profile in the stone was exposed. A small section of a quarry where the stones of the pyramid likely came from was also excavated. Lastly, they were able to confirm that the burial cave and the *nefesh* can be associated together as they share the same orientation and symmetry longitudinal axis.<sup>14</sup>

### The Objectives and Expectations of the Current Excavation and Links to the Wider Region:

The objective and expectation of this current season (2018) was to create a clearer image of the inhabitants of this site during its many periods of occupation, in relation to their ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds, and what their life was like with regards to religion, warfare, burial rituals and daily life. This would be done by dating objects and monuments and identifying which populations created them.

For the earlier time periods, the goal was to determine the ethnicity of the earlier inhabitants of the site. The possibility of it having been an Idumaeen settlement is debated, as it is located on the ancient border of Judah and Idumaea.<sup>15</sup> If they were Idumaeans, questions regarding if they had gone through a forced or voluntary conversion to Judaism can also be discussed, as it appears that culturally the two ethnicities were not that different.<sup>16</sup> Evidence for Idumaeen populations in this region and time period can be seen through material remains such as mikveh, intentionally perforated vessels, circumcised ritual phalli, and non anthropomorphic art. Such finds were found in pits at Horvat Midras, however all such findings stopped by the end of the first century BCE. This halt would coincide with the debated Idumaeen conversion to Judaism by John Hyrcanus I in 125 BCE, supporting the interpretation that in light of forced conversion they resorted to abandoning the site. This can be compared to the nearby site of Marisa, which also shows an abandonment layer with intentional damage to altars and shrines around 108 BCE.<sup>17</sup> Further investigation on this topic is needed to explain who the first inhabitants of this site were and what their religious practices were compared to Judaism. Results could help answer questions regar-

ding what conversion would have meant for these people and how these different groups would have viewed themselves.

Another main goal of this season's excavation was to determine if it is the site where King Herod's family originated. It is possible that Herod's family came from a town called Drousius in ancient times; this name is similar to Khirbet Drousius, which is what local Arab villagers called the site of Horvat Midras in the 1860s.<sup>18</sup> As well, there is evidence for socio-economic wealth at Horvat Midras during the Second Temple time period, as seen by the many burials and, more specifically, the burial cave with the *nefesh* pyramid. Sources tell us that Herod's family came from a region in the Judean foothills, and as they would have been a socio-economically advantageous family there is a possibility that Herod's origin could be at Horvat Midras.<sup>19</sup> It is also known that Herod's grandfather was an Idumean who converted to Judaism, which would fit the shifting patterns of religion at this site.<sup>20</sup> This could help to better understand the influence King Herod's family had on this region, as well as how and what economic factors would have played a role.

There was also the goal to better understand the Bar-Kokhba revolt. As there are no firsthand accounts of the revolt we must solely rely on archaeological data<sup>21</sup> The use of tunnels made out of mikveh, columbarium and public shelters can reveal guerrilla warfare fighting tactics in the war against the Roman army. Although not found at this site, smaller material evidence such as Roman coins over-struck by Jewish rebels can also shed light on the resistance movement.<sup>22</sup> By understanding how the revolt took place at Horvat Midras, we can better understand the impact of the revolt in the wider region of the Judean foothills and compare the evidence to similar sites such as Horvat Ethri, Khirbet Burgin and

10. Ganor, Amir, Alon Klein, Rina Avner and Boaz Zissu. "Horvat Midras," 3.

11. Peleg-Barkat, Orit. "Field Notes: The Second Season of Excavation at Horvat Midras." *Strata: Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 35, 2017: 179.

12. Ibid, 181.

13. Ibid, 183.

14. Ibid, 185.

15. Peleg-Barkat, Orit. *The Idumaeans*. Lecture, 2018.

16. Richardson, Peter and Amy Marie Fisher. *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 61: Both groups were once nomadic peoples from the Arabian plateau that settled the region of Israel, and both groups had similar cultural practices such as circumcision.

17. Ibid.

18. Shatzman, Israel. "Herod's Childhood and the Idumaeen Provenance of his Family: Marisa or Horvat Midras?" *Scripta Classica Israelica* 32, (2013): 142.

19. Ibid, 125.

20. Peter and Fisher. *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 63.

21. Zissu, Boaz. *The Bar-Kokhba War, 132-136 CE: An Archaeological Perspective*. Lecture, 2018.

22. Ibid.

Horvat Amuda.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, we had the objective to determine who lived at the site after the revolts took place. Evidence so far supports the interpretation that there was a decrease in Jewish activity and a rise in Roman and, later, Byzantine activity. This can be supported by the Roman structures in area A, which are believed to be a temple, and the increased Roman urbanization in sites nearby such as Bet Guvrin with its Roman amphitheatre. The Byzantine church and burials also show a Christian settlement.

#### Detailed Description of the Results

##### Achieved During Field School:

Each site respectively was able to achieve very good results. Site A was able to expose the plan of the temple revealing many different rooms and chambers, and the excavators at site A were also able to find two vaults. There were many finds which helped with the dating.

Site B was able to remove a lot of dirt from the mikva and connecting tunnels, allowing the archaeologists to find many artifacts including pottery, coins, and organic material. Questions still remain about the bottom of the mikva, as its floor remains unexposed. The dwelling in this area also resulted in the finding of many artifacts, including an almost fully intact amphora. The tunnels date to the Bar-Kokhba revolt, with findings inside that date to later periods indicating that they were used after the decline of the Jewish settlement.

The finds from Area D, and the interpretation of the finds and their significance to the site: For Area D, the nature of the dig was to expose all four corners down to the bedrock in order to get a clearer image of the original dimensions of the pyramid and to expose its original facade. This information will be useful if the reconstruction of the monument were to take place in the future. Another goal for this area was to better date when the monument was constructed and when it was destroyed. As it is not a closed structure, it is difficult to date when it was exactly made. However, because the base was sealed by a layer of conglomerate material as hard as concrete, we know

that anything we find under this layer will date to before the pyramid was destroyed; likewise, anything found above the conglomerate dates to after it was destroyed. This could also help to better understand the nature of its destruction, and if the destruction process was man-made or caused by natural phenomena. Lastly, there was the goal of understanding how the pyramid was built, such as how it was placed on the bedrock and how the stones were layered.

The first goal of exposing all four corners of the pyramid was achieved, although not with the exact results hoped for by the team. All four corners were dug down to their bedrock, yet only one corner in the southeastern side was found fully intact with its moulded entablature profile. This was found in locus 31 and the square H.4., at 354 meters above sea level. This reveals what all four original corners would have looked like with their facade and decoration.

The base corner stone for the southwestern corner was found, although the stone above it with the moulded profile was missing. The corner stone for the northwestern corner was not found, however there is speculation about an imprint of the original stone on the bedrock, which would coincide with the assumed dimensions of the pyramid being 10m x10m. Lastly, the northeastern corner was dug down to the bedrock and the base stone was uncovered, however the actual corner stone was missing. As only one corner stone still exists intact, if we were to reconstruct the pyramid, we would base what all four corners would have looked like on the sole remaining southeastern corner.

For dating, no coins were found this season, although a few pieces of indicative pottery were found. The finds from the lowest layer, located next to the foundation of the pyramid, would place the construction period date to the Early Roman period. However, as the base of the pyramid is an open structure, it is hard to determine if these finds date exactly to the constructions of the site or if they date to the period the pyramid was in use.

There was a piece of Byzantine pottery found above the conglomerate, indicating that the collapse happened before the Byzantine period. Whether the collapse was

man-made or natural is still under debate, but it can be concluded that both components played a part to a certain extent. The nari stones, which are harder than the chalk from the pyramid were found at the Roman ashlar structure in Area A, indicating man-made destruction. This dating would also coincide with the interpretation of a decline of Jewish occupation after the revolts, as the stones from this Jewish monument would have been taken to build the temple for the superseding Roman settlement. However, the conglomerate would have been formed as a result of heavy rains, indicating that stormy weather played a part in the deterioration of the stone and the morphing of their original shape as their minerals were leached out.

For understanding how the pyramid was built, there was a layer of nari stone in ashlar masonry found underneath the conglomerate. This indicated that the original facade would have been made out of the harder nari stone instead of the softer chalk that makes up the pyramid today. As well, based on the southern-side of the pyramid, we can see that the nari stone would have gone down about 21cm under the pyramid structure. This almost vertical ashlar structure can be interpreted as a cubed podium structure with a moulded entablature facade upon which the pyramid would have rested.

In regard to general findings, one piece of copper was found. It was designed in a leaf like shape, leading us to believe that it would have been a decorative piece on either a vessel or a piece of armour.

#### Wider Regional Significance of the findings at Area D:

When interpreting the results from the pyramid, many similarities can be found with other funerary monuments in this region that date to the Second Temple time period. To begin with, the facade preserved on the nari stone pyramid can be found on many different tombs and *nefeshs* during this time. The moulded entablature ornamentation<sup>24</sup> that is found on the Southern

23. Ibid.

24. Hachili, Rachel. *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in the Second Temple Period*. (Boston: Brill Leiden, 2005.), 110.



side of the pyramid can be compared to burials facades found at sites such as at the Frieze Tomb in the Kidron Valley.<sup>25</sup> The ashlar masonry of the nari stone is also very common for the time period. Herod's family tomb is made out of ashlar masonry, as well as the monument of Absalom again in the Kidron valley and the Nazirite Family tomb.<sup>26</sup> Although step pyramids like the one at Horvat Midras are uncommon, a nefesh that incorporates a pyramid into its structure is rather common. Common examples of a pyramid-like structure would be the tomb of Zechariah and the Bene Heir tomb, which are both cube-shaped structures ornamented with Hellenistic columns that are surmounted by a pyramid.<sup>27</sup> The similar motif of a rectangular base and pyramid capped monument can be seen in the carved relief on the Nabataean tombs, as well as being depicted on ossuaries in Jerusalem.<sup>28</sup> There are also literary sources, such as the story of Simon the Hasmonean who erected a memorial of seven pyramids over his parents' and brothers' tomb at Modi'in, which Rachel Hachili thinks would look similar to the tombs in the Kidron Valley.<sup>29</sup>

However, what makes Horvat Midras unique is the fact that it rests on a very small podium compared to the other sites. This unique feature gives this site importance as it is one of the few examples we have of a pyramid with a short cube-shape base without any Hellenistic columns for this region and time period. It is also interesting as it shows the different cultures and influences present at that time. As explained in *Jewish Funerary Customs*, Jewish funerary art of the Second Temple period reflects a hybrid style of Hellenistic-Roman and Oriental traditions, often mixing Hellenistic ornamentation with Oriental monuments like pyramids and cornices.<sup>30</sup> This shows that this site has always been a place for the blending of different cultures and beliefs, as this Hellenistic and Oriental blend can be compared to that seen in the earlier period with the Idumaeans and

Jewish populations. This blending of cultures can also be supported in a very literal sense as the nari stones used in a Jewish burial were later used by the Romans for their temple following the revolt, again showing how different cultures and peoples have been living on the land of Horvat Midras.

#### Final Interpretations:

When looking at the large themes examined at this site, like early Idumaeans and Jewish settlements, King Herod and his family's link to the land and the Bar-Kokhba revolt, it becomes obvious that Horvat Midras is an important site for Jewish heritage. However, as we have seen there have been many different peoples and cultures that have a history with this site. The Idumaeans might not have converted to Judaism, there was a thriving Roman and Byzantine settlement after the revolts, and there was even Mameluke and Ottoman activity. Yet these different communities were not given the same opportunity to understand their history in connection to this site. Just the example of how the Roman temple in Area A was first interpreted as a synagogue can help shed light on the fact that archaeology can be a very biased science, and that we must always pay attention to those conducting the research and why they are conducting it. As Nur Masalha notes, how we view the past of Israel can affect our modern views and politics. He says: "by rooting the Jewish culture and civilization into the history of this land, it helps to legitimize the modern Zionist movement of Israel being the right homeland of the Jews."<sup>31</sup> The linking of Horvat Midras with important moments in Jewish history and development can support this idea, as it shows the link between Jewish heritage and the land.

We can also link this importance archaeology has for Zionism to other sites, such as Masada. This site has significance for Zionism, as it was one of the last strongholds of Jewish rebels against the Roman army. However, people have increasingly been critiquing the image of glorified freedom fighters that has been propagated

and the heroism that has been associated with the rebels.<sup>32</sup> Ben-Yehuda explains that when this information was distributed between 1963-1964, the media and the Israeli government were working together in a "nation-building process" and were not critical of the biased site interpretations.<sup>33</sup> This leads one to wonder why this original rhetoric was propagated, and what effect it has had on patriotism and modern day politics to have this site as an important part of Jewish heritage. The questions raised at Masada can be applied to many other sites in Israel, showing that reasons for certain interpretations and the exclusion of others can affect how we view history and the role different people have played in it.

If we try to interpret archaeology in a more inclusive manner, we would be able to see that the land of Israel has been occupied by many different people and that they all have a connection with the land. When we begin to not only focus on Jewish history at Horvat Midras but also of the history of the Idumaeans, the Romans, the Byzantine Christians and the Muslims of the Mameluke and Ottoman empires, we can see that this site was a home for many different people and that all their histories should have equal value and importance when we are discussing the archaeology of the site. How we decide to interpret history can have direct impacts on the politics and lives of people today, as it shapes how people view themselves and others through their connections to the land.

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25. Ibid, 47.

26. Ibid, 32.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid, 346.

29. Ibid, 131.

30. Ibid, 126.

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32. Ben-Yehuda, Nachman. *The Masada Myth: Collective Memory and Mythmaking in Israel*. (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 187.

33. Ibid.



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For updates on the excavation of the site, visit: <https://horvatmidras.huji.ac.il/15>

# ALL THE KING'S HORSES: THE ROLE OF THE HORSE IN ALEXANDER THE GREAT'S LEGACY

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KYARA HUNTER

**Abstract:** Alexander the Great's legacy is widely debated and highly problematic, but one underexplored aspect is how horses impacted his influence and image throughout history. His warhorse Bucephalus is nearly as iconic as Alexander himself, and this paper explores the ideological and practical work that equines do in the ancient Greek mind and world, arguing that our modern view of animals affects our understanding of antiquity. Through a reading of Xenophon's *The Art of Horsemanship*, the very devoted and empathetic relationship between Alexander and Bucephalus imagined by Katherine Roberts' novel, *I am the Great Horse*, is demonstrated not to be a modern projection onto the past. Rather, this 'special' relationship, which present day media terms a 'bond' between riders and their mounts, was a component of the Macedonian army and influenced practices from the nation's selection of soldiers and march distances to battle tactics. As the horse's role changes in battle, their role in elite sport and their representation in Greek mythology also changes, celebrating wise centaurs and powerful Amazonian horse women. This paper finds that the horse is a powerful symbolic, social, political, and quasi-religious figure in ancient Greece, and Alexander's Macedonia specifically, suggesting that the horse-human relationships have a deep history predating present day horse girls of popular media. Instead, it is a complex and ancient dynamic that works on multiple levels and fields, not least of which were the battlefields of Bucephalus' victories.

When we think of horses in Classical Antiquity, the Trojan Horse looms large, closely followed by Bucephalus, and perhaps even Emperor Caligula's favourite racehorse, Incitatus, whom, according to a Suetonius legend, Caligula planned to make a consul.<sup>1</sup> Now, horses may never have held political office, anywhere, at any time, but in Alexander III's (also known as Alexander the Great, 356-323 BCE) Macedonia their power and influence were hardly less than if they had. It is a well-known anecdote that Alexander slept with the *Iliad* under his pillow,<sup>2</sup> perhaps imagining himself as a reincarnation of Achilles.<sup>3</sup> Alexander III's relationship with Bucephalus is perhaps less surprising when one remembers that in Homer's *Iliad*, Achilles' speaking horses famously address him in conversation.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the young Alexander drew more from Homer than a fierce war-

rior ethos and longing for glory. That said, horses were not as integral to the armies of the *Iliad* as they would be for the later Macedonians, and this change is in large part responsible for their conquests in the times of Philip II and Alexander III. This paper will explore the horse's role in Macedonian life and the wider context by which Macedonian horsemanship influenced, and was influenced, by various texts and cultures from Xenophon's *The Art of Horsemanship* to the Persian cavalry to trace the present-day representations of ancient equestrian activity. In doing so, I argue that horses are used to shape Alexander III's image, both today and in his own time, and that our contemporary assumptions about ancient equestrian culture do a disservice to our understanding of its manifestations in antiquity.

Exploring animals in antiquity offers an integral look into how people conceptualized themselves through animal-human interactions. Approaching ancient history from an animal studies perspective involves considering what kind of ideological work animals did for both educated thinkers and the ordinary person at the time, as well as how they were employed and appropriated for human purposes. Understanding how this ideology affected people's relations to the real animal, and how these animals sha-

pe our modern understanding of antiquity, helps to dispel myths and assumptions on topics ranging from gender to social status. Far from their very necessary and powerful physical work on the battlefield, horses also inhabited intense ideological, social, political, symbolic, and quasi-religious positions in ancient Greek thought. Whether we consider Macedonia Greek or not, it was certainly no exception to this element of Greek culture.<sup>5</sup> Through the horse, however, Macedonia was also linked to other regions and peoples, such as the Scythians of the Steppes, and even the Persians, who were far more invested in equestrian culture than the Greeks.

Given the contemporary veneration of philosophers and their ideals, it is significant to note that Xenophon (c. 430-354 BCE), a Greek philosopher, soldier, and historian, also deemed horsemanship a worthy topic for treatment. His treatise, *The Art of Horsemanship*, probably written around 350 BCE, is extensive in its coverage. It de-

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1. Suetonius, Caligula 55, in *The Lives of The Twelve Caesars*, trans. by Robert Graves (London: Penguin, 1957), 174.  
 2. Matthew A. Sears, "Philip and Alexander of Macedon," in *Understanding Greek Warfare* (London: Routledge, 2019), 145.  
 3. Waldemar Heckel and John Yardley, *Alexander the Great: historical sources in translation* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 208-11.  
 4. Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), XIX. 404-24.

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5. For Greek, see: Mark Golden, "Helpers, Horses, and Heroes," in *Greek Sport and Social Status* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008), 6. [muse.jhu.edu/book/13905](http://muse.jhu.edu/book/13905). For further discussion, see Johannes Engles, "Macedonians and Greeks," in *A Companion to Ancient Macedonia*, eds. Joseph Roisman, Ian Worthington (Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

tails the proper procedures for selecting, trying, buying, training, riding, tacking, and caring for horses. Ancient Greece established many admirable practices, such as democracy, epic poetry, and classical art, and Xenophon's treatise extends into the present, informing many of our basic tenants of horsemanship. Today, many of his principles still stand, despite the different purposes — leisure and sport — that horses serve today when compared to the warhorses Xenophon addressed. Xenophon spent time on a Persian military campaign around 401/399 BCE, where he more than likely witnessed Persian horsemanship, which I believe could have influenced some material in his manual. Considering these cross-cultural engagements helps to locate the horse in Macedonian thinking at this time.

The emphasis Philip II and Alexander III put on cavalry was nothing new — Macedonia's army was always traditionally composed primarily of aristocratic cavalry. Macedonia, blessed with many large plains just like Thessaly, had long been cavalry country, and even before Philip came to power, the elite backbone of the Macedonian cavalry had been the "King's Companions".<sup>6</sup> The cavalry, however, did change under Philip II and Alexander III. Philip II introduced a wedge formation he observed from the Thracians, creating stronger, more penetrating and devastating attacks in the enemy line.<sup>7</sup> Nicholas Victor Sekunda, however, following Arrian, claims that Philip learnt this technique from the Scythians.<sup>8</sup> This contradiction possibly reveals that Philip and Alexander's cavalry was influenced by many external cultures.

The cultural imitation Philip II performed set a precedent for the borrowings Alexander III took from Persian and Asian cavalries.<sup>9</sup> In a decision that "increased tensions among the Macedonian elite even further, Alexander also enrolled some Asian horsemen into the ranks of the Companion

Cavalry, the most prestigious of his forces".<sup>10</sup> Despite the discontent this ethnic integration caused among the Macedonians, historical sources suggest that the very idea of Companion Cavalry was perhaps an Achaemenid one.<sup>11</sup> Alexander III's incorporation of both Persian and Asian riders into the Macedonian cavalry were not the first non-Macedonian additions, either. Philip II had previously added another crack cavalry force to his army: the Thesalians, traditionally the best horsemen among the Greeks. Under Philip, the Thesalian cavalry seems to have been equipped and arranged more or less identically to the Companions.<sup>12</sup> It is not known whether the Macedonians were as disgruntled about the Thesalians as they would later be about the Asians, but their reaction would raise interesting questions as to whether they considered themselves Greek at the time.

As imagined by Shakespeare, Richard III's famous last words "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" could just as well have been spoken by a Macedonian king.<sup>13</sup> The status of warhorses was high,

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"A horse, a horse, my kingdom  
for a horse!"

— William Shakespeare

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considering the amount of training, care, and money it took to maintain them, attested by the extensive care routine set out in Xenophon.<sup>14</sup> Alexander III would, however, edit Richard's cry to demand not just any horse, but a very specific horse. According to Arrian, Alexander demanded Bucephalus' return after the stallion's suspected theft while among the Uxians, and

threatened to kill all inhabitants otherwise.<sup>15</sup> While obviously a matter of authority and reputation, this anecdote also invokes the relationship between an individual horse and rider. Although grown legendary in the case of Alexander III and Bucephalus, this relationship raises the question of the dynamic between regular cavalymen and their mounts. Sekunda notes that "it seems that in the reign of Alexander III the cavalymen themselves, rather than the state, still owned their own horses", but that state was responsible for the replacement of a mount if the animal did not last through the campaign.<sup>16</sup> Sekunda also explores the records of a cavalry *grammateus*, a cavalry clerk, to reveal the conditions of horse and rider, finding that they were "concerned with the inspection of cavalry horses. Line 7 seems to lay down regulations in the event of the *hipparchos* [cavalry officer] rejecting a cavalry mount as unfit for service and the action that the *grammateus* should take".<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, inspections of the prospective cavalymen's horses may have been the basis upon which individuals were admitted into the cavalry.<sup>18</sup> This evidence all places a great importance on the rapport between horse and rider, as the individual responsibility for their care, suggesting that the intense 'bond' between king and stallion may not have been quite as exceptional as sources maintain.

There is a motion in modern scholarship to look at the classics, and figures like Alexander III particularly, from different perspectives. Katherine Roberts' 2006 young adult novel, *I Am the Great Horse* does just that, reimagining Alexander's life from the perspective of Bucephalus and covering almost all his battles and campaigns.<sup>19</sup> Although fictional, Roberts' novel is deeply historically informed and draws attention to the realities of life for a Macedonian warhorse. Like Xenophon, it details the training drills, daily care, the practicalities of sustaining cavalry while on campaign, as well as differing horsemanship customs

6. Sears, "Philip," 154.

7. Ibid, 154-55.

8. Nicholas Victor Sekunda, "The Macedonian Army," in *A companion to ancient Macedonia*, ed. Joseph Roisman and Ian Worthington (London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 451.

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10. Sears, "Philip," 165.

11. Sekunda, "The Macedonian Army," 448.

12. Sears, "Philip," 155.

13. William Shakespeare, Richard III, in *The Arden Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by James R. Siemon (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2009), 5.4.7.

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16. Sekunda, "The Macedonian Army," 468.

17. Ibid, 469.

18. Ibid.

19. Katherine Roberts, *I Am The Great Horse*, (New York: The Chicken House, 2006).

across cultures, the emotional relationship of warhorse and rider, and the many grooms who tended them and waited anxiously in the camp during battle.<sup>20</sup> These realities are often overlooked in very detached studies of Macedonian cavalry numbers and manoeuvres, many of which rarely, if ever, reference the actual horses themselves.<sup>21</sup> Historical accounts rarely survive from those on the margins of glory, despite their necessity to facilitate it. Thus, Roberts' imagining of the life of military grooms and their charges – although fictional – reorients the focus away from the kings and heroes, if only in the imagination.

The consideration of Alexander III's treatment of cavalry horses offers interesting perspectives on later writers' presentations of him as a bloodthirsty, maniacal psychopath.<sup>22</sup> For instance, Alexander's care of his horses extended to walking rather than riding them on long marches to preserve their strength.<sup>23</sup> This is a simple and perhaps seemingly obvious decision, but one I think which counters, on however small a scale, the argument that Alexander III was a rash and reckless commander.<sup>24</sup> So too does the story of his 'taming' of Bucephalus. Andrew Runni Anderson explores the main ancient sources addressing Bucephalus and Alexander's management of him. Though none of these main ancient sources are contemporary to Alexander III, the equine aspects of those we do have read convincingly, as in Plutarch's *Alexander*, and Arrian's *Anabasis*.<sup>25</sup> Plutarch claims that Bucephalus had a Thessalian origin, and proved unmanageable to all but young Alexander upon the horse's arrival in Pella.<sup>26</sup> Alexander saw this as a "lack of skill

and courage" in the struggling horsemen, and then deduced that the horse suffered poor vision in one eye and turned him to the sun to prevent Bucephalus from being spooked by his own shadow.<sup>27</sup> Plutarch's account emphasizes that, once mounted, Alexander was gentle:

**"Then with a little pressure of the reins on the bit, and without striking him or tearing his mouth, he held him".<sup>28</sup>**

Plutarch's emphasis on Alexander III's understanding, patience, and humane handling of the frightened horse uses the horse to humanize the prince. Rather than presenting Bucephalus as a wild beast to be conquered and dominated, proving Alexander III's sheer strength and mastery, their relationship is one of understanding and relieving fear, not a dramatic struggle.

The young Alexander III behaves in this instance exactly as Xenophon proposes in his treatise, *The Art of Horsemanship*. Xenophon advises that if a horse spooks at something "he should be taught, not by irritating but by soothing him, that there is nothing to fear".<sup>29</sup> As a general principle Xenophon states that the good rider "must refrain from pulling at his mouth with the bit as well as from spurring and whipping him", which sounds nearly identical to Plutarch's description of Alexander III's handling of Bucephalus above.<sup>30</sup> Whether Alexander III read Xenophon, or whether Plutarch did, there is a clear attempt to present the prince as a conscientious follower of kind and proper horse management. Xenophon believes that for a warhorse to be dependable and for smoothest relations between horse and man, "colts must not only love men, but even long for them".<sup>31</sup> This statement is far from the detached, almost mechanized view military scholars take when considering cavalry from antiquity. Xenophon's allowance of, and indeed advocacy for, an emotional connection between horse and rider foregrounds the animal's use as a war machine. Although he also acknowledges that "[different] horses

fall to one's lot at different times, and the same horse serves you one way at one time and another at another", it is in the context of advising the horseman to make himself adaptable to the individual horse's different experience, rather than enforcing oppressive and generalized expectations on individual animals.<sup>32</sup>

It may be illuminating to consider Macedonian cavalry, representations of the horse in war, and the horse-human relationship in the context of centaurs in Greek mythology. Some Greek mythical centaurs symbolized the bestial side of humanity. Recall, for instance, the centaurs in battle with the Lapiths. Centaurs were thought to reveal the animalistic appetites of men, often depicted overindulging in drink, abducting people and other mythical creatures, or raping them.<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, the legendary Lapiths and centaurs were imagined to have lived in Thessaly, perhaps connecting with the later Thessalians being the foremost horsemen of their time.<sup>34</sup> In this myth, horses are used to represent humanity's destructive, bestial nature when uncontrolled and undisciplined. In myth, horses are employed to bestialize humans, while in Alexander III's legacy, horses are used to humanize Alexander. Evidently, from the excerpts of Xenophon above, the concept of a more harmonious relationship between horse and rider existed, and indeed was advocated for. Horse and man became one, like a centaur, which showed a very self-disciplined, self-controlled effort on the part of the human – "never deal with him when you are in a fit of passion" – which contrasted the bestial passion of the mythical centaurs.<sup>35</sup> It is exactly the harmony of this union, however, which facilitates the great destruction and danger of mounted cavalry, making armies far more intimidating than chariot warfare allowed for.

20. Sekunda, "The Macedonian Army," 468.

21. Graham Wrightson, *Combined Arms Warfare in Ancient Greece: From Homer to Alexander the Great and his Successors*, (London, Routledge, 2019).

22. Joseph N. Abraham, *Kings, Conquerors, Psychopaths: from Alexander to Hitler to the Corporation*, (Lafayette, LA: University of Louisiana at Lafayette Press, 2018).

23. Sekunda, "The Macedonian Army," 469.

24. Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander* 7.29, trans. by P. A. Brunt. Loeb Classical Library 269. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983).

25. Anderson, "Bucephalus and His Legend," 1.

26. Plutarch, *Alexander* 6.1. in *Plutarch's Lives*, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Har-

vard University Press, 1919).

27. Plutarch, *Alexander* 6.2.

28. Ibid 6.4.

29. Xenophon, 22.

30. Ibid, 5.

31. Ibid, 21.

32. Ibid, 38.

33. William Smith and Charles Anthon, *A new classical dictionary of Greek and Roman biography, mythology and geography, partly based upon the Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1851), 190.

34. Smith and Anthon, *A new classical dictionary*, 190.

35. Xenophon, 37.



I posit that these myths of horse-human hybrids enhanced – or perhaps stemmed from – the horse’s role in warfare shifting from chariot to cavalry. In Greek Bronze Age chariot warfare, horses drew chariots which were quite possibly ‘parked’ before the actual battle began.<sup>36</sup> The chariots were used for transportation to and from the battlefield, but not as much in the fight itself, which occurred on foot. This is represented in the *Iliad* where heroic combat occurred hand-to-hand while the chariots primarily transported warriors. As much as Alexander III may have wanted to imitate Achilles, he would have differed significantly in fighting primarily on horseback. In contrast to the wild centaurs and Achilles’ battle with Chiron, the legendary centaur teacher of Achilles, who is civilized, educated, and incredibly wise.<sup>37</sup> The wise centaur may well represent man conquering his passionate, animal side but, once again, like Alexander III and Bucephalus, this is not achieved through domination and force, but fusion.

Further, in terms of mythology, the Amazonian horsewomen provide precedent for the fusion between a horse and their rider. Adrienne Mayor examines the mythical Amazons, whom some Greeks believed were the first to domesticate and ride horses, and their use as a mythologizing tool, probably to mythologize the ancient Scythian.<sup>38</sup> In Greek thought there exists an intense connection between female power and the horse, “perhaps a belief in a special relationship between independent women and wild horses led the ancient Greeks to believe that the Amazons must have been the earliest horse people.”<sup>39</sup> Alexander III’s rapport with Bucephalus could be invoking the “long-standing notion that some mystical synergy, psychic harmony, or “mind meld” exists between women and horses,” now relocated onto a masculine figure.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Justin relates an encounter between Scythian horsewomen and Philip II in 339

BCE where Philip captured thousands of horses and humans, nearly all of whom escaped after a spear killed Philip’s horse while marching back.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the sources record Alexander III’s supposed meeting with the Amazon Queen Thalestris while on campaign, perhaps a mythical version of Philip’s contact with the Scythians, demonstrating a linkage between the Scythians and Amazonian horsewomen.<sup>42</sup> Thus, regardless of the authenticity of his contact with the mythical horsewomen (or Scythians, more realistically), there exists a point of contact between Alexander III and the Amazons in Greek thought. Retrospectively, Alexander III and Bucephalus’s bond appears almost as an appropriation of feminine equestrian prowess and the gender-equalizing power of horses on the steppes, employing it for conquest and the creation of Alexander III’s magnetic aura.<sup>43</sup> Despite the feminization attached to this comparison, the Amazons’ power was well respected, and I suggest that this is a rare moment of equality across genders, which the horse-human relationship facilitates.

In the modern world, we think of horses as luxuries, indisputable symbols of wealth and status associated only with sport and leisure. In contrast, we tend to position them in the ancient world as ubiquitous necessities for agriculture, travel, and warfare. This binary view is not, however, wholly accurate. Furthermore, when privileging only a practical, utilitarian equine role, this view encourages us to devalue and underestimate the emotional importance of ancient horses and disregard the horse-human relationship. In most of ancient Greece, however, this was not the case. In his study on ancient sport, Mark Golden highlights the elitist position of the horse in antiquity, noting that only the very wealthy participated in equestrian competitions, for horses were less practical and more costly than hardier animals like mules or donkeys.<sup>44</sup> With the exception of Macedonia and Thessaly, the topography of Greece was not amenable to equestrian activities, especially for everyday labour and travel. Mo-

reover, the ancient Greeks had not invented an effective collar for work horses, limiting their usefulness in agricultural labour.<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, in Thessaly, where horses were more practical and ubiquitous, there was reduced participation in equestrian sport, as the horse was not a symbol of power for the Thessalians as it was for other peoples who used horse sport to enhance their social status.<sup>46</sup>

What, then, does this mean for Macedonia? Macedonia’s geography was, like Thessaly, amenable to horses and, as mentioned above, we know horses were a fixture in Macedonian cavalry for years before Philip II and Alexander III. Unlike Thessaly, however, Macedonians did enthusiastically partake in horse sports. Golden includes Philip II in his list of kings invested in horse sport: Demaratus of Sparta, Hieron of Syracuse, Philip of Macedon, Attalus of Pergamum, and the Egyptian Ptolemies ruled widely separated sections of the Greek world over a period of several hundred years; nevertheless, they shared one ambition at least: to have their horses triumph. Then as now, equestrian competition was the sport of kings.<sup>47</sup> He goes on to note that equestrian victory was a crowning glory even for those who already wore crowns. So it is said that Philip II of Macedon got three pieces of great news on the same day in 356 BCE: his army had won, his son Alexander had been born, and his racehorse had won at Olympia.<sup>48</sup> This places equestrian victory on a level with royal succession and martial victory, arguably the two most important aspects of kingship.

Horses were obviously exploited to support human hierarchies in the ancient world. Although the king himself was not actively participating in the horse race, it is significant that the victor in the horse race was said to win “with a horse,” *hippōi*, and not with a jockey. Significantly too we do know the names of several horses.<sup>49</sup> The

36. Carolyn Willekes, “The Greek Warhorse: Breeding, Training and Military Role” (University of Calgary Canada, 2006), 10.

37. Homer, XI, 829-31.

38. Adrienne Mayor, “Horses, Dogs, and Eagles,” In *The Amazons: Lives and Legends of Warrior Women across the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014): 170-190.

39. Ibid, 170.

40. Ibid, 171.

41. Ibid, 171-172.

42. Heckel and Yardley, *Alexander the Great: historical sources in translation*, 196-98.

43. Mayor, “Horses, Dogs, and Eagles,” 171.

44. Golden, “Helpers, Horses, and Heroes,” 6.

45. Miles Doleac, *In the Footsteps of Alexander: The soldiers who conquered the Ancient World* (London: Amber Books, 2014), 49.

46. Emma Aston and Joshua Kerr, “Battlefield and Racetrack: The Role of Horses in Thessalian Society,” in *Historia* 67, no. 1, (2018): 2-35.

47. Golden, “Helpers, Horses, and Heroes,” 6.

48. Ibid, 8.

49. Ibid, 12.

jockeys actually riding the horses, risking their lives, and presumably possessing more knowledge and skill in the area than the owners, are neglected in favour of the horse itself and, presumably, the king it represents. While giving credit to the animal at first looks positive and affectionate, relocating all the glory onto them displaces any credit away from the human jockey. Thus, the real horse-human relationship is undercut in sport to enhance social hierarchy and the king's status, even while the personal relationship was enhanced between Alexander III and Bucephalus to perpetuate his legacy in war. Considering Alexander III's status, it is perhaps unsurprising that his name as a rider is remembered alongside Bucephalus', while so many jockeys' names are forgotten.

Bucephalus has been employed in much the same way by later historians in service of Alexander III's legend. This is perhaps no surprise, considering that kings like Philip II took part in Greek equestrian competition and used this same mythologizing power of the horse to assert and sustain their own legends in their own time. Yet, these symbolic and ideological functions of the horse are juxtaposed against, but not contradicted by, the practical biopower represented by and physically enacted from the cavalry horse. In Bucephalus both Xenophon's very real, trainable, feedable warhorse and the legendary equine myths converge, benefitting Alexander III's project in every way. One need look no further than Katherine Roberts' novel to see that children are being introduced to a compassionate, gentle Alexander III, all through the lens of his relationship with and care of horses. In the scholarly realm, the increase of studies, such as those discussed in this paper like Golden's and Skunda's, which examine the real role of horses in the Macedonian and other cavalries of antiquity, reveals a burgeoning interest in human-animal relationships and provides new ways of thinking about ancient life, particularly where it revolves around such contested figures like Alexander III. All the king's horses might not be able to put Humpty Dumpty together again, but it seems they can do so for the image of Alexander the Great, who could be said to owe his kingdom to a horse.

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## MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS:

## THE GROUNDS OF PAULINE AUTHORITY IN WEAKNESS AND MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

TYLER LYNCH

**Abstract:** In this essay, I examine the connection between weakness and mystical experience in the formulation of Pauline authority, with focus on Second Corinthians. My main context analyses Paul's justification of his apostolate against the super-apostles in Corinth. I argue that Paul uses mystical experience to illustrate his conception of authority as defined by power-in-weakness, rather than power in the self. Furthermore, Paul's conception of power-in-weakness is itself dependent on a mystical identification of one's bodily suffering with the suffering of Christ. I will demonstrate how Paul's accounts of his mystical experience of the transfigured Christ on the road to Damascus, and his ascension into Heaven, are rhetorically geared by Paul to emphasize his own weakness and humility. Finally, I show how Paul views bodily suffering as a mystical manifestation of the power of Christ crucified. Thus, mystical experience undergirds Paul's conception of power-in-weakness through a personal, direct sense of connection with the reality of Christ through suffering.

Introduction: mysticism and Paul: Mysticism has remained central to Christian religious expression since Christianity's inception in the first century C.E. From Paul's personal vision of Christ on the road to Damascus to the communal rapture of tongues, mystical experience was central to Paul and the practice early Christian church. Early Christian mysticism was varied and complex, expressed in a variety of contexts, from apocalyptic visions to ecstatic mania. Despite its varying expressions, early Christian mysticism was defined essentially around a core mode of experience: the inculcation of the inner, personal, "direct experience of Ultimate Reality."<sup>1</sup> This understanding of mysticism has remained prevalent throughout Christian history, yet for Paul mystical experience constituted more than mere experiential reality. Mysticism configured into many of the central concepts of his ministry. This essay analyses how mystical experience relates to Paul's justifications of his apostolic authority through weakness in Second Corinthians. I argue that Paul justifies his authority primarily through his personal weakness and mystical experience, and that these two concepts are indelibly linked. Paul's accounts of his mystical experience *illustrate* weakness, and Paul's sense of weakness *depends upon* a mystical identification of bodily suffering

as manifesting the power of Christ. I focus primarily, but not exclusively, on Second Corinthians, and begin by presenting context with Paul's crisis of authority against his opponents in the city of Corinth. I will then define power-in-weakness as a concept encompassing the capacity of both physical suffering and internal defects (ie. what Paul describes as weakness) to manifest the power of God, and analyse where power-in-weakness is integrally dependent upon mystical experience. First, power-in-weakness is illustrated in Paul's accounts of his mystical experiences of Christ and ascension into Heaven. Second, power-in-weakness depends on the identification of Paul's suffering as a mystical union with Christ's suffering on the Cross.

Context and setting:

Second Corinthians and Paul's crisis of authority: Perhaps the most severe challenge to Paul's apostolic authority contained in the extant Pauline epistles is that depicted in Second Corinthians, a book comprised in large part by Paul's responses to sustained critiques of his apostolate by rival apostles in the Greek city of Corinth.<sup>2</sup> In Paul's

absence from the city, Corinth's *ekklesia* had begun to entertain the ministry of a number of "super-apostles" claiming to be superior to Paul and preaching a message conflicting with Paul's own (11:5).<sup>3</sup>

While Paul never explicitly gives the identity of the super-apostles, a number of contextual clues may be gleaned about them. The super-apostles they claim to be true "apostles of Christ" (11:11-12), reinforcing their credentials with letters of reference (which Paul does not have) (3:2); and Paul implies that they share his Hebrew heritage (11:22). Based on the centrality of mystical experience in Paul's defense, one can surmise that the super-apostles also leveraged their own "legitimizing visionary experience" to support their apostolic credentials.<sup>4</sup>

If the super-apostles remain somewhat nebulous, their accusations towards Paul are clear. Paul is critiqued as physically weak (10:10), "untrained in speech" (11:6), arrogantly independent (11:7), duplicitous

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offering to the Jerusalem church and present a marked shift in tone, and are less germane to this essay. Source: Alexandra R. Brown, "The Gospel Takes Place: Paul's Theology of Power-in-Weakness in 2 Corinthians," *Interpretation* Vol 52, 3 (1998): 272-273.

1. April DeConick, "Early Christian Mysticism," in *Paradise Now: Essays on early Jewish and Christian mysticism*, edited by April DeConick, 69, Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006

2. As with many of Paul's letters, the Second Letter to the Corinthians appears to be a composite, comprised of several letters. The portions most relevant to my essay are Chapters 1-7, where "Paul's defense of his weakness as a manifestation of genuine apostolic power begins" - and Chapters 10-13: Paul's most explicit arguments in self-defense, discussed at length below. The intervening chapters, 8-9, mainly concern the

3. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations are from Second Corinthians. All quotations are taken from the NRSV, and any italics are added by me for emphasis.

4. Alexandra R. Brown, "The Gospel Takes Place," 274.



and “crafty” (12:16). In addition to character attacks, Paul’s authority is challenged over a range of “theological, christological and pneumatological” issues, with Paul going so far as to argue that the super-apostles ultimately preach “a different gospel” (11:4).<sup>5</sup> Paul presents his defense against the super-apostles in 2 Corinthians 10-13, a portion of the epistle often called the ‘Letter of Tears.’<sup>6</sup> I turn next to this response.

#### Paul’s Justification of Apostolic Authority Through Weakness:

2 Corinthians 10-13 sees Paul launching a sustained defense of his apostolic authority to the Corinthian church, summarized in his stark declaration that he is “not in the least inferior to these super-apostles” (11:5). Paul’s defense veers from harsh critiques of the super-apostles and Corinthian *ekklesia*, to a catalogue of the hardships and efforts he incurred during his ministry, alongside accounts of his own mystical experience.

Paul makes two primary justifications of his apostolic authority: the first is precisely the weakness he has incurred in service of the gospel (many aspects of which are being weaponised against Paul by his opponents); the second is the mystical experience which demonstrates the power of God working in him. I argue that these are inseparably related: Paul’s weakness has a mystical element, and Paul’s mystical experience is geared to emphasize Paul’s weakness.

Paul draws emphasis to the *same* weaknesses of which he is accused, conceding that he is “weak” (11:29), “untrained in speech” (11:6), and anxious (11:38). Going further, Paul portrays himself as man scarred by “toil and hardship” (11:27) - including torture, manual labour, and deprivation - recounting a litany of suffering which culminates in Paul’s account of his pitiful escape from Damascus, lowered by night over the city walls in a basket (11:23-28).

5. Lars Aejmelaeus, “The Question of Salary in the Conflict between Paul and the ‘Super Apostles’ in Corinth,” in *Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity*, edited by Ismo Dunderberg, et al, Leiden: Brill, 2014: 347.

6. Andrew C. Ballard, “Tongue-Tied and Taunted: Paul, Poor Rhetoric and Paltry Leadership in 2 Corinthians 5.13,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 37, no. 1 (2014): 54.

How does Paul define weakness, and how does it manifest the power of God? Paul himself uses ‘weakness’ to encompass physical suffering (such as floggings and sickness) as well as internal defects (such as his anxiety or rhetorical ineptitude). Weakness may thus be understood to represent all factors “which strain the human self and even reduce the self to nothing,”<sup>7</sup> thereby opening the self to the power of God, revealed in Christ crucified and resurrected. In claiming that God’s power is manifested most in individuals deemed weak by the world, Paul asserts an idea with deep roots in Judaic scripture. The Hebrew scriptures are replete with examples of righteous, authoritative individuals who were criticized for weakness, including Abram, Moses, Gideon, and David. A central theme in all these instances is the idea that the power of God was essentially confounding to human wisdom, and that Divine glory was even more impressive and providential to the extent that God’s human instruments were weak and powerless.

Paul’s accentuation of his weakness in defense of his authority must be counterbalanced by the self-aggrandisement which he also exhibits. Paul admits that he “may boast a little” (11:16), and is wholly unwilling to cede apostolic superiority to the super-apostles (11:5). Nevertheless, Paul’s conveys his boasting with a heavy degree of irony. Despite emphasizing his personal dedication to the gospel, Paul apologizes for boasting “as a fool” (11:21) and urges that anyone “who boasts, boast in the Lord” (10:17). As mentioned above, the second justification of Paul’s apostolic authority is his mystical experience, including his transfiguration experience and ascension to Heaven. I shall next examine how Paul frames these mystical experiences to accentuate his weakness, and therefore justify his authority.

“The least among apostles:” Weakness in

Paul’s transfiguration experience:  
In early Christianity, one of the key justifications of apostolic authority was by way of an apostle’s mystical experience of Divi-

7. James B. Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1-10): Paul’s Heavenly Journey in the Context of Early Christian Experience*, Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2011: 281.

ne power - which in the Christian context was often apprehended as a vision of the transfigured Christ.<sup>8</sup> As a direct, highly-personal experience of Divine reality, the transfiguration experience is essentially mystical, and was a strong demonstration of a recipient’s apostolic merits. An established transfiguration experience was irreproachable testimony to one’s “freedom, being an apostle, and authority.”<sup>9</sup> In a central instance, the appearance of a Jesus raised to Divine glory to apostles Peter, James, and John atop a mountain becomes a clear substantiation of their spiritual power and closeness to Christ.<sup>10</sup> Paul, too, leverages his transfiguration experience in support of his apostolic authority. However, rather than accentuate his special status as the recipient of a mystical vision of the risen Lord, Paul relays this experience to the Corinthian church framed to emphasize his own *weakness and unworthiness*.

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul recounts a long list of those who experience the risen Christ, including five hundred fellow Christ-followers, and “all the apostles” (15:4-7). Paul recounts his own experience last, weakening his claims to apostolic primacy by literally placing himself last. Paul’s account of his vision of Christ brims with self-deprecation: he describes himself as “one untimely born” (15:8); the “least of the apostles” (15:9); a man “unfit to be called an apostle” (15:9). Paul does not neglect to note that he persecuted the followers of Christ at the time of his transfiguration experience (15:9), emphasizing another damaging display of weakness.

8. Transfiguration signifies the essentially-transformed mode of being in which the figure of Christ appears to the visionary recipient. While this transfiguration is most clearly seen in visions of Christ following his crucifixion or ascension, the most notable transfiguration experience appears in Matthew 17 when Jesus was still alive. Thus, transfiguration can also refer to a vision of the living Jesus raised to heavenly glory, as with the transfiguration experience of Peter, James, and John which I relate above (Matt 17 1:9).

9. Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 172

10. Matthew 7:1-9. Paul also references the transfiguration experience of Moses in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, placing his own experience of the risen Christ in a lineage dating as far back as Moses.



Furthermore, Paul relinquishes many of the “accoutrements of authority” earned through his transfiguration experience.<sup>11</sup> Paul refuses his apostolic rights to receive payment for his preaching or to travel with a wife, instead working alone to support himself - an act whose connotations of poverty and menial labour draw harsh criticism from the Corinthians.<sup>12</sup> Throughout, Paul treats his own mystical experience to centre on his weakness, embodying his central argument that Christ’s “power is made perfect in weakness” (12:9).

“...I do not know:” Weakness in Paul’s

ascension account:

The second and most notable instance where mystical experience illustrates and undergirds Paul’s authority through power-in-weakness is the ascension account of 2 Corinthians 12:1-10. Paul’s ascension account comes at the climax of his letter of self-justification, as the highest argument for his apostolic authority to the Corinthian church. Where a transfiguration experience represents an invasion of earthly reality by Divine power, an ascension experience is arguably even more impressive, representing the transcending of earthly reality by the subject into the Heavenly realm. Like transfiguration, heavenly ascension is an essentially mystical experience with deep precedents in both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures.<sup>13</sup> Paul’s ascension account in 2 Cor 12:1-10 presents his strongest justification of his own apostolic authority, but also his most explicit inversion of the standards of power and authority by which his Corinthian opponents judge him. Nearly every rhetorical choice is geared to emphasize Paul’s weakness. The ascen-

sion passage is deliberately positioned to emphasize weakness, sandwiched between Paul’s humiliating descent over the walls of Damascus and his account of the painful thorn-in-the-flesh. Rhetorically, Paul’s ascension account is so unimpressive that it borders on satire; indeed, the modern scholarly consensus reads Paul’s ascension account as a calculated self-parody designed to “marginalise the apocalyptic<sup>14</sup> claims of his opponents.”<sup>15</sup> Harrison’s use of the term ‘apocalyptic’ signifies the mystical connotations of apocalypse as a revelation, or peeling back, of reality in a spiritual sense - rather than a destructive or world-ending event. Where Paul’s opponents boast in their mystical experience,<sup>16</sup> Paul can barely give a coherent account of his own. Indeed, before relating his most impressive mystical experience yet, Paul parodically states that “nothing is to be gained by it” (12:1). Paul’s refusal to submit to the self-commendation presented by the super-apostles subverts not only the willingness of the super-apostles to “commend themselves” (10:12), but the basic framework of “Graeco-Roman [sic] honorific culture” itself.<sup>17</sup>

Paul does not explicitly identify himself as the subject of the story, and writes his account in the third-person, rather than presenting it as first-person experience. It is evident that the “person in Christ” to whom Paul refers in 11:2 is Paul himself, since Paul switches to the first-person from 11:6 onwards.

Paul defers, rather feebly, on nearly all the details of his ascension. Twice he repeats that he is unable to state whether he was transported into Heaven bodily or only in spirit (12:3). Paul refuses to share what he heard in Heaven, and perhaps cannot even remember these “things that are not to be told” (12:4). It is a startlingly inept account for an apostle struggling for control of

his congregation, accused by his opponents of rhetorical ineptitude and spiritual inferiority. Rather than marshal his mystical experience as proof of his spiritual ability, Paul emphasizes *precisely* those traits for which he is criticized.

Paul’s mystical experience clearly stands as proof of apostolic authority, redolent of the “signs and wonders and mighty works” which Paul claims he has demonstrated to the Corinthians (12:12). Despite Paul’s parodic tone, the exceptional character of his ascension would have been readily apparent to his audience. Nevertheless, Paul frames his mystical experience to emphasize his weakness and mock the boasting which his opponents engaged in.

Thorns and crosses: Mystical manifestation of Christ’s power through bodily suffering:

I will now analyse how Paul’s conception of power itself is defined by a mystical conception of weakness as manifesting the power of the crucified Christ. Paul does not simply use mystical experience to *illustrate* weakness: he finds a mystical, inner, direct connection to Divine power in the experience of bodily suffering itself. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in culmination of Paul’s ascension account in 2 Cor 12:7-10. The thorn-in-the-flesh passage sees Paul directly embodying the idea that human weakness manifests God’s power, blurring the boundaries between physical and mystical.

Directly following his ascension to Heaven, Paul is stricken by Christ with a quasi-mystical ailment (a “thorn in the flesh”) to prevent him “from being too elated” in his ascension (12:7). Paul’s greatest triumph is thus followed by his moment of greatest pain, with the thorn grounding Paul’s mystical ascension in weakness and pain. Coming at the climax of Paul’s self-justification as an apostle, the thorn-in-the-flesh affirms that it is not Paul’s mystical abilities, but his physical weakness, which establishes his merit as an apostle. The thorn - and power-in-weakness in general - must be understood in light of Paul’s belief that bodily suffering embodies the paradoxical power of Christ’s crucifixion. For Paul, the Cross represents a “transforming perceptual shift” by which God radically reconfigu-

11. Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 266

12. 2 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Cor 9 4:7. Also note: In *The Question of Salary in the Conflict between Paul and the ‘Super Apostles’ in Corinth*, Lars Aejmelaeus explores interesting dimensions of the shame associated with manual labour in the ancient Greco-Roman context - something Paul is not ashamed to flaunt despite its shameful connotations with poverty and deprivation (ie. weakness).

13. Ascension accounts are related by Hebrew figures such as the prophets Michaiah (1 Kings 22:19-22), Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:1-3:15) and Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13), as well as by Greco-Roman figures such as Iatromentes, Parmenides, and in Plato’s Phaedrus. For more, see Wallace, 46-104.

14. Apocalyptic, here, must be understood in the literal sense as a mystical “unveiling” or “revelation” rather than pertaining to the end of the world

15. J.R. Harrison, “In Quest of the Third Heaven: Paul & His Apocalyptic Imitators,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol 58, 1 (Feb 2004): 52.

16. Alexandra R. Brown, “The Gospel Takes Place,” 274.

17. Harrison, “In Quest of the Third Heaven: Paul & His Apocalyptic Imitators,” 55

res the nature of power itself, manifesting His saving grace through Christ's death by a humiliating, painful form of execution. Crucifixion was so feared and abhorred in the 1st Century Roman Empire that Paul goes so far as to call the preaching of a crucified Christ "a stumbling block to Jew and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor 1:23).<sup>18</sup> For Paul, only a weak vessel could truly embody the scandalous power of the Cross, since in weakness the strange power of God shines through all the clearer. If God poured his power into vessels that possessed conventional, *human* strength and power, one might be inclined to boast in their own abilities, mistaking the power of God for the results of their own might.

For a Christ-follower, then, the possession of authority depends upon this inner, direct experience of connection to Christ through one's own weakness. By glorifying his own suffering, toil, and persecution, Paul "grounds his apostolic legitimacy" in his ability to make his suffering body the site of the Cross's power.<sup>19</sup> Just as the suffering Christ displays God's power on the Cross, so the suffering Paul displays Christ's power in his body.

Paul explicitly makes the connection between bodily suffering and the power of the Cross in 2 Corinthians 4:10: "We are... always *carrying in the body* the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible *in our bodies*."<sup>20</sup> For Paul, relegating the body to persecution and suffering allows the power of the Cross to be literally embodied. It is a theme to which Paul returns repeatedly throughout his letters, stating that believers are icons [ie. physical embodiments] of Christ (3.18) and "suffer with him" (Romans 8:17). In his most explicit formulation, Paul states that he "bear[s] the marks of Jesus branded on my body" - a statement which may go so far as to imply Paul's possession of stigmata (Galatians 6:17). Ultimately, Paul views his own "affliction [as] an extension of Christ's."<sup>21</sup>

I argue that this identification with one's suffering and Christ's power bears all the hallmarks of mystical experience. It is personal, centring on the experience of suffering, and it is a direct experience of Divine reality, as the Christ-follower experiences their very body as the site of the Cross's power. Suffering is intimately connected to the "inner illumination" by which Paul experiences the power of God in mysticism.<sup>22</sup> Whether as a persecutor visited last by the risen Lord, or an apostle stricken with a thorn-in-the-flesh following his ascension, Paul experiences weakness and mystical experience as inextricably related - a relation upon which Paul grounds his apostolic authority.

#### Conclusion:

Paul could never have foreseen the degree to which his writings influenced the future of the world, and the intervening two thousand years have normalised, and also distorted, our perceptions of Paul. Power-in-weakness is often treated as a reassuring reminder that one's flaws need not prevent success. Mystic experience, if it is considered at all, is occult and esoteric, something far removed from the bounds of conventional religious expression.

However, accurate understanding of the Christian faith depends upon recapturing the radical nature and initial strangeness of Paul's conception of authority as rooted in weakness and mystical experience. Paul's reorientation of authority away from societally-established forms of power, and towards weakness, served to dramatically upend the horizons of a Christ-follower's allegiances and self-conception. Mystical experience was not some esoteric endeavour for Paul, who envisioned the "basic state of the Christian" as one defined by mystical unity with the life-giving power of Christ, mediated through bodily suffering.<sup>23</sup>

I wish to conclude by briefly noting the eschatological significance of Paul's

pain. While this essay lacks the scope to fully incorporate the significance of Paul's views of Divine redemption into his vision of power-in-weakness, I believe this will be a fruitful area for future research and exploration. Indeed, I consider the following point crucial in understanding the Pauline ethos, and believe that briefly signalling its importance here is crucially important. I have noted how it is the power of Christ's crucifixion which Paul mystically manifests in his body. Yet Paul does not glorify suffering as an inherent good, but something ultimately transient, much as Christ's crucifixion necessarily precedes the ultimate display of Divine power: Christ's resurrection. The two events must be viewed together as encompassing a single act of Divine redemption. Thus, while God's power was made perfect in weakness, Paul viewed power-in-weakness as only the prelude to an all-encompassing act of Divine redemption which would ultimately eradicate suffering entirely. As Paul tells the Romans, "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us" (8:18). Paul's concept of power-in-weakness must be viewed in light of his hope of this ultimate divine redemption.

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18. Brown, "The Gospel Takes Place," 279.

19. Ibid, 280. Paul makes this statement quite literally in Galatians 6:17: "From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body."

20. Italics are my addition.

21. Timothy B. Savage, "The Pattern of the Chris-

tian Ministry: Power through Weakness," In *Power through weakness: Paul's understanding of the Christian ministry in 2 Corinthians*, 173: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

22. Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise*, 184.

23. Ibid, 257.

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## FLOWERS AND SERPENTS: READING GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN GENESIS 39 AND 2 SAMUEL

FINLAY POGUE

CONTENT WARNING: DISCUSSIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

**Abstract:** In Genesis 39 Potiphar's wife's sexual advances towards Joseph resembles those made by Amnon towards Tamar in 2 Samuel 13; both involve people of higher social status (i.e., Potiphar's wife and Amnon) advancing or preying sexually on those of lower social status (i.e., Joseph and Tamar). However, this paper contends that focussing solely on the implicit and explicit sexual violence in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13, respectively, overlooks the crucial gendered elements of each story. Following Nyasha Junior's definition of gender as "culturally constructed sets of attitudes and behaviors regarding masculinity and femininity," this paper investigates how the "cultural construction" of (social) politics, and the "masculine and feminine" elements of sexuality combine to reveal the political and sexual marginalization of women in each story. Specifically, following Judith Butler's notion of "gender intelligibility," this paper argues that Potiphar's wife and Tamar are, respectively, only "intelligible" as human subjects insofar as they "conform" to certain "standards" of femininity set by a masculine social sphere. Further, using Ron Pirson's analysis of Genesis 39, this paper realigns Potiphar's wife from a feminized "seductress" at the mercy of her sexual desires, to a politically savvy woman navigating the patriarchy. Thus, putting Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13 in conversation reveals the gendered imbalances in the narratives and demonstrates that sexuality is the only social currency available to Potiphar's wife and Tamar, respectively.

The "seduction of Joseph" story in Genesis 39,<sup>1</sup> and the "rape of Tamar"<sup>2</sup> in 2 Samuel 13 are, on the surface, related primarily along an axis of unwanted sexual advances. In the latter, Amnon lusts after, and rapes, his half-sister Tamar, while in the former Potiphar's wife repeatedly 'comes on' to the "well built and handsome" Joseph, despite his refusals (Gen. 39:6). Accordingly, perhaps because the connection between Potiphar's wife and Tamar seems surface-level, Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13 are often examined in isolation, testaments to each episode's "patriarchal environment."<sup>3</sup> For example, though Ryan S. Higgins acknowledges the "biblical gender ideology" in 2 Samuel 13, Tamar's rape is still

discussed in terms of 'beginning' and 'end'; while of course, as a narrative segment, the rape begins and ends, Higgins minimizes the continuity of gender asymmetry in the episode as a whole by approaching 2 Samuel 13 with "Tamar's ruin" chiefly in mind.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Esther Fuchs' reading of Genesis 39 isolates Potiphar's wife from the underlying gendered matrix of the narrative. Like Higgins, Fuchs' analysis hinges on the perceived sexual dynamics of the scene, namely Potiphar's wife as the "desirous party," Joseph as the "desirable object."<sup>5</sup> In that context, Fuchs deems Potiphar's wife "morally...unambiguously inferior" to Joseph; in other words, even though Fuchs comments specifically on the patriarchal context of Genesis 39, her analysis ultimately bypasses and preserves the gendered social sphere that underwrites the scene's action.<sup>6</sup> Potiphar's wife is treated as a monad, disconnected from the gendered social context that subtends her position as an

ostensibly "desirous party." As we will see later, limiting Potiphar's wife to a sexually "desirous party" forecloses her ability to escape the sexual confines of her gender.

Accordingly, I follow J. Cheryl Exum's claim that "a feminist critique must, of necessity, read against the grain."<sup>7</sup> Specifically, my reading of Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13 relies on Judith Butler's notion of "gender intelligibility."<sup>8</sup> According to Butler, to be a "coherent" person one must exhibit and perform attributes socially understood to correspond to the gender with which one is aligned (or assigned).<sup>9</sup> As Butler notes, one's gender 'alignment' is not quite as simple as a choice; instead, gender is assigned, usually from birth, based on physical sex characteristics. In that way, the social imperative to 'cohere' as a gendered being precedes the formation of individual identity; or, in other words, identity is contingent on one's social "gender intelligibility." "In-

1. Nyasha Junior, "Powerplay in Potiphar's House: The Interplay of Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in Genesis 39" (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 2008), 94.  
2. Mark Gray, "Amnon: A Chip Off the Old Block? Rhetorical Strategy in 2 Samuel 13:7-15 the Rape of Tamar and the Humiliation of the Poor," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 23, no. 77 (1998):1.  
3. Ryan S. Higgins, "He Would not Hear her Voice: From Skilled Speech to Silence in 2 Samuel 13:1-22," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 36, no. 2 (2020): 36.

4. Ibid, 37.

5. Esther Fuchs, "The Biblical Wife: Structure and Setting in Conjugal Narratives" in *Sexual Politics in Biblical Narrative* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 146.

6. Ibid, 146.

7. J. Cheryl Exum, preface to *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993): 11.

8. Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006): 22.

9. Ibid, 23.



coherence,” and “unintelligibility” then, are constant threats to personal and social safety and stability; to become “unintelligible” is to transgress the expectations of one’s gender performance and risk greater exposure to all forms of social, political, physical, sexual, emotional, and epistemic violence. In short, “unintelligibility” corresponds to what Butler calls “precarity,” or “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support more than others, and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, or death.”<sup>10</sup>

With that in mind, I suggest that focussing solely on the implicit and explicit sexual violence in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13, respectively, overlooks the crucial gendered elements of each story; by focussing on sexual violence merely as a by-product of sexual desire, we miss the complex “culturally constructed set of attitudes and behaviors regarding masculinity and femininity” that inform sexuality and violence in Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13.<sup>11</sup> My aim is to bring Potiphar’s wife and Tamar into conversation by reading their seemingly disparate circumstances along gender lines; they are only “intelligible” as human subjects, I argue, insofar as they conform to certain standards of femininity inscribed in a masculine social sphere. Thus, reading Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13 together reveals the gendered imbalances in each narrative and demonstrates that sexuality is the only social currency available to Potiphar’s wife and Tamar, respectively.

“But He Would Not Listen To Her”:

Unhearable Feminine Speech In 2 Samuel 13

First, I will expand on Butler’s notion of “intelligibility” and of gender as a social construction in a biblical context. While noting that “gender norms vary among the ancients,”<sup>12</sup> Nyasha Junior outlines how the historical social context of ancient Near

Eastern cultures is structured by “gender expectations.”<sup>13</sup> For example, Junior cites Genesis 3 as evidence of prescribed gender roles; in Gen. 3:17, man is prescribed the masculine role of physical labour, while in 3:16 woman is explicitly told that her “husband...shall rule over you.” However, Junior also cites the proscription of cross-dressing in Deut. 22:5 as evidence of the mutual construction of gender norms. That is, while masculine-feminine power dynamics are very much in play, both men and women are “constructed” by a broader system of gender pre- and proscriptions.<sup>14</sup> This is to say that, while ‘patriarchy’ necessarily implies a gendered power imbalance favouring men, men and women are intertwined in the perpetuation of that patriarchy. Accordingly, without confusing the historical context of Genesis 39 or 2 Samuel 13 with more contemporary gender theory, it is nevertheless the case that “intelligibility” in a biblical context refers to how closely one adheres to pre-existing gender norms. This is not to imply that one’s adherence to gender norms is a conscious choice; indeed, as Butler and Karalina Matskevich would argue, gender norms are something imposed on a genderless subject from an exterior social context.<sup>15</sup>

With that in mind, feminine intelligibility specifically is often centered around sexuality. For example, in 2 Samuel 13, Tamar is a highly “intelligible” character. Before we even learn her name we are told she is “beautiful,” and thus at a narrative level Tamar’s sexual value precedes her very identity (2 Sam. 13:1). Indeed, we can read the chapter’s first verse as a kind of index for 2 Samuel 13 as a whole: Amnon is mentioned first, for he is the central masculine figure in the text. Tamar’s beauty is mentioned next, for her beauty is what primarily concerns Amnon. We are told Tamar’s relation to Amnon next, for in the patriarchal context of the story, a woman’s relation to a man is her principal means of identification.<sup>16</sup> Only after that are we told Tamar’s

name, and finally the verse concludes with Amnon’s relationship to David and his infatuation with Tamar, thus circumscribing Tamar within a hyper-masculine narrative (and guaranteeing her “intelligibility”).<sup>17</sup>

Tamar’s feminization is only furthered in that Amnon is attracted to her, at least in part, by the joint fact she is his sister and is a “virgin”; that is, Tamar’s “beauty” is constructed in no small part by her almost mythical “impossibility” (2 Sam. 13:2). In other words, Amnon is not attracted to Tamar qua Tamar, so much as the idea of a perfect feminine sexual object.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, perhaps precisely because he is attracted, above all, to a conceptual woman—and not the living, breathing Tamar—is Amnon capable of committing such violence against her. It is significant that Amnon begins the chapter without the intention of raping Tamar, and instead seems to accept the predicament of his “impossible infatuation.” Indeed, only when Jonadab tells Amnon to “pretend” (2 Sam. 13:5) does rape become a very real possibility.<sup>19</sup> Thus, only when the real Tamar enters the domain of (gendered, sexualized) fantasy—the domain of the conceptual woman—are real consequences attached to her.

This is all not to absolve Amnon but to suggest that gender norms can precipitate

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that “the structural, ontological dependence of the other lies at the heart of the gendered identity of ‘iś, ‘man’” (2); in other words, the position that woman as a created subject relies for her subjectivity, first and foremost, on a male other—a reliance that, as we will see, is not necessarily, or meaningfully mutual.

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10. “Gender Politics and the Right to Appear” in *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015):33.
11. Junior, “Powerplay in Potiphar’s House,” 3.
12. Ibid, 47.
13. Ibid, 49.
14. Ibid, 52.
15. Butler, “Subjects of Sex”; Karalina Matskevich, *Construction of Gender and Identity in Genesis: The Subject and the Other* (London: T&T Clark, 2019).
16. See Matskevich, *Construction of Gender*. Specifically, I am referring to Matskevich’s claim
17. I am in conversation with Shimon Bar-Efrat, “2 Samuel,” in *The Jewish Study Bible*, JPS Tanakh Translation, 2nd ed., ed. Adele Berlin and Mark Zvi Brettler (Oxford University Press, 2004): 626.
18. Although, to what extent Tamar is limited from the fore to her objectification is a valid point of investigation—in other words, who is ‘Tamar qua Tamar’?
19. There are echoes, in Jonadab’s character, of the serpent in Genesis 2, insofar as both man and snake induce a kind of ‘fall’ in Eve and Amnon, respectively; however, where Eve gains the knowledge of good and evil as a result, Amnon seems to lose any sense of good and evil after talking to Jonadab. The allusive connection between the masculine Amnon and feminine Eve is worth investigating further.

gendered violence.<sup>20</sup> We can see this clearly in the scheme Amnon and Jonadab concoct, which operates along a severely gendered axis. Specifically, Amnon preys upon Tamar's feminine role as food preparer by asking David to send her to "prepare a couple of cakes in front of me" (2 Sam. 13:6).<sup>21</sup> Amnon's insistence that Tamar prepare the food "in front of" him also suggests at the performative elements of the entire narrative: it is as if Amnon is requesting Tamar literally 'act out' her feminine role for him. Further, Amnon's wording suggests the contingency of woman on man, in a patriarchal context, as if Amnon sees himself as an audience to be entertained. It is significant that the process of the cakes' preparation is so specific: we are told that Tamar "took dough and kneaded it into cakes...and cooked the cakes," a linear and far more detailed account of the cake making process than is strictly necessary from a narrative standpoint (2 Sam. 13:8). Yet, from a literary standpoint 2 Sam. 13:8 is almost processional, evoking Tamar's tragic progression towards her terrible fate. Keeping in mind also that the knowledge and practice of making "cakes," or bread, is a central component of many cultures, the dramatic irony of the scene is that Tamar approaches the hyper-masculine, animalistic urges of Amnon along an opposite trajectory of feminized, domestic labour and culture.<sup>22</sup>

What we find accordingly, in the patriarchal social sphere of 2 Samuel 13, is that women are predisposed by the very system that marks them as women to be especially vulnerable to the characteristics of femininity with which they are marked.

In other words, femininity in a patriarchal context is not a two-way street. Nowhere is this clearer than in Tamar's vocal resistance of Amnon in 2 Sam. 13:12-13, a speech that moves once again from a feminine register towards a masculine register. Specifically, Tamar first appeals to Amnon at a moral, interpersonal, 'feminine' level,<sup>23</sup> calling Amnon's assault, rather than Amnon himself, a "vile thing" (2 Sam. 13:12). Then, when Amnon appears unphased, Tamar shifts to a more explicitly angry register, trying to ward Amnon off with a display of *ad hominem* force—"you will be like any of the scoundrels in Israel" (Ibid, emphasis added). When that tactic is also unsuccessful, Tamar shifts register a third and final time, this time appealing to Amnon with specifically masculine, patriarchal language; when she says, "Please, speak to the king; he will not refuse me to you," she defers entirely to the patriarchal judicial system in the hopes that, if Amnon does not recognize her appeal to humanity, he will at least recognize the power of the (literally) patriarchal law (2 Sam. 13:13). It is worth noting Higgins's reading of this exchange. Although it is possible Higgins does not extend his analysis far enough; though he sees "the devolution of [Tamar's] speech" as demonstrating "her diminishing agency", the extent of Tamar's agency before Amnon's assault is unclear. Indeed, my argument is that "the devolution of [Tamar's] speech" showcases her "diminishing agency" less than it reveals her lack of agency to begin with.<sup>24</sup>

That this is not ultimately the case is conveyed in 2 Sam. 13:14: "But he would not listen to her; he overpowered her and lay with her by force." It is significant that the author does not use Amnon's or Tamar's name:<sup>25</sup> for a moment gender is brought to the fore and made painfully clear; for

a moment it does not matter that Amnon and Tamar, specifically, are involved in the rape, but that "*he overpowers her.*" Indeed, it evokes Catherine A. MacKinnon's statement that "[s]exual objectification is the primary process of the subjection of women. It unites act with word, construction with expression, perception with enforcement, myth with reality. Man fucks woman; subject verb object."<sup>26</sup>

In other words, we can read backwards from the author's phallogocentric formulation of the rape itself in 2 Sam. 13:14 to understand the "primary process" at work leading up to that moment. That is, Tamar's final, masculine rhetorical plea is unsuccessful precisely because her "intelligibility" forecloses her understandability; Tamar attempts to communicate with Amnon in a register outside the one she is constructed in, and thus attempts the impossible task of transgressing language itself: Tamar is "intelligible" as an object, and therefore cannot act as a subject.

#### "Look Like Th'innocent Flower, But Be The Serpent Under't": The Potiphars' Plots

I approach Genesis 39 from a similar perspective of gender and sexuality. Accordingly, I do not read Potiphar's wife as a sexual aggressor but, following Ron Pirson, as a woman using the only means available to her to achieve political ends.<sup>27</sup> In other words, in this section we encounter a chiasmus of sorts; where Amnon in 2 Samuel 13 uses the social and political means available to him (his powerful father, his own masculinity), in order to achieve sexual ends, in Genesis 39 Potiphar's wife uses sexual means to achieve social and political ends.

As mentioned, my argument relies on Pirson's reading of Genesis 39 (one that certainly goes "against the grain"). To begin with, Pirson notes that if Potiphar "leaves everything in Joseph's care, 'except for the

20. It is also worth noting, as Gray does, that there is an "explicit connection between" David's "sexual behavior" towards Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11, and Amnon's behavior towards Tamar ("A Chip Off the Old Block?" 39). That is, in the same way gender is a learned behavior, following Gray, we might say that sexual assault can also be a learned behavior.

21. Junior, "Powerplay in Potiphar's House," 68.

22. Francesca Balossi-Restelli, Cecilia Conati-Barbaro, Cristina Lemorini, Lucia Mori, Davide D'Errico, "Bread in Prehistory: looking for the path of an extraordinary invention," in *Bread: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, ed. Cesare Manetti and Fabrizio Rufo (Rome: Sapienza University of Rome, 2014): 6.

23. Specifically, Tamar's first response to Amnon seems in conversation with what Joan Ringelheim terms a "culture of women," or the tendency for women to form "networks of survival" in times of life and death ("The Unethical and the Unspeakable: Women and the Holocaust," in *Simon Weisenthal Center* 1 [1984]: 14).

24. Higgins, 34.

25. For simplicity's sake, I use the singular "author," while acknowledging that the authorship may be plural.

26. Catherine A. MacKinnon, "Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory," *Signs* 7, no. 3 (1982): 541.

27. Ron Pirson, "The Twofold Message of Potiphar's Wife," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 18, no. 2 (2004).

bread that he ate,” as Gen. 39:6 indicates, “One is to wonder whether this ‘everything’ includes Potiphar’s wife as well.”<sup>28</sup> Further, highlighting an alternate translation of Potiphar’s social role under Pharaoh, Pirson suggests that Potiphar is not a “courtier” but a “eunuch,” and argues that “considering Potiphar’s physical condition [as a eunuch]” Potiphar and his wife have likely brought Joseph into the household in order that he “father a child with” Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39:1).<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, the author of Genesis 39 grants Potiphar’s wife “space to ventilate her grievances” because her position in the narrative exceeds that of a mere “seductress”;<sup>30</sup> for Pirson, Potiphar’s wife is the potential mother of Potiphar’s heir (and to that end is as much a sexual object as Tamar, a point we will return to).

However, my reading of Genesis 39 differs from Pirson’s, for one because I think Pirson overdetermines Potiphar’s role in the scheme; that is, while Potiphar initiates the plot to secure himself an heir there is evidence that he gradually loses his position as a politically effective patriarch and thus relinquishes control of that plot. Specifically, given that Joseph is seventeen, in Genesis 39, and thirty by the time he gets out of prison in Gen. 40:30,<sup>31</sup> Pirson suggests that Genesis 39 may not occur “day after day,” but “year after year.”<sup>32</sup> Thus, with a much longer timeframe in mind it seems possible that Joseph’s gradually increasing responsibility in Potiphar’s household (in Gen. 39:1-10) corresponds as much to Potiphar’s trust in Joseph as it does to Potiphar’s inability to run the household alone; that Potiphar ultimately “[pays] attention to nothing save the food that he [eats],” suggests

a sick old man, unable to engage with much beyond what is right in front of him (Gen. 39:6).

Accordingly, my reading of Genesis 39 differs from Pirson’s again, because Pirson assumes Potiphar’s wife wants an heir as much as her husband does; Pirson suggest that, because both Potiphar and his wife begin the scheme ‘together,’ they have the same objectives in mind. However, more likely, I suggest that Potiphar’s wife might be as intent on assuming her husband’s powerful position as her husband is in acquiring an heir. In other words, while it is possible Potiphar brings Joseph into his household in order for the latter to impregnate his wife, I submit that Potiphar’s wife sees Joseph only as an impediment to household power. Thus, in no insignificant way, Potiphar’s wife can be read as a precursor to Shakespeare’s Lady Macbeth; that is, far from a sex-crazed, second-in-command, Potiphar’s wife is—or was, until Potiphar loops in Joseph—the *de facto* head of the house precisely because Potiphar himself is ineffective. From this perspective, the objective of Potiphar’s wife, in Genesis 39, is precisely to remove Joseph from the political sphere of Potiphar’s household in order to clear the way for her own reign.

In effect, then, where Pirson’s reading still favours Joseph—i.e., in his reading Joseph ultimately thwarts the Potiphars’ plot—my reading allows Potiphar’s wife greater autonomy; that is, precisely because her true motives are obscured by her sexual objectification (as a “seductress,” or as an heir-bearer) Potiphar’s wife’s bid for household sovereignty is successful. In other words, while Pirson’s reading is unorthodox, it does not ultimately affect the outcome of the story: Joseph still thwarts Potiphar’s wife and to that extent Potiphar’s wife remains an ineffective character; that is, where the surface reading of Genesis 39 suggests that Potiphar’s wife is thwarted sexually, Pirson’s reading disagrees, only to suggest that Potiphar’s wife is thwarted socially and/or politically. Specifically, that the episode begins from Joseph’s perspective, as he starts his humdrum daily tasks, the detail that “none of the household [was] there inside” may only refer to what he sees as he begins his day (Gen. 39:11). Further, the author’s emphasis on the day being like any other (“one such day” [Gen. 39:11])

primes the reader to question that very premise; if the day is so ordinary, why are we reading about it? In other words, the author asks the reader to question Joseph’s perspective; Joseph’s unawareness is the site of the scene’s tension. Indeed, after Potiphar’s wife accosts Joseph and is left with his garment, it is suspicious she is able so easily to “call out to her servants” (Gen. 39:14). Instead, it seems likely that the servants are only hidden and thus when Potiphar’s wife ‘calls out’ to them she is both literally calling out (to tell them what has happened) and calling them out of their hiding places.

Approaching Gen. 39:11-15 from this perspective, reveals first how Potiphar’s wife utilizes the sexual objectification thrust upon her by her husband; that is, while from Potiphar’s perspective his wife is securing him an heir, to Joseph she appears merely as a ‘seductress.’ In other words, that Potiphar’s wife is making a political move is disguised behind the masculine lens of her own sexualization; disguised, that is, behind her own “intelligibility.” Second, by hiding her servants within earshot (and out of eyeshot), Potiphar’s wife reveals her shrewd awareness of the law. That is, as Pirson points out, in accordance with Deut. 22:23, a law that suggests if a woman “cries for help,” only the man can be held accountable for the rape, Potiphar’s wife ensures that her cries will, in fact, be heard.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

Perhaps the most striking and tragic difference between Genesis 39 and 2 Samuel 13 is how the characters’ political wherewithal meets on an axis of feminine intelligibility the masculine, judicial underpinnings of the chapters’ respective social spheres. Specifically, we can see Potiphar’s wife’s plan as the reverse of Amnon’s plan. Namely, Amnon’s speech produces the political effect of “everyone withdrawing”—political insofar as Amnon’s social position gives him power over “everyone”—and thus ensures Tamar’s legal sexual objectification and Amnon’s sexual ends. Meanwhile, Potiphar’s wife’s speech (or “cry”) follows from her sexual objectification—both ‘real’ in her capacity as heir-bearer and fictional insofar as she is not actually accosted by Joseph—and pro-

28. Ibid, 251.

29. Ibid, 253. As Pirson notes, his translation is corroborated by “the translators of LXX” (253), a position furthered by Robert C. Gregg (“Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife,” in *Shared Stories, Rival Tellings: Early Encounters of Jews, Christians, and Muslims* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2015]: 238) and Shalom Goldman (“The Centrality and Significance of the Joseph Narratives,” in *The Wives of Women/Wives of Men* [New York: State University of New York Press, 1995]: 24), among others.

30. Ibid, 248. Pirson is referring here to Gen. 39:14-19.

31. Ibid, 249.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid, 249-250.



duces the legal, political effect of everyone gathering, thus ensuring her political ends. What emerges then, is where Tamar's appeal to Amnon 'as a woman' and then 'as a man' reinforces the gendered dynamics of the scene, Potiphar's wife manages to instrumentalize her objectification and appear explicitly as a woman, implicitly as a man. In other words, where Tamar is limited by her "beauty" Potiphar's wife seems instead to follow the famous words of Lady Macbeth: she "look[s] like th' innocent flower, but [is] the serpent under't."<sup>34</sup>

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34. William Shakespeare, *Macbeth: Third Series*, eds. Sandra Clark and Pamela Mason (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2015): 159.



LIKE A NATURAL WOMAN: IRON AGE CONTEXTS FOR THE REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN JUDGES 4 AND 5

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PIPPA ROGAK

**Abstract:** Judges 4 and 5 recount two versions of the war between the Israelites, led by Deborah, and the Canaanites, led by Sisera. Two of the most pivotal characters in these narratives, Deborah and Jael, are notably both female characters. These two women wield power and authority that has little precedent within the texts of the Hebrew Bible. However, an investigation of the forms of military, religious, and domestic power and authority that they possess reveals that the precedent for this type of female character does indeed exist extra-biblically: such roles are attested in literary traditions and archaeological evidence from the early Iron Age Mediterranean world. Deborah's prophetic and military nature have strong parallels with Greek and Ugaritic representations of prophet-women and warrior-women. In addition to these public military and religious roles, Deborah and Jael both hold great sway in familial and domestic contexts. Their domestic power can be understood in the context of early Israelite material culture and theories of female-dominated spaces in Iron Age Syro-Palestine. An investigation into the cultural and literary precedents for the women of Judges 4 and 5 reveals that Deborah and Jael are products of a wider tradition of female authority in the Iron Age and are by no means an isolated depiction of women in power.

Judges 4 and 5, the prose narrative of Deborah's war against Sisera and the Song of Deborah respectively, are among the more contentious and distinctive texts of the Hebrew Bible: the two accounts of Deborah's feats differ greatly in style and often in content, and different verses appear to be additions, redactions, and amendments from various periods.<sup>1</sup> While some scholars, notably J.H. Wellhausen, claim that the Song of Deborah is one of the oldest texts of the Hebrew Bible, dating to the 12th or 11th century BCE, others suggest that the Song is in fact a much later text, dating to around the exilic period.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, though some scholars have attempted to date the events of Judges 4 and 5 by relating the geography of the text to archaeological finds, there is no extrabiblical evidence for the battle against Sisera or the existence of Deborah and Barak.<sup>3</sup> While much remains

unclear about the accounts of Deborah, it is clear that these narratives provide a significant representation of women in the Hebrew Bible: Deborah herself is a religious and military leader in the battle against Sisera, and Jael, a Kenite woman, is the one who ultimately defeats Sisera (Judges 4:17-21 (Judges 4:17-21)). The roles of these women, particularly Deborah as a military leader and Jael as the prophesied defeater of Sisera, are distinctive within the Hebrew Bible, and raise questions about the nature of gender roles in the setting of the texts and the contexts of their compositions. The prose and song versions of the story "invoke a number of social and economic factors that characterized a broad expanse of time and communal interaction that characterized most of the Iron Age period."<sup>4</sup> This pan-Iron Age social image in the Deborah narratives is quite evident in the gender roles present in the texts. Though extrabiblical evidence for the stories of Deborah is lacking and the time of composition is highly ambiguous, the texts are

thoroughly grounded in Iron Age historical and literary traditions. This paper will examine how the material and textual culture of Syria-Palestine and its environs reveal social and literary factors that allow us to understand the Judges 4 and 5 as a product of Iron Age gender roles.

One of the foremost elements of Deborah's leadership is her religious importance in the community, a type of authority that is reflective of women's roles in local Iron Age worship. The Song describes Deborah and Barak singing a song in praise of God, and leading others to "break out in song" with them, while the prose narrative refers to "Deborah, a prophet" (Judges 5:12; 4:4). The Song shows Deborah taking part in and leading others in worship through song, and the prose narrative explicitly addresses her religious leadership and places her in a prophetic role that the Hebrew Bible typically ascribes to men. Archaeological and comparative literary evidence suggests, however, that Deborah's religious authority aligns with Iron Age traditions of women worshippers. Finds from Iron Age I village sites, such as household shrines and cultic objects in domestic spaces, show the prevalence of local and domestic religious practices which involved the women of

1. Jacob L. Wright, "Deborah's War Memorial. The Composition of Judges 4-5 and the Politics of War Commemoration," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 123, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 519.
2. Serge Frolov, "How Old Is the Song of Deborah?," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 2 (December 1, 2011): 164.
3. A. D. H. Mayes, "The Historical Context of the Battle against Sisera," *Vetus Testamentum* 19,

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no. 3 (1969): 355.

4. Mark Leuchter, "Why Tarry The Wheels of His Chariot? (Judg 5,28): Canaanite Chariots and Echoes of Egypt in the Song of Deborah," *Biblica* 91, no. 2 (2010): 258.

the household as much as the men.<sup>5</sup> At the site of Kuntillet Ajrud (ca. 8th/9th century BCE), weaving scraps were present in cultic contexts, which Susan Ackerman proposes indicates female worshippers, given the widespread connotation of weaving as a feminine activity.<sup>6</sup> Beth Nakhai suggests that in these village and rural settings, religious responsibilities were divided between both men and women, a notion corroborated by the Kuntillet Ajrud weavings.<sup>7</sup> The shared participation in worship at these sites is very much the dynamic present in the Song of Deborah, in which Deborah and Barak lead the song of praise together. This suggests that Deborah's position as a religious woman in the pre-monarchic setting has an extrabiblical basis in early Iron Age rural cultic practices.

Though Judges 4 and 5 are set in the Levant, in an interconnected Mediterranean world, parallels with Greek prophecy may also illuminate Deborah's religious role in the context of IA literature. Judges 4 explicitly names Deborah a "prophet," a role that is typically male in the Hebrew Bible, but which, as discussed above, is not necessarily unusual for women in the Iron Age Levant (Judges 4:4). Furthermore, Vainstub outlines a key connection between Deborah and the tradition of prophetesses in Greece. The Hebrew name of Deborah can be translated as "bee," an animal commonly associated with Greek prophetic women.<sup>8</sup> Some Homeric literature and Greek works associated the Delphic Oracle, a prophetic figure who was always a woman, with bees, and also referred to the oracles as *Melissa*,

also meaning "bee."<sup>9</sup> The parallel naming may suggest that Deborah draws on Greek prophetess traditions, or shares some common origins to them, which indicates that the female prophet character of Deborah is not an unprecedented fiction but rather a product of preexisting concepts. The Homeric period, as well as the Delphic Oracle's height of fame in the Mediterranean were within the 7th century BCE, correlating roughly with the middle of the Iron Age in the Levant. If we hypothesize that the prophetic and bee connections may indicate some form of cultural exchange or a common literary basis, this supports the position that the stories of Deborah likely originate from after this period and not, as Wellhausen and others argue from the 12th or 11th century. Though the connection to Greek prophetess tradition is by no means a concrete chronological anchor, it does demonstrate that there existed a paradigm for prophetic women in Iron Age literature.

In addition to her religious and prophetic role, Deborah is notable for her military leadership. Military women are not well attested in the archaeological record of Syria-Palestine, but the military leadership and violence that Deborah and Jael exemplify share motifs with warrior goddess traditions. Though she does not go into battle herself in the prose narrative, and it remains ambiguous in the Song, it is according to Deborah's orders that Barak goes with "ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead[s] them up to Mount Tabor," demonstrating her authority in affairs of battle (Judges 4:14; 4:6). War narratives in the Hebrew Bible often emphasize the masculinity of warfare, and so the shift in attention "away from the male warrior Barak to Yhwh and/or a woman" in Judges 4 and 5 is unconventional.<sup>10</sup> However, outside of the Hebrew Bible, warrior women figures recur in mythology of ancient West

Asia. While there currently is an absence of archaeological evidence of historical female military figures in the region, an absence of evidence does not necessarily rule out the possibility, and the tradition is well attested in mythological sources. Taylor and Craigie identify parallels between the women of Judges 4 and 5, Deborah and Jael, and Ugaritic warrior goddesses. Craigie addresses a possible parallel between Deborah and the goddess Anat, and Taylor argues that the poetic imagery of Jael in the Song of Deborah alludes to the Ugaritic goddess Athtart.<sup>11</sup> Athtart was not solely a warrior goddess, but in some traditions this was an important aspect of her nature. Taylor cites sources from the period of Tutmosis IV that depict her as a weapon-wielding warrior goddess, her association with the Mesopotamian warrior goddess Ishtar, and Ugaritic texts that describe her as a "smasher of a man's head" as evidence of her warrior nature.<sup>12</sup> The latter point is, Taylor argues, a strong argument for a connection between the Song of Deborah and Athtart, as it parallels Jael's killing of Sisera in Judges 5:26.<sup>13</sup> Taylor also points out that Anat and Athtart are often paired in mythological traditions, and so it may be significant that the Song of Deborah appears to have allusions to both of these goddesses together.<sup>14</sup> Sources from the reign of Tutmosis IV situate the warrior Athtart around the 14th century BCE, and the destruction of Ugarit around the 12th century roughly dates Ugaritic sources to the Late Bronze Age.<sup>15</sup> These mythical traditions would, therefore, already have been extant and established by the time of the compositions of the two Deborah narratives. Regardless of the intentionality of these parallels, the similarities between the women of Deborah and these warrior goddesses originating

5. Beth Alpert Nakhai, "Varieties Of Religious Expression In The Domestic Setting," in *Household Archaeology in Ancient Israel and Beyond* (Brill, 2011), 353.

6. Susan Ackerman, "Digging up Deborah: Recent Hebrew Bible Scholarship on Gender and the Contribution of Archaeology," *Near Eastern Archaeology* 66, no. 4 (December 2003): 181.

7. Beth Alpert Nakhai, "Women in Israelite Religion: The State of Research Is All New Research," *Religions* 10, no. 2 (February 2019): 2.

8. Daniel Vainstub, "Some Points of Contact between the Biblical Deborah War Traditions and Some Greek Mythologies," *Vetus Testamentum* 61, no. 2 (2011): 325.

9. Vainstub, 325.

10. Claudia Bergmann, "We Have Seen the Enemy, and He Is Only a 'She': The Portrayal of Warriors as Women," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (October 2007): 654; Wright, "Deborah's War Memorial. The Composition of Judges 4–5 and the Politics of War Commemoration," 529.

11. Craigie, "Three Ugaritic Notes On the Song of Deborah," 34.; J. Glen Taylor, "The Song of Deborah and Two Canaanite Goddesses," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 7, no. 23 (July 1, 1982): 100.

12. *Ibid.*, 100–101.

13. *Ibid.*, 101.

14. *Ibid.*, 100.

15. David Kaniewski et al., "The Sea Peoples, from Cuneiform Tablets to Carbon Dating," *PLOS ONE* 6, no. 6 (June 8, 2011): 5.

from nearby regions demonstrates that the military roles of Deborah and Jael, though unconventional within the Hebrew Bible itself, may have been building upon a pre-established Bronze Age mythical tradition.

Deborah's official roles as a religious and military leader are supplemented by a more abstract and informal type of authority, but one that would nonetheless be highly valued in the context of early Israelite communities: her motherhood. Deborah's representation is unusual in that she is not centered in a family, as there are no references to her having children, and her husband Lappidoth is of little importance in the story (Judges 4:4). However, her role in the community is similar to the role that women held in the family in Iron Age Israel. Indeed, the Song of Deborah explicitly calls her a "mother in Israel", suggesting both that motherhood is central to her identity despite the apparent absence of blood family, and that she is a mother to the people of Israel (Judges 5:7). This identity is not only in title. Carol Meyers outlines how women in rural settlements in Iron Age Israel often had the important social role of mediating relations between families.<sup>16</sup> This is strikingly similar to how Deborah acts as a mediator: in Judges 4, "the Israelites went up to her to have their disputes decided" (Judges 4:5). Despite being the only female Judge in the Hebrew Bible, Deborah's diplomatic responsibilities as Judge strongly reflect maternal and familial roles of women in early Israelite societies.

Where Deborah's domestic and familial qualities are somewhat abstracted, the figure of Jael is often viewed in literature as a paragon of domesticity.<sup>17</sup> Jael therefore provides a clear case study for the place of domesticity in the communities of the Jud-

ges stories. She remains within her tent, a domestic space, throughout the story, and defeats Sisera using deception and wiles. Scholarship interprets her use of milk and of the tent peg in various ways, as an analogy for maternity, hospitality, or sexuality.<sup>18</sup> Each of these three interpretations of Jael and her weapons, while differing in the details, positions her as a woman who gains power from activities located within the private sphere of the tent. There is archaeological basis to the theory that women in ancient Israel filled predominantly domestic spaces and roles. For example, the distribution of millstones discovered in the 11th to 10th century BCE site of 'Izbet Sartah suggests that essentially all flour making and baking occurred within individual houses.<sup>19</sup> Meyers argues that, based on sources including other biblical passages, it is quite likely that the overwhelmingly domestic activity of bread making was the domain of women.<sup>20</sup> While Deborah embodies social aspects of women's maternal roles, Jael epitomizes the domestic and private life of women. In their own respective ways, these two leading women of Judges 4 and 5 are very much aligned with familial and domestic roles of women in the early Iron Age.

Though it is rather unusual within biblical texts to see women wielding authority and power, Deborah and Jael's roles demonstrate that the association of women with domestic roles does not necessarily mean relegating them to a low-status position. Meyers posits that "the multifarious functions of the Israelite household in the premonarchic period virtually dominated all activity" and so, as a result, it may not have been as uncommon for women in family- and tribe-based societies to hold power, as readers often assume it to be.<sup>21</sup> She argues that the dualistic view, in which "female identity is linked with the domestic sphere and male identity with the public sphere" is flawed, as it feeds into the "myth

of male dominance".<sup>22</sup> The myth of male dominance is a concept developed by S.C. Rogers, who argues that, based on a study of 350 rural peasant communities, though men often held more official positions, women had a great deal of power in tribal or familial societies because of their influence in the domestic sphere.<sup>23</sup> Rogers maintains that archaeological and anthropological studies often emphasize male dominance in formal institutions and leave "no room for the input of informal power" like that which women might have.<sup>24</sup> Food production and textile production are vital to a community's survival, and so the people who did those tasks, which as discussed above, in early Iron Age Israel would have predominantly been women, may have had some importance and power as a result. This concept manifests in Jael, as she gains power over Sisera because of her domination of the domestic space. Furthermore, in a society that values tribe and kin, women who negotiated between families would be critical to a peaceful and functional society, as Deborah is. Rogers' theory contextualizes Deborah and Jael's power in Judges 4 and 5: because of the importance of the family to the community, Deborah's motherhood and Jael's domesticity make them significant and influential figures in the events of the narratives.

Though there are many extant theories, the dates of composition of Judges 4 and 5 remain conflicted and elusive. The absence of extrabiblical evidence for the events of the narratives further complicates this debate. However, there is ample archaeological evidence to help understand the ideologies of Judges 4 and 5. The gender roles in Judges 4 and 5 appear incongruous in the context of the Hebrew Bible alone but, when placed in broader archaeological and literary context, there are numerous parallels and precedents for the female tropes in the texts. The religious and military authority, as well as the domestic power, of the

16. Carol Meyers, "Women's Culture in Agrarian Households of the Iron Age," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age Through Roman Palaestina*, ed. Seymour Gitin and William G. Dever (Eisenbrauns, 2003), 430.

17. Pamela Tamarkin Reis, "Uncovering Jael and Sisera. A New Reading," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 2005): 24-47.

18. Ibid.

19. Meyers, "Women's Culture in Agrarian Households of the Iron Age," 430.

20. Ibid, 431.

21. Carol L. Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context*, *Fulcrum.Org* (Oxford University Press, 1991), 139.

22. Ibid, 32; 43.

23. Susan Carol Rogers, "Female Forms of Power and the Myth of Male Dominance: A Model of Female/Male Interaction in Peasant Society," *American Ethnologist* 2, no. 4 (1975): 727-56.

24. Ibid, 728.

female characters reflects women's participation in cultic practices, warrior goddess mythical traditions, and familial status across the Iron Age. These contexts do not provide one specific setting or date of composition, but rather help to demonstrate how the Deborah narratives are a mosaic of elements and influences of Iron Age Israel.

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