

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM



‘DAVID’S WOMEN’

A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF MICHAL, BATHSHEBA
AND TAMAR IN 1 SAMUEL AND 2 SAMUEL.

By Julia Michelle Hogan

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School of Philosophy and Religion
College of Arts and Law
University of Birmingham
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Abstract

In this thesis I shall look at the narratives of three women in 1 and 2 Samuel: Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar. I will argue how these women each endure incredible experiences of suffering that are brought about primarily through the actions of both King David and the narrator. These women suffer at the hands of the narrator due to the narratives neglect in recording their experiences in any detail in the text. Instead, it will be my argument that these women are simply used as a means of continuing and explaining the events that happen in the plot of 1 and 2 Samuel and the 'David story'. It will be my aim then to attempt to bring these women's experiences to the forefront of the text and uncover their lost voices. I shall do this through evaluating each narrative through a 'feminist lens' which will ultimately enable me to draw upon three common 'themes' that each woman's narrative shares with the other. The realising of these themes will allow me to demonstrate how it is that although these women stand alone, neglected within the biblical text, they are in fact united together under their combined suffering as one of 'David's Women'.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Mother, who is my greatest support and inspiration.
Without you I would not have had the opportunity to pursue my passion.

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Many thanks to all who have supported me through the completion of this thesis; I would like to thank Dr Andrew Davies in particular for his wonderful supervision and guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. I am also truly thankful to all my friends and family who have stood by me throughout the duration of my research, lending me your sympathetic ears and allowing me a great deal of patience.

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Introduction

When initially deciding on a topic in which to conduct my research I knew that I wanted to focus on a subject that I found inspiring and that was of particular personal interest to me. I have always had a keen interest in the women of the Bible and it always struck me that the women of the Hebrew Bible seem to endure experiences that in contemporary society, would be considered very important. The experiences that some of these biblical women are described as enduring are of a highly sensitive and personal nature that includes the subjects of: childbearing; barrenness; marital problems; sexuality and sexual abuse. What became apparent was that often the biblical narrator mentions that these events happen in the text, however then fails to focus upon how these events are significant and perhaps damaging for the female character.

The term 'David's Women' could in fact be inclusive of the many different women that are recorded or referred to as being present throughout the life of David, however unfortunately most of them are lost to the continually moving narrative of the David story. It appears to be that the women in the life of King David are there as just a mention in the text, as very few are actually considered important by the narrative to be mentioned by name. David's own mother provides a good example of this, as unlike his father Jesse, she is failed to be mentioned within the narrative. Also, David's sisters unlike his brothers in 1 Samuel 16:1-13 are not mentioned until 1 Chronicles 2:13-16 in a momentary recital of David's lineage.¹ David is described as having numerous wives and concubines, to which but a few are considered important enough to be named and if it is a huge feat to be even named in the narrative then the probability of the accurate retelling of these women's experiences to be recorded in the narrative becomes unlikely.

¹ Fewell and Gunn (1993a; 145-155) discuss several other women that are associated with David, but whose names and experiences are not recognised or elaborated on by the narrative.

In this thesis I shall endeavour to focus upon three women of these 'David's women': Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar. I have chosen these three women as I believe that they each share an affinity with one another in that they endure incredibly significant and wholly negative experiences brought about primarily by the actions of King David and in Tamar's case also by his son Amnon. It will also be a part of my discussion to argue how it is that the narrative construction of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel and not just the character of King David has a negative impact upon these women's characters. This is due to the narrator using the destructive events that happen to these women as catalysts through which the continuation of the greater narrative of the text may be explained.

It shall be a part of the methodology of this thesis to approach the texts of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel from a feminist perspective,² reading the text through a feminist lens in order to effectively retrieve the hidden voices of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar and elaborate upon their experiences that are all currently silenced and hidden. It is my belief that these women endure periods of great suffering that involves abuse that is both emotional and sexual in nature; all experiences of which are only briefly mentioned in the text. These experiences deserve to be focused upon in much more detail and in doing so I shall attempt to then unite these women through the shared association of their experiences. Although their narratives are separate from one another, they are in fact united as women through the similarities in their shared suffering.

It shall be my intention in this thesis to demonstrate how the texts of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel fail to mention the reality of Michal's situation as she is represented by the narrator

² During my initial reading for this thesis I was introduced to the writings of Cheryl Exum and Alice Bach who will in fact play a considerable part in the construction of my argument. They both discuss at some length the patriarchal narrative that is found in the Hebrew Bible as favouring males over females as they, amongst others feminist scholars argue that fundamentally the Hebrew Bible is a text written by males, *for* males, promoting in the text the importance of patriarchal dominance in society. For a greater introduction to the patriarchal nature of the text see: Bach, 1997: 14-21; Exum, 1993: 170-180; Exum in Calvert-Koyzis and Weir, 2009: 52-55; Fuchs, 2000: 15-17.

almost as a deservedly 'desolate' and 'barren' woman in 2 Samuel 6:20-23. will argue how it is that Michal's character is doomed from the start, as her role in the story appears to be solely aiding the progression of David to becoming king; much to the detriment of her character.

I shall discuss how it is Bathsheba suffers at the hands of King David through him abusing his position of power in taking advantage of her sexually, after seeing her from the palace roof. The limited information the reader is given in terms of Bathsheba's actions, thoughts, emotions and most importantly her words in 2 Samuel 11-12 means that the interpretation of the David and Bathsheba affair is difficult. I will attempt to penetrate the text from a perspective that offers Bathsheba a point of view, one that sees her as a victim of both King David and of the narrator himself.³ Bathsheba is a victim of the abuse she endures at the hand of the character of King David, but her character is also a victim of the narrator of due to the way her character is silenced and how every aspect of her character is stripped bare and exposed to the gaze of the reader.

Finally I shall discuss Tamar who is raped by her half-brother Amnon in 2Samuel 13. I shall argue that like Michal and Bathsheba, Tamar also suffers from a narrative neglect in that although she is permitted to speak in the text her experiences are lost due to the narratives preoccupation with focusing upon the male character's roles in the story. Although describing Tamar as one of 'David's Women', the reality is that 2Samuel 13 contains very little mention of King David and instead focuses more upon the actions of David's sons Amnon and Absalom. I shall argue however that Amnon's abuse of Tamar in fact mirrors his father's previous abuse of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 and that Tamar's abuse in fact necessary to the

³ I will refer to the narrator as male when necessary in this text due to him being a creation of the male authors and a representative of patriarchal ideologies in the text's stories that he creates. See Bach, 1999: 351-352;

greater theological agenda of 2 Samuel. The rape of Tamar is crucial in explaining the events that unfold between David and Absalom from 2 Samuel 14 to 2 Samuel 20.

Having identified that these women endure experiences that are present in the narratives of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, but not wholly obvious, it will be effective to present this thesis in two separate stages: Firstly, I shall discuss each individual woman's narrative in depth in an attempt to retrieve their hidden voices in an attempt to retrieve their experiences from the narrative. Secondly, after having demonstrated how each of these women suffer as individuals in 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel I will move on to discuss in a comparative chapter how these women may be regarded as being united with one another through their shared experiences.

The similarities of these women's experiences will be demonstrated by me realising three shared 'themes' that are representative of each other's experiences: 'Gaze', 'Location and Transition' and 'Sexual Violence'. The realisation that these women endure the same experiences means that they can then be united with one another in a sense that they no longer need to stand alone in individual chapters of the text as desolate and silenced women. They become united through their experience of being 'David's Women'.

1. Methodology

It is beneficial for me to begin this thesis with a chapter dedicated to my methodology that outlines what exactly I intend my argument to be when comparing the narratives of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar and what exactly their experiences are as 'David's Women'. I also want to establish here a more precise definition as to what exactly my feminist approach to the study of the texts of 1 and 2 Samuel shall be: by what exactly do I mean when during my introduction I stated that I intend to carry out a critical analysis of 1 and 2 Samuel through the medium of a 'feminist lens'? I shall also discuss how it is the narrator of 1 and 2 Samuel has a particular 'agenda' in these texts and this agenda has a direct negative impact on how then the female characters are represented in the text.

The 'narrative agenda' is a terminology that I will use to describe a contextual ideology that was present at the time the texts were written that endorses the dominance of patriarchy. This ideology is then promoted in the text through the demonstration of power differences between the male and female characters and also affects how much recognition the text the devotes to discussing female character's first hand experiences. There are quite obvious differences between male and female characters in terms of how the narrator regards their importance to the continuation of the plot, and I argue that this difference is demonstrated through how much narrative attention is placed on the giving the characters a 'voice' and therefore recognition in the text. It becomes the task of the feminist reader to expose the androcentric nature of the biblical text in favouring male characters and male voices over female, in order to effectively extract concealed female experiences from the biblical text.

I will begin by asserting what exactly my feminist approach is in regards to the literary criticism of biblical text and how I intend to engage with this effectively during the development of my argument. I certainly believe that it is helpful for both me as well as the

reader to clarify what exactly I mean when I discuss the use of a ‘feminist lens’ in my approach. From reading Esther Fuchs’s introductory chapter to her book *Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative* (2000), I began to realise that the way in which I will approach the subject of uncovering the experiences of ‘David’s Women’ most effectively. This is in the same way as she describes the ideal feminist reader, that she is a woman⁴ who approaches the Hebrew Bible as a ‘cautious and suspicious reader’ that acknowledges that the biblical text is not written within the interests of women at heart. Fuchs uses the terminology of a ‘hermeneutics of resistance’⁵ to describe this approach, stating that the ‘suspicious’ feminist reader is called such due to her inability to accept the Biblical text in its current state. This reader ‘does not accept her male-centred and male authored representations. She refuses her construction as the ‘Other’ as a human who is different and inferior to the normative male’ (Fuchs, 2000: 16).

The text is geared towards favouring the actions of men and the promotion of a patriarchal dominance, which ultimately has a resounding negative effect upon the way women in the text are portrayed. From this representation of woman as inferior, an undeniably negative image is then cast out from the pages of the bible that arguably has a direct derogatory impact upon the female reader. Therefore in order to review the text effectively as a feminist, the reader must be an individual who is alert of the damaging effects that the biblical narrative has upon her person and remain aware at all times of the narrative ‘agenda’ that is geared against her.

⁴ I believe that when Fuchs refers to the feminist reader as being ‘woman’, rather than being exclusive from men, Fuchs is promoting the idea that a woman should approach the biblical text with caution and suspicion because as a female her interests are not at the centre of the text, but rather are obscured in favour of the interests of the greater patriarchal focus of the narrative.

⁵ The hermeneutics of resistance as described by Fuchs (2000: 16-18) I find to be reflective of the field of ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’, that is in this instance to realise any negative agendas that the text may conceal; particularly against women. In the context of approaching the texts of the Hebrew bible, hermeneutics of suspicion is a terminology that refers to critically approaching the biblical text whilst being fully aware of the androcentric nature of the text and how it is not in favour of women and attempts to marginalise them (Graetz, 2005: 10-11).

Fewell and Gunn (1993a:17) discuss how the influence of what the biblical text contains has a direct impact upon how society is shaped. They discuss how the patriarchal dominance of the Hebrew bible has become intrinsic to defining society: in that males and their masculine qualities are considered to be the powerful, successful and ultimately 'normal' gender in the order of society whereas feminine qualities are often considered 'weak', inessential and overall inferior to masculinity.⁶ The inferiority of the female then means that women both in society and within the biblical context are what may be referred to as 'Other'.⁷ It may be argued that what the bible contains continues to shape and define our perceptions of gender roles in modern society (Fuchs, 2000: 24) and so *continues* to be damaging towards the female, due to the importance of the text's teachings and examples of morality within the shaping of the society in which we live.

The danger of the biblical text, and what Fuchs urges women to remain 'suspicious' of is that the biblical narrative does not only promote patriarchal dominance in its writing and therefore in the social order, but then goes further to actually justify this patriarchal dominance as something that is morally sanctioned by God (Fuchs, 2000: 14). This damaging view is what I shall refer to in this thesis as the 'narrative agenda', in that the biblical narrative knowingly constructs the text of the Hebrew Bible in a way that regards the female characters in the text as justifiable inferior to males through a divinely sanctioned ideology. I

⁶ The notion of society as being both male and heterosexual is a vast topic upon which makes up the fundamentals of much feminist theory. My argument in this thesis cannot do such a topic justice, however I can recommend further introductory reading: See Sawyer, 2002: 10-13; Halberstam, 1998: 1-3. And for extended reading on the topic: Mary Daly: *Gyn/Ecology* (1984) and *Beyond God the Father* (1986).

⁷ The imagery of woman as 'Other' shall appear at several places in this thesis, as the woman as 'wife' and 'mother' and the woman as depicted as 'Other' is a theme that is raised in the texts of 1 and 2 Samuel, particularly in regards to how Michal and Bathsheba are regarded by David. In Proverbs there are several chapters (particularly Prov. 1-9) dedicated to the dangers that the 'other' woman poses to the safety of men and the androcentric social order, as she is a female who opposes the desexualised and conservative image of the virtuous woman. The Other woman represents a foreign mystery: mostly through her sexual allure and promiscuity. The other woman is deemed threatening to the patriarchal order as she may manipulate men through their weakened responses to her sexual nature; resulting in her being deemed as incredibly dangerous to the patriarchal structure. See also Murphy, 1998: Cheryl Exum and her discussion as to the notion of woman as 'Other' in a biblical context in chapters three and four of her book *Fragmented Women* (1993).

shall argue that in order to do demonstrate the male characters as superior, the narrative portrays a majority of female characters in his text in a one dimensional, passive way (Sawyer, 2002: 6-9). This is in order to use female characters as a way of demonstrating how it is a woman are expected to behave in society, and to what purpose a female has in the patriarchal order. I shall go further to argue in this thesis that Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar are also used by the narrator as a way of explaining the events that take place in the David story, to which they are then disregarded when they have achieved this.

The only time a woman is deemed by the narrator as being 'good' or of any admirable worth in the text is when she is acting in a way that ensures the promotion of the narrative agenda. A 'good' woman may be a mother who has given birth to sons for instance, or demonstrates well the role of a good and supportive wife to her husband. She will certainly show no real signs of autonomy or challenge the authority of her male counterpart; she may not even be permitted to speak at all. The one-dimensional nature⁸ of female characters may be represented through only one aspect of the character at a time being dealt with by the narrative (Fuchs, 2000: 30-31). We know, for instance, that a woman may have been given a particular title, or took part in a particular task; an example being a woman may have given birth to a son however we are given little more information about that woman. The reader is left unaware of the thoughts and emotions of these women, robbing them of a voice in the text. The challenge then lies within my ability to effectively delve into the biblical narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel in an attempt to retrieve these women.

Both Alice Bach and J. Cheryl Exum will play a prominent role in the construction of my argument, and it is valuable for me to mention Bach's argument here regarding the

⁸ Fewell and Gunn (1993b: 57-58) briefly discuss how it is that the biblical narrator often purposely leaves out information that is too personal, flamboyant and descriptive about the text's characters offering the reader the barest and most integral information through which to form an image of his characters. What I am arguing here however is that minimal information is given about female characters for deliberate reasons, rather than just being a narrative technique encompassing all biblical characters as a whole.

narrator's influence over the way the biblical text is constructed and how these constructions have had a hand in influencing biblical reader throughout the centuries. Bach (1997: 16) argues that as readers, we wholly believe in the assumed authority of the narrative agenda: the narrator speaks with such conviction in his text, that he has been regarded as a direct source of divine and unquestionable truth. Bach discusses that in order to be *effective* in deconstructing the text from a feminist critical viewpoint, it is crucial for the reader to recognise that the narrator is not a vessel that channels the omniscient voice of God; but is rather a *fictional* construct of the author and in Bach's words is "the fictive *henchman* of the author".⁹ It is the task of this thesis to recognise the fictional nature of the biblical narrator and therefore expose the fictional nature of the total authority that he assumes over the morality of his text.¹⁰

This is where my methodology begins to take focus as it will be the task of this thesis to challenge both the authority of the narrative that constructs female characters and on the value of the female characters themselves regarding their place in the text. Now that the bias of the narrator, and in turn the author, has been exposed as originating from more a socio-historic basis, I can move on to the task of me exposing the hidden voices Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar.

The hidden voices of women that lay concealed in the text are known as 'F' voices and these 'F' voices lie submerged within the male or 'M' narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel. In discussing the successful retrieval of the concealed 'F' voices from the predominantly 'M' narratives of the Hebrew bible, it is beneficial for me to mention the work of Brenner and van

⁹ Also see Brenner and Dikj-Hemmes (1996; 17-19) and Gunn and Fewell (1993b;52-53).

¹⁰ Gunn and Fewell also comment upon this notion of the narrator as being fictitious creation of the author, speaking of how it is helpful for readers to regard the narrator as a fictional construct of the biblical author, in order to avoid being drawn into the 'absolute reliability' of the narrative's claims within the text (Gunn and Fewell, 1993b, 54-55). Once recognising the limited authority of the narrator it in turn means that it becomes easier to regard the biblical narrative as a reflection of the contextual society in which these books were written.

Dijk-Hemmes (1996) and their approach in their book *On Gendering Texts*. They discuss biblical texts from a feminist exegetical perspective and mention a wonderful notion in that 'F' voices are present and buried in biblical texts due to women's very participation in their creation. Women must have had some part to play in maintaining the oral traditions of these texts originally before the written word, therefore reciting the texts orally. It is the presence of these buried, muted voices -whether they are of the characters in the text or indeed real women that add historical value to the text's traditions- that make the feminist endeavour to retrieve them so important, as they are present yet hidden.

I shall adopt Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes approach in regarding the texts of 1 and 2 Samuel exegetically in terms of regarding the texts I review from a perspective that focuses on the female characters primarily; however I shall keep my discussion focused to a critical reading of the text at hand rather than focusing too much about the plausibility of female authors and contributors to the text. Fewell and Gunn in their book *Gender, Power and Promise* (1993a) make a crucial observation in discussing how it is essential that in order to be effective they must purposely 'go looking for women' in their critical analysis of the biblical text. They endeavour to uncover the hidden 'F' voices that lay dormant in the finished article of the bible, as the retrieval of these voices will have a significant sociological impact upon the modern reader and modern society (Gunn and Fewell, 1993a: 12-18). This is something incredibly important to feminism in society and something to which I wholly agree.

Cheryl Exum (1993) in her opening discussion within her book *Fragmented Women* (1993) discusses how in approaching the text with a feminist agenda as to uncover the lost 'F' voices within the 'M' texts we must be prepared to deconstruct the entire male narrative and expose his agenda against women. Exum goes on to say how uncovering hidden 'F' voices is in fact a problematic affair as the real truth as to the experiences of these women and their true voices do not actually definitively *exist* in the text. To penetrate the text and focus

primarily on the concealed experiences and voices it is necessary to read between the lines of the text (Exum, 1993: 16-17). This notion of ‘reading between the lines’ I shall regard as approaching the text from a feminist midrashic perspective in using what the text does *not* say about these women in order to form a clear picture of them.

I believe that it is valuable to consider the use of feminist Midrash in the construction of my argument, as it shall certainly be the case that I will need to make some presumptions as to the personality, the thoughts and the very voices of characters of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar. I will need to apply to them animated personalities in order for them to appear three dimensional, living, emotional beings who have the ability to experience. Norma Rosen in *Biblical Women Unbound* identifies that crucially, biblical narratives are not static and one dimensional in their nature; but are fluid with many options left open for discussion, evaluation and interpretation. Once a biblical narrative is ‘set into motion, it is no longer entirely in the control of its author’ (Rosen, 1996: 6) and so the use of feminist midrash for Rosen is more than just a fictional retelling of certain biblical stories, but rather Midrash is a valuable tool in exposing narratives of women that are *already* present in the biblical texts, they are just hidden from sight. Feminist Midrash becomes an alternative reading of the same narrative (Rosen, 1996: 14-15).¹¹

It has become clear to me that in order to carry out my aims of this thesis I will need to draw both upon the effective retrieval of ‘F’ voices and experiences from a narrative that is obscured by a patriarchal bias. In applying the correct feminist theory and looking at the texts from a midrashic approach will prove helpful in doing this and I shall attempt to

¹¹ I was intrigued by the explanation of Athalya Brenner (2005: xiii) as to how she would define the contents of her book *I Am*. She makes a valuable point when discussing how she would categorise her work, referring to it as a hybrid between a midrash, albeit ‘fictional’ approach and an academic study of biblical text. This goes in hand with Rosen’s comment as to biblical narratives being ever changing, and that there is plausible academic study of traditional biblical narratives containing the potential for feminist midrashic interpretation.

imagine the narratives of 1 and 2 Samuel from an alternative perspective: from the perspective of the women that are involved that are Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar.

2. Michal

In this chapter I shall analyse the ways in which Queen Michal's character is presented in the narratives of 1 Samuel 18; 2 Samuel 3 and 2 Samuel 6.¹² It shall be my argument here that the character of Michal is used by the narrative in order to function as an asset to the continuation of the plot, in that her presence in the text helps to explain both political and theological themes in the text. I also shall discuss here how it is that Michal's character is a victim of the 'narrative agenda' as discussed in my methodology, as there is an attempt to present the character of Michal behaving in an appropriate way for a woman; particularly regarding her femininity and interaction with her husband.

In Michal's final appearance in 2 Samuel, she is described as watching David from the palace window in 2 Samuel 6:18 and 'despising him in her heart'. This statement stands poles apart from the reader's first introduction to Michal in 1 Samuel 18:20 where she is described as 'loving David'. The cause of Michal's change in heart is not something that is not specifically defined in the text and so the reasons for this must be uncovered from looking at evidence that the narrative offers us as to the treatment of Michal. Michal's negative attitude towards David in 2 Samuel 6:18 may also be regarded as a way of the narrative portraying Michal as an unreasonable and shrewish wife.

How the narrator achieves the effect will be an important part of this discussion and I will focus in particular on the narrative's construction of gender and in particularly masculinity and the demonstration of Michal as being quite a masculine character. There are three key scenes that comprise the Michal narrative: 1 Sam. 19: 8-17, 2 Sam. 3:12-16 and 2 Sam. 6:16-23 during which Michal is only permitted to speak briefly on two occasions, which happen to be both the first and last time we see her in the text. I believe that while focusing

¹² My biblical references will be taken from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

on the speech of Michal, it becomes particularly important for me to pay attention as to what it is Michal is *not* permitted to say. This is because although the speech of Michal is crucial in establishing an idea of her character, there is a danger in that the narrative directs the few choice words of Michal in a way that is detrimental to the way her character is perceived.

2.1 The Young David

The narrator informs us that initially Saul's daughter Merab was betrothed to David but then was instead married to Adriel the Meholathlite in 1 Samuel 18:19. It is stated in 1 Samuel 18:20 that 'Saul's daughter Michal loved David' which is an important description by which to introduce the character Michal, as it is the first reference in the entire Biblical text of a woman being described as loving a man (Alter, 1981: 118). Although we are aware of Michal's feelings for David the reader is not told however whether David's emotions are reciprocated,¹³ and after hearing of Michal's love for David, we are told that Saul then offers Michal in marriage to David instead of Merab. Contextually the relationship between David and Saul had been in steady deterioration and after his first attempt on David's life in 1 Sam. 18:10-11¹⁴ we are told of Michal's love for David. This establishes perhaps a political context

¹³ It is the case that the character of David is not demonstrated as showing much emotion or interest in the love of or in reciprocating love to the women that surround him (Gunn and Fewell, 1993b: 150) and (Clines, 1995: 225-227). Michal appears to be no exception as to David's detachment to women and the contrast between the narrative's description of Michal's love for David followed by his reciprocated silence represents an almost prophetic direction that the relationship will take.

¹⁴ The relationship between David and Saul begins to deteriorate after Yahweh anoints David as the chosen King of Israel in 1 Samuel 16: 12-13. After this Saul is described as plotting or physically attempting to take David's life (1 Samuel 18:11; 18: 17-30; 19:11-17) as he is described as being 'afraid' of David as the 'Lord was with him but had departed from Saul' (1 Samuel 18: 12). Also in regarding Merab's betrothal to David it seems a situation arose for Saul in which Michal *loved* David and David demonstrated ambition at being married to Michal in order to elevate his political status (1 Sam 18:26) The marriage to Michal was the easiest way in which Saul could 'snare' and kill David (1 Sam 18: 21-25). See Stiebert (2013:45-47) for an insightful analysis of the immediate situation here, as it *initially* is one that is pleasing all the parties involved. For more on the marriage to Michal aiding the political agenda of David see: (Angel: 2012: 48-49); (White, 2007: 452) and (Exum, 1993: 44-45).

of the marriage, in that perhaps the marrying of Michal and not Merab to David is a strategic move on Saul's behalf.

The narrative describes how 'David was pleased with becoming the King's Son in Law' and certainly, David must have been delighted at this opportunity to elevate his status. In return, Saul hoped that by marrying Michal, David would be killed whilst obtaining the ambitious bride price of one hundred philistine foreskins (1 Samuel 18: 21-30). David's avid determination to complete this dangerous task may well have been perceived by a young Michal as a declaration of love, however from a more suspicious reading of the text it may also be derived that David's tenacity to complete the task reflects more the complexities within the strained relationship of rivalry and distrust between David and Saul (White, 2007: 452).

The next scene that Michal inhabits is 1 Samuel 19:11 in which she is described as being married to David and is now physically helping him escape from the danger of Saul by letting him down through her window. This is certainly an important decision emotionally for her to choose between helping her beloved David and helping her father whose house in which she resides. The narrative describes Michal here exclaiming to David that 'if you do not save your life tonight, tomorrow you will be dead' (1 Sam 19:11) and so despite the dangerous repercussions that the act of helping David would have, it appears that Michal's love for David inspires her to help him escape.¹⁵

Despite the urgency of the scene, any description of a passionate farewell between the couple leaves much to be desired (Shargent in Brenner, 1994: 42) even though there is a

¹⁵ I originally intended to describe this act of Michal of choosing between the two men as her choosing to show loyalty to her husband and not her father in this situation. However the situation perhaps warrants a more socio-historic explanation from the context of a married woman in Ancient Israel. Michal now married to David may now be regarded as being affiliated with her husband and not her father, and therefore in this passage shows loyalty to him. See Stiebert, 2013: 46-48 for an analysis of loyalty ties that change through marriage.

possibility given the volatile nature of the situation that the two would not see each other again for a long while.¹⁶ After some time it must have become clear to Michal that he had no urgent intention of returning for her¹⁷ and it is even described by the narrative that David was away from Michal long enough to acquire two new wives in Abigail and Ahinoam (1 Sam 25: 42-43). David actually returns in dangerous proximity to Saul's palace to meet with Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 and remains hidden there for three days (1 Sam 20:19). During this time it is not recorded by the narrative that David attempts to see Michal, nor is it recorded - and it remains unimaginable- that David enquired about her health or wellbeing.

During the escape of David in 1 Sam 19, Michal is represented in the narrative as being physically strong enough to lower David from the window to escape from Saul's messengers. This coupled with the narrative giving Michal the autonomy in the describing of her love for David *first* may be seen as the narrative demonstrating Michal's character as having masculine characteristics (Exum, 1992: 74). Michal's quick witted actions of her covering for David and fooling her father's messengers can be seen as being out of the ordinary to the usual behaviour of women (Berlin in Clines and Eskenazi, 1991: 92) and points more towards a more masculine representation of her character.¹⁸

¹⁶ Michal is described as telling her father the reasons that she helped David escape are due to him threatening to kill her in 1 Samuel 19:17. It is presumed from the structure of the text that Michal is lying to her father in saying this. However, Edelman comments on how David threatening Michal is not necessarily inconsistent with David's character. Perhaps Michal here is telling the truth? Did David threaten to kill her if she did not help him escape. This adds a new and interesting angle to how the relationship of David and Michal may be viewed. See Edelman, 1991: 148-149.

¹⁷ Cheryl Exum makes an interesting discussion as to how Michal is represented through the visual medium of film and how David is portrayed as being the long suffering husband of this unreasonable woman. David in the film *David and Bathsheba* describes how he 'begged on his knees' for Michal to join him in exile, but she refused (Exum, 1996: 64). This offers a good example into how the text's interpretation is present in modern society, particularly in the preservation of the male character's reputation. This is something that will also be discussed regarding Bathsheba in chapter three.

¹⁸ Alice Bach notes the way Michal executes the escape of her husband with almost military precision as she lets David down from the window and then proceeds to gain him time through the clever use of a *teraphim* (1 Samuel 19:13) (Bach, 1997: 138). There are of course other instances of women in the Hebrew Bible as being quick witted and taking control of situations, for example Abigail uses great initiative (1 Samuel 25), the woman of Tekoa (2 Samuel 14) and Jael (Judges 4-5) are to name but three. In the context of the Michal narrative however I want to focus on how she personally is represented and as David Clines (1995:220) comments, the

It is interesting to compare the masculinity in Michal and David's relationship with David's relationship with Jonathan, who is described as loving David 'like his own soul' (1 Samuel 18:3). David in return risks his life to returning in 1 Samuel 20 to seek out Jonathan and swear to him his own love for him that they will remain allies (1 Samuel 20: 17). The relationship that is depicted between Jonathan and David becomes important in highlighting how the lines between masculinity and femininity may be perceived to be somewhat obscured, particularly in the context of the character of Michal.

Clines (1995: 223-224) comments on what appears to be obscured gender roles between the relationships of David, Michal and Jonathan, discussing that the male bond between David and Jonathan is a demonstration of the camaraderie between men, and therefore actually helps to define their masculinity. Exum (1992: 73-74) also asserts that although Jonathan may not necessarily be 'feminine' in his declaration of love for David, she does agree that there is a certain 'male' rivalry between Michal and Jonathan, as he is the object of David's 'love'.¹⁹ Adele Berlin speaks of how Michal may be regarded as being a strong, aggressive and physical character in her strength of helping David escape, whereas Jonathan's excision of strength in helping David comes from the mere releasing of an arrow (Berlin in Clines and Eskenazi, 1991: 92).

Michal is placed in a difficult position, in that she demonstrates certain masculine qualities whilst still maintaining the role of female and the wife of David. She is therefore excluded from the chance of the exclusive male relationship that Jonathan and David enjoy

fact that a woman may be depicted as with quickness of mind and eloquence in speech does not remove from the fact that it is generally a male characteristic.

¹⁹ David is also described as declaring that Jonathan's love was more wonderful to him than the love of women (2 Samuel 1:26). Fewell and Gunn (1993a) discuss the verb placement of the word 'love' or '*ahab*' is the same word used to describe Michal's emotions towards David and also for Jonathan's love for David. Fewell and Gunn comment on the slight differences in the syntax of the sentences it is used in that Michal's 'falling in love' with David in (1 Samuel 18:20) and Jonathan's 'loving' David (1 Samuel 18: 1-3; 20:17) concluding that Jonathan's love is demonstrative of an 'abiding' and everlasting passion for David (1993a: 149) that endures the test of time.

(Exum, 1992: 72-73), whilst also then finding it difficult to fulfil the role of 'wife'. The character of Michal is seemingly caught in a gap that is spread between the two roles.

Experiencing the obscurity between the boundaries of what is definitively feminine and definitively masculine is a problem that Michal's character appears to experience in her text. Michal's ancient struggle with gender represents a struggle that is still relevant in our modern society and the blurred boundaries between society's constructions of gender are something that Halberstam (1998: 267-270) goes into great detail in her book *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam comments on how in its most extreme sense, a woman that engages in masculine behaviours is 'abhorrent' to society as it is true that -like what was expected of Michal- a woman's femininity should be naturally both passive and inactive in its challenge to male masculinity. This point relates to my above discussion in my methodology as to the biblical constructions of gender entering into the fundamentals of the construction of society.²⁰

2.2 Michal at the window

It is true to say that the window frame surrounds Michal throughout much of the time she is featured in the text (1 Samuel 19 and 2 Samuel 6) and this isn't the only depiction of a woman gazing out from behind a window frame.²¹ The frame may be symbolic of Michal's

²⁰ The construction of gender roles and in particular the boundaries that define what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine' are something that appears to be clear in the text of the Hebrew Bible. Clines discusses that although what is defined as masculine behaviour in the Hebrew bible may have slightly changed in terms of modern society, there are five definite behaviours that men typically engage in that defines them as masculine. Most primarily of all to be masculine is to not be feminine; which helps highlight Michal's obscured placement in the text as she inhabit a place between the two genders. See Clines, (1995): 217-227; 231- 242. Halberstam argues that above all else the biggest fear of society that comes with a woman associating herself with masculinity is the threat that is posed to her femininity (1998:269-270). This relates to Michal's difficulty with her role, in that when she demonstrates masculine characteristics she is alienated by the narrative as then being a poor example of a female character.

²¹ Queen Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37) is an example of a woman who waits at the window frame, gazing defiantly outward to her oncoming fate. Also of symbolic interest is the Levite's concubine in Judges 19:27, who falls down and grasps at the *threshold* of the house after returning from being sent out alone to be brutally raped by a mob on the commands of her Levite master. The unnamed Sisera's mother (Judges 5: 28-29) also

‘marginality’ in the text as she is framed and away from the greater narrative focus that is the David story of 2 Samuel (Aschkenasy, 1998: 16). She resides in the place that lies behind the window frame, she is in the home and more notably she is on the *inside* and it is this inside that I shall argue is considered to be the appropriate place of the woman. A woman’s place is to remain in the household and the details of a good wife is demonstrated through her ability to run her household efficiently, to raise her husband’s children and overall to bring honour to her husband through the efficiency and obedience in which she carries out these tasks (Prov. 31: 10-31).

What are not regarded as the attributes of a good wife are women that are unable to bear children and women that are considered to be a nag and to incessantly dishonour her husband’s authority (Bird, 1997: 30-32).²² It is the case that Michal’s narrative depiction as a ‘wife’ seems to fall into this second, more unfavourable category. Michal watched David leave through the window in 1 Sam 19:12 and in 2 Sam 6 Michal herself then endeavours to venture beyond the frame. ‘The window represents freedom from oppression...Nevertheless we realize that the open road [outside] belongs to the ‘man’’ (Aschkenasy, 1998: 37) the window is representative of the freedom of the outside space, but with this freedom comes an uncertain future. For Michal to cross this boundary and to join David on the outside would be to enter into a domain that, despite the strength of Michal’s character, proves to be

waits by her window, looking through the lattice waiting, expecting to see the arrival of her dead son. Cheryl Exum devotes attention to the archaeological history of the ‘woman at the window’ within *Plotted, Shot and Painted* (1996: 72-80).

²² It is important to identify here that in Proverbs 31, the female *is* depicted as leaving the physical building of the house in the sense that she presides over duties that contribute to the functioning and wellbeing of the household, which naturally stems into tasks that take place outside of the house (Prov. 31: 10-31). Although the good wife is certainly depicted as stepping outside, she is secure in that what she is taking part in is a legitimate extension of her household and domestic duties. I am using the imagery of the ‘outside’ here in that for a woman *alone*, unaffiliated or separate from a presiding male it becomes a more sinister and dangerous place. The outside is the domain of the mysterious and dangerous *other* woman, the opposite of the good wife and in herself a danger to the power of patriarchy. Proverbs 7 offers a particularly good example of this as it discusses a woman who is upon the outside whilst her husband is away and she is walking the streets -alone- looking to seduce an unsuspecting male (Murphy, 1998: 74-75). What is particularly interesting is the position of the narrator, who is watching her carry out her dangerous and damaging behaviour through the lattice of a window. For more on the inside being the place of the woman see: Yee, 2003: 154-156; Exum, 1992: 90; Exum, 1993: 50; Aschkenasy, 1998: 45-46.

treacherous. Much like Jezebel who is physically thrown *through* the window frame to her death (2 Kings 9:33) the crossing of the boundary brings tragedy and for Michal as she then remains upon outside and lost from the narrative.

Exum (1993: 47) observes the imagery that is created by Michal lowering David to the ground through her window in that she is effectively birthing David into a new life and through this act; she momentarily experiences a freedom that is denied to her character. I realise the contradictions of this imagery as it appears the lines of what is feminine and masculine become obscured once again here. Michal's character here takes on the role of the *mother* in her 'birthing' David into freedom so it is then somewhat ironic in that Michal is later condemned to remain childless by the narrative for her demonstrating an arguably *masculine* autonomy in 2Sam. 6:21-23. Michal is given masculine characteristics by the narrative and is then in turn condemned when she steps outside the role of being a female.

When David did not return for her, Michal must have felt a terrible sense of abandonment and eventually to confirm her desertion, she is married to another man, Paltiel son of Laish in 1Sam. 25:44. It is at least seven years before David takes notice of Michal and Paltiel and demands her return in 2 Sam 3:13-20 (Clines in Clines and Eskenazi, 1991, 45). The marriage between Michal and Paltiel may be regarded as being more of a political statement from Saul and an attack on David; an insult to him in removing him entirely from any claim to his throne through a symbolic 'widowing' of Michal through her remarriage (Klein in Brenner, 2000: 41). However this remarriage becomes redundant after Saul's death which allows David to then demand the return of his wife in 2 Sam.3:12-16 in order to demonstrate his legitimate claim as ruler of the Kingdom.

David demands the return of Michal in 2 Samuel 3: 12-16 and it is the only time she is pictured as being away from the window frame. She is now on the outside, caught in a space

or in the words of Exum she is ‘hemmed in’ (Exum, 1993: 44-45) between the political agendas of the men that surround her. All that the narrative tells the reader is that Michal is present in this scene and any emotions she may have regarding Paltiel are not recorded. The character of Michal here much like her voice is lost in the wilderness, lost amongst the deeds of men; this murky hinterland is not a place where she is comfortable, and she is overpowered by the political agendas and will of the men that surround her. It becomes important to acknowledge how it is this scene contributes to the final confrontation scene of 2 Samuel 6 where Michal hated David in her heart.

Paltiel is described as walking behind Michal weeping, until Abner commands him to desist and to return home (2 Sam. 3:16). From his reaction Paltiel could perhaps be regarded as an emotional and loving man that may care deeply for Michal? However at the same time he may also be regarded as powerless (Aschkenasy, 1998: 39). He does not verbally object to her being taken away and does not demonstrate any obvious attempt to stop it, which opposite to Michal’s masculinity, strikes me as a demonstration of somewhat feminine characteristics of his character.²³

Michal in this scene does not say a word and perhaps the silence of Michal does in fact speak volumes. It is a silence that hints at a ‘volatile subtext’ of deep rooted anger Michal is forming towards King David in his obvious use of her for political strategy (Exum in Clines & Eskenazi, 1997: 176). On a personal level, Michal must be concealing years of hurt towards King David for simply abandoning her to her fate when they were newly married,

²³ Kessler (2000: 417-418) describes how ‘Abner...address[es]...Paltiel as one might command a dog... Michal’s husband submits to silence...and returns to face his own humiliation and shame’. In collaboration with footnote twenty, it appears that Paltiel fails to demonstrate with what Clines (1995) describes as being ‘masculine’ behaviour as Paltiel in following behind Michal, whilst weeping coupled with his powerlessness to even challenge/physically hinder Abner goes against Clines’ five crucial things that define masculinity. This perhaps shows that his character demonstrates what Clines determines as characteristics that are not typically considered masculine characteristics within the context of 2 Samuel. Paltiel’s lack of courage or ability to even speak out against the taking of Michal renders his character with feminine characteristics (Clines, 1995:217-218).

and perhaps she feels outraged still at David's behaviour in calling her back to him after all these years for purely political reasons . It is quite easy to imagine Michal as a silently seething woman, who true to her character will show now fear at confronting her estranged following the crescendo of her building emotions.

What does strike me as peculiar is how it is lawful for Michal to marry another man whilst she was still married to David, without raising the issue of adultery? The giving of Michal to another man may well be considered a gesture from Saul that denounced David as illegitimate, cut off or dead from his family (Klein in Brenner, 2000: 41) or even a punishment for Michal in her helping David escape she is sent away? Another interpretation is the insinuation of adultery stands out to me as perhaps a prophetic suggestion as to the future David and Bathsheba affair in 2 Samuel 11. The actions and the language of David in the way he 'sends' for Michal 2 Samuel 3:16 is similar to his treatment of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 in which David 'sent messengers to fetch' Bathsheba after he sees her on her rooftop.

2.3 The Ark is brought to Jerusalem

I shall now move on to the next time Michal is mentioned in the narrative of 2 Samuel 6, where Michal is now reunited with King David after having left behind her weeping husband Paltiel, presumably forever. The reader finds Michal once more on the inside, stood at a window frame looking towards the outside as King David who along with 'the whole multitude of Israel' (2 Sam 6: 19) is enthusiastically celebrating the bringing of the Ark of Lord into the city of Jerusalem. In this final scene between David and Michal, instead of having the physical strength to lower David from the window, Michal is depicted as having the strength of character to step outside and challenge the king. The text describes her

witnessing the King's jubilant dancing, that results in him 'uncovering himself... before the eyes of his servants' maids' (2 Sam.6:20). In other words, Michal is watching David through his vigorous dancing expose himself to everyone in the city who is close enough to see.

Michal herself remains away from the celebrations, once more gazing at David through her window, watching him as he proceeds to continue with a life to which she now plays no part; watching him reveal to the women that surround him aspects of his body that should remain reserved and for her eyes only.²⁴ Her standing alone gives a quite eerie sense of her isolation and with this the reader is made aware that Michal's feelings for David are greatly changed as 'Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart' (2 Sam.6:16). It is with this emotion that Michal builds up the courage to step outside and to confront her husband.

Ideologically the narrator places Michal in a difficult position as she is figuratively caught in a space that is between her as the wife of Yahweh's anointed King David and her being daughter of the previous and unfavoured King Saul. The narrative demonstrates this awkward positioning of her character through her being depicted as standing alone upon the inside, away from the celebrations and behind the window frame. Also, the language changes throughout the duration of the text when describing Michal's affiliation to David and Saul. As in 2 Samuel 6 Michal is described as being 'Michal daughter of Saul' (2 Sam 6:16) however in her previous window scene she is referred to as 'David's wife Michal' (1 Sam 19:11). Michal's affiliation to her father and her husband changes in the narrative language of

²⁴ The narrative describing Michal as taking offence at David's jubilant dancing and more so at him exposing himself in front of women that Michal refers to as his 'servants' maids' focuses Michal's offence as being solely to do with David exposing himself in front of women that she deems beneath her. Some alternate interpretations of this passage have also resulted in Michal being considered as representing the old fashioned, outdated views of Saul's lineage: snobbish towards David's alternative worship practice and towards the lower class women of the city who share the experience with him. The narrative in the passage 2 Sam 6: 16 allows the reader to realise that David has done nothing wrong in the eyes of Yahweh, but he has in the eyes of Michal (Bowman in Clines and Eskanazi, 1991: 115). For more on the varying interpretation of Michal's character as an archaic prude see: Blaikie in Clines and Eskenazi, 1991: 95-95.

the text when the political relationship between the two men changes. Michal being described as David's wife was appropriate language at the time as it demonstrated her usefulness in helping her husband escape her father. Now that the reign of Saul is over and he and his entire lineage except Michal are dead, the name of Saul is now solely a means of ostracising Michal. She now becomes the last representative of a house that was doomed to fail by Yahweh himself and is 'tarred' with the name of her father²⁵

The figurative 'space' that Michal occupies is also representative of the narrative's use of Michal's character in how he presents her to the reader within the text as being between the typical gender roles. Michal appears first as a masculine, almost soldier-like woman in 1 Samuel 19 and now here in 2 Samuel 6 she occupies the role of unruly wife that still demonstrates a relatively masculine nature through her autonomy in stepping out of the house to confront her husband.

Exum (1993) discusses the way in which the narrative alternates Michal's affiliation as either being daughter of Saul or wife of David as being demonstrative of an 'essential rift' that must be demonstrated between Michal and David in order to fulfil a greater theological agenda of the text, in that Yahweh bequeathed that no decedent of Saul will ever sit upon the throne of Israel (1 Sam 13:14) (Exum, 1993: 26-27). Michal's character was used as a means of establishing David's position as King and now within her final scene she will be used once more by the narrative to demonstrate the final ending to Saul's lineage through the 'death' of her character in her final scene of 2 Samuel 6. Through this narrative 'death' Exum (1993:27) discusses how it is *essential* that Michal has no children as the text's very theology demands that there is no child to continue the lineage of Saul. The narrator is keen to remind the reader

²⁵ See Exum 1992: 84-90; Exum 1993: 45; Sakenfield, 2003: 80-81.

of this in the final words he attributes to Michal in 2 Samuel 6:23 in that 'Michal daughter of Saul had no child to the day of her death' (2 Sam 6:23).²⁶

Michal in 2 Samuel 6: 20 is described as coming out to meet her husband and confront him after looking upon him exposing himself she is finally pushed to breaking point.²⁷ Here she steps away from the window frame to venture into the outside space: 'How the King of Israel honoured himself today, uncovering himself today before the eyes of his servants' maids, as any vulgar fellow might shamelessly uncover himself' (2Sam.6:20). Michal demonstrates great autonomy in deciding to step away from the window to confront her husband; however the words that she is said to speak appear to be quite sarcastic and superficial. It is certainly warranted in that perhaps through the eyes of a arguably conservative princess, the sight of the King revealing himself may be considered as the metaphorical 'straw that broke the back' of an already emotionally strained woman. However as having already discussed there is evidence that Michal has cause for a deep rooted anger towards David, it is peculiar then that in her moment of glory she would choose these sarcastic, prattling words to speak to David. Perhaps the narrative portrays Michal and saying these words in order to explain the theologically necessary estrangement of Michal and

²⁶ Exum (1992: 91) goes on to discuss the passage of 2 Sam: 21:8 in which it is described that King David gave over the five sons of Merab daughter of Saul to the Gibeonites to be executed. Exum (1992) discusses how it is just as easily to read Michal in this passage instead of Merab. If this is the case then it opens up whole new avenues as to the interpretation of the life and fate of Michal after her final scene in 2 Samuel 6; particularly from a feminist agenda of purposely uncovering the lost voice of Michal. If it was in fact Michal's sons and not Merab's who were sacrificed then it is another narrative assault on her character, twice denying her the chance for children and twice eradicating her from the text (of course not considering the trauma of the five son's tragic ending). For a greater depth of analysis of this see: Ishida, 1977: 78-79; Exum, 1992: 90-91; Exum, 1993: 38-39.

²⁷ Sawyer (2002: 96-99) notes that very few women in the biblical narrative are demonstrated as being successful when crossing gender boundaries and acting with male autonomy referring to this as 'gender-games'. This is a terminology that describes how the narrator portrays female characters in the Hebrew Bible that attempt to blur or step across gender boundaries in a negative way, in order to maintain the success of the patriarchal agenda (Sawyer, 2002: 96-99). Michal here demonstrates an autonomy that is not befitting of her as a female in stepping out to meet David and rebuke him and for this she is then silenced by David and made an example of, in that his is how a woman should not behave.

David; portraying her as an annoying ‘nag’ in another attempt at segregating Michal from David.²⁸

The narrator succeeds in making Michal appear unsavoury in her stepping out to confront David and then when she speaks portrays her as nothing more than a ‘prattling’ woman that chastises her husband solely for him celebrating a religious occasion. Exum (1993: 37-39) provides valuable insight to the treatment of Michal in her book *Fragmented Women* is quite vocal about this final passage of 2 Samuel 6 as being what she regards figurative ‘death’ of Michal. She argues that what suffers here is a great violence at the hands of the narrative who ‘murders’ Michal through her being robbed of her final moment; of finally having a chance to explain to her husband how she feels about a lifetime of meeting the agendas of the men that surround her. Michal is instead depicted as offering nothing more than a sarcastic comment to David and is then immediately silenced and rebuked by him for the audacity she has shown at coming out to reprimand him (2 Sam 6:21-22).

After this event Michal is silenced forever within the rest of the narrative of King David and as Brueggemann (1990: 252-253) rightly comments: ‘Michal has no future, no claim on Israel, no prospect for life...Michal...is dismissed by the narrative as barren and hopeless’. With this quotation, it seems fitting to finish this chapter with highlighting that its very aim has been to penetrate the surface of the narrative, exposing the narrative and its agenda in strategically using the character of Michal in order to benefit the greater story of King David. As Brueggemann rightly describes, once her role of establishing David as King of Israel is completed Michal is dismissed entirely by the narrative, she retreats into the pages of history.

²⁸ Michal comes across in her sarcastic remark as being jealous of her husband ‘exposing’ himself to other people. Perhaps in some ways the jealousy of Michal is warranted through the notion that Michal suffers much sexual jealousy at the hands of David and his seeming lack of interest in her romantically as a wife. Now, she witnesses him expose himself in public, in front of strange and unfamiliar women when she herself does not experience David this way. See Aschkenasy, 1998:41.

3. Bathsheba: The Lamb

I will discuss the character of Bathsheba and the text of 2 Samuel 11 in an attempt to uncover the hidden experiences of this woman that as it stands are very well concealed in the narrative. It shall be argued in this chapter that the text of 2 Samuel 11 conceals a great deal of suffering that is endured by the character of Bathsheba, all of which takes place in a short space of time, as Bathsheba here finds herself: engaging in an adulterous affair with King David, which then results in an accidental pregnancy, the resulting murder of her husband Uriah and then the death of the child once it is born. I would also like to discuss the suggestion that the narrative in this chapter conceals the truth that King David may well have actually sexually assaulted Bathsheba, rather than the ‘David and Bathsheba affair’ being a mutual, consensual liaison.

It shall also be discussed that Bathsheba is presented in 2 Samuel 11 as a passive, muted character that remains quite disturbingly silent and does not question or protest the tragic circumstances that surround her.²⁹ This is arguably very different from the character of Michal who at least attempted to speak out against David. It will be my argument that Bathsheba is viewed in 2 Samuel 11 by David purely as a silent sexual body, considered by him to be the ultimate fantasy woman; poles apart from the nagging, masculine Michal from 2 Samuel 6.³⁰ It shall be argued that in 2 Samuel 11 the character of Bathsheba -much like Michal previously- is present in the text as a narrative tool that aids the continuity of the greater David story. Bathsheba’s character is demonstrated by the narrator as being a

²⁹ I would like to note that the Bathsheba that is presented in 1 Kings 2: 19 is presented as a much more autonomous character that is in control of her and her son Solomon’s situation, (Berlin, 1994: 27) however as have identified, I will be primarily focusing on the narrative construction of Bathsheba’s character in the text of 2 Samuel 11 in this chapter.

³⁰ Katharine Sakenfeld (2003) discusses the imagery of King David spying the beautiful Bathsheba from afar in 2 Sam 11:2-4 as representing the ultimate in ‘male fantasies’ as Bathsheba represents an unknown and mysterious woman that is desired by the male from a distance. I find Sakenfeld’s comments here valuable, as she injects a contemporary view of the passage in comparing David seeing Bathsheba as a man would see a woman across a ‘crowded room’ at a party or occasion and instantly desire this unknown, attractive female. (Sakenfeld, 2003: 73). This point will also be discussed below in Bathsheba as a ‘femme fatale’ character.

passive, one dimensional 'object' whose main purpose in this chapter is to help explain the greater theological reasons behind David's disgrace in the eyes of Nathan and Yahweh, and the resulting repercussions this disgrace has to the rest of the 2 Samuel text. Bathsheba under the title as one of 'David's women' becomes a victim of both the narrative's and David's actions and it will therefore be my main concern in this chapter to at least somewhat expose this and attempt to retrieve Bathsheba from the depths of the male orientated narrative.

3.1 Upon the rooftop

It is easy to perceive from the way the narrative portrays Bathsheba to regard her as a temptress who actively sought to seduce the King into an adulterous affair by knowingly appearing to him naked upon her roof, where she knew he would be watching.³¹ However, when attempting to read against the grain of the text, there are clues in the text which may be read as suggesting that actually all the blame for this incident lies with the actions of David and the abuse of his power as King.

The first line of the chapter begins with King David being described by the narrative as having remained at home in Jerusalem whilst the rest of his army are out to war to fight the Ammonites, as the spring had arrived and traditionally at that time of year 'Kings go forth [to

³¹ The interpretation that Bathsheba is a calculating temptress and the main instigator in the affair with David is not uncommon, as the notion that she 'was a willing partner in David's guilt' and 'ambitious' (Davidson, 1955: 286) in "enticing the King's lust" (Fuller [et al], 1969: 322), is a traditional, patriarchal interpretation. Bathsheba has been regarded as an opportunist who having been left childless by her husband Uriah -who may never return from battle- wanted to secure her future and be queen. Who better to father her children than the King? (Klein, 2003, 58-60). This is reminiscent of what Fuchs (2000) claims is one of the main problems that feminist theologians must tackle. These conservative, patriarchal interpretations of Biblical characters like Bathsheba are extremely damaging as they dictate how we perceive female characters in the text in so much that we become passive and accommodating to interpretations that are extremely negative towards women in the Hebrew Bible (Fuchs, 2000: 23-26). For more on traditional conservative biblical interpretations distorting the text see: Exum, 1996: 115-117.

battle]’ (2 Sam. 11:1). King David however has chosen to remain behind in Jerusalem, handing over the responsibility of leading the army into battle to Joab. In this chapter beginning with the immediate representation of David as neglecting his fundamental responsibilities as king, sets the scene for the rest of the chapter. David’s moral duties have been overtaken by his sense of power; obscuring his sight as to what is right and what is wrong behaviour.³²

So in the first opening sentence of the chapter the narrative immediately portrays the King as being morally neglectful and in 2 Sam 11: 2 then goes on to describe the scene of David’s first sighting of Bathsheba: ‘It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking about on the roof of the King’s house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; the woman was very beautiful’ (2 Sam. 11:2). There is a definite juxtaposition here between the first two lines of the text in that the narrative jumps from a description of David’s army out at war to David lounging upon a couch in the afternoon sunshine. Exum (1992: 126) comments on how as readers it is easy to imagine David rising lazily from his couch after an afternoon of lounging and napping. The image of his men out to war in great peril contrasted with David’s apparent lack of concern as he lounges around at his leisure makes a suggestion towards the moral position of David, in that as he does not show any particular concern for his soldiers, he would not show any concern in seizing and taking for himself the married woman that he sees naked before him.

³² Garland and Garland (2008: 22) discuss how David is ‘no longer the lionhearted military adventurer... [he has] sent his troops out to battle, becoming an armchair general lolling about on his rooftop’. Steven McKenzie (2000: 157) takes particular notice of David’s brazen abuse of his power, for he has no reservations in desiring and simply ‘taking’ Bathsheba, whom he was informed was the daughter of Eliam (2 Sam. 11:3) whose father was Ahithopel; one of David’s most trusted advisors (1 Chron. 27:33; 2 Sam. 15-17) and the wife of Uriah, one of David’s ‘Mighty Men’ as mentioned in 2 Sam. 23: 39. Larry W. Spielman (1999: 254) discusses how it is that David has become totally seduced by his own power and that Bathsheba, no matter who she was, was no match for this seduction: ‘David stayed at home at a time when other Kings went out to conquer...[instead] seduced by his own power, David conquers Bathsheba’. In this chapter David is a relentless force that is fuel.

The text gives us no indication as to whether Bathsheba is deliberately letting herself be seen by the King and there is also no mention within the text as to Bathsheba's location whilst she was bathing. It has been suggested that the palace roof puts David above her, as the passage itself will later speak repeatedly of 'going down' to where Bathsheba lived 2.Sam.11.8-13 (Dennis, 1994: 145-146). However, this literal interpretation of the geography of the text may not necessarily be the case. If Bathsheba was bathing upon her roof, perhaps she assumed that she was out of sight, as Sakenfeld (2003: 72-73) comments in that perhaps Bathsheba was trying to conceal herself as much as possible in the space that she had available? She also goes on to say that perhaps there were particular etiquettes of the time involving another individual's rooftop, in that people would not actively stare at another's roof in the knowledge that they may run the risk of seeing someone in a compromised position.

It is easy to assume from the way the narrative portrays Bathsheba's positioning upon her roof that she was in the direct line of sight of the King, however alternatively, perhaps David went to great lengths to try and catch a glimpse of Bathsheba? Perhaps straining to see her, or climbing for a better view? Whatever the position of Bathsheba, there is no doubt that the responsibility lay with King to look away and not to actively seek her out. As most of the men are away at war it is easy to assume that perhaps Bathsheba thought it would be safe to bathe upon her rooftop? It probably would not have occurred to Bathsheba that being upon the rooftop was to be in danger; as one very powerful male still remains in the city.

Bathsheba then, first appears to the reader as a lone female whose husband and protector is away at war and with this absence of men. Walter Brueggemann appropriately comments on her position saying that 'There is a powerful silence back in Jerusalem' (Brueggemann, 1990, 273), as while King David's men are away the text becomes eerily quiet. All background noise fades away and if any one remains to surround David and Bathsheba they

become almost shadows that stalk the background (Dennis, 1994: 145). As the people that surround David and Bathsheba melt away into the silence David is free to act upon his desires. Three main people are present upon the palace rooftop to witness David's actions: David himself, the reader and the narrator, all others are forgotten; we each stand there gazing at this beautiful woman as she, obviously, bathes herself.

3.2 The Sexual Body

Looking at the verse of 2 Sam 11:2-3, this short sentence has a large impact on Bathsheba's character in the stripping away any of her privacy. This sentence exposes her character to the reader solely as a one dimensional sexual 'body' that is discussed primarily through her character's ability to arouse the King. The conscious decision of the narrator to include the added description of Bathsheba ritually bathing herself after her menstruation introduces her character from a new sexual perspective. In knowing that Bathsheba is bathing herself, the graphic detail of the text is increased because as a reader I am now aware that Bathsheba is both naked and more than likely washing herself intimately (Exum, 1993: 175).

As a reader I made aware of Bathsheba's nakedness and now have no choice but to imagine it, focusing upon every intimate detail of Bathsheba: her nakedness, the positioning of her body; her menstruation. 'We presume she is naked, or nearly so; at any rate we are forced to think about it' (Exum, 1993: 174) in knowing these intimate details of Bathsheba Exum argues that we become a voyeur, we are upon the roof alongside King David with him and we are witnessing a beautiful woman bathing herself. The voyeurism of the reader adds an entirely new level to the abuse of Bathsheba's character and with every new reader to the text of 2 Samuel 11 her nakedness is bared to see once more. As the passage progresses the sexual body of Bathsheba is laid out for all to see, as we are informed of the sexual encounter

between her and David and also afterwards in Uriah's refusal to go to her in 2 Samuel 11: 8 (Bach, 1997: 135).

There is a plausible reason as to why the detailed recounting of Bathsheba's bathing after her menstruation is considered important enough by the narrative to be included in the text, in that it offers information that helps to prevent tarnish to the reputation of King David. However as a result of this, incredibly personal information about Bathsheba is used in an incredibly insensitive way. The description of Bathsheba ritually bathing appears to be included by the narrative in an attempt to make a point of salvaging David's reputation after the affair, in that it tells the reader that King David must be the legitimate father of the child that Bathsheba conceives and not Uriah. Furthermore, it also asserts Bathsheba's ritual purity after her menstruation and that when David slept with her; he was not breaking any purity laws in engaging in a sexual act with a ritually unclean woman (Dennis, 1994: 148). This is damage limitation here for David in that although he has committed a great sin in committing adultery and murdering an innocent man, he has not made his situation any worse by breaking any cleanliness laws.³³

So, Bathsheba is ritually bathing herself from a place that is in sight of the palace roof, and since the text does not tell us that Bathsheba was purposefully bathing in sight of the King, it is not unreasonable to assume that she was unaware of being watched. Now in 2 Samuel 11: 4-5 David acts upon his lust and the adultery is committed:

³³ There is a counter argument that I find helpful to note in that even after her ritual bathing, Bathsheba would have still remained 'unclean', as it may have been the case that menstrual purity comes about through a set period of time rather than a single act of physical bathing post menstruation. See: Chrankin-Gould [et al] 2008: 342.

David sent messengers to fetch her, and she came to him, and he lay with her. (Now she was purifying herself after her period.) Then she returned to her house. The woman conceived; and she sent and told David, 'I am pregnant'

(2 Sam. 11.4-5)

The description of the actual sexual encounter between David and Bathsheba in 2 Sam 11: 4 is brief, especially in comparison to the amount of narrative attention the repercussions that the resulting pregnancy has on the rest of the chapter. The description of the 'affair' embodies but a single sentence and this briefness of language certainly leaves a large gap in deciphering Bathsheba's state of mind, emotions and most importantly her voice. What is obvious is that 2 Sam 11:4-5 is not a recollection of an epic story of forbidden love, but rather a recital of a momentary passion that is described entirely from David's perspective. It seems to me that if there had not been a resulting pregnancy then David's interest in Bathsheba within this passage would have been over as soon as she left his bed chamber, and the story is unlikely to have been recorded for posterity. This resulting pregnancy and its repercussions I shall discuss in more depth in my comparative discussion in chapter five below.³⁴

The use of language in 2 Samuel 11: 4 is interesting, particularly in regards to the use of verbs in the narrator's description of the sexual encounter between David and Bathsheba. It describes how David 'sent' for Bathsheba and 'took' or 'lay' with her and Bathsheba 'came' to him and then 'went' back to her house.³⁵ The verb use here reinforces Bathsheba's passivity to the situation, in that she offers no real protest in going along with his advances, in fact the description of her 'coming' to the King may be seen as a consensual act (Klein in

³⁴ Mieke Bal (1987) makes an interesting observation as to David simply wanting to indulge in the 'male pleasure' that is momentary sexual satisfaction here, with the intention of having absolutely no consequences. See Bal, 1987: 31.

³⁵ David '*Slh*' or 'sends' for Bathsheba and she is then '*Lqch*' or 'taken'. The Hebrew translations of the text are explored in more detail by Lilian Klein in Athalya Brenner's book *A Feminist Companion to Samuel and Kings* 49-50.

Brenner: 2000: 49).³⁶ The wording does seem to make it appear that Bathsheba was not forced to do anything against her will, but then it would take a brave woman not to go to the King of Israel after he had sent for her company. This is particularly the case when you are young, lone female, with the knowledge that your husband was in the delicate position of a foreign mercenary in the Kings army (Sakenfeld, 2003: 73). Indeed, when viewing the meeting from Bathsheba's perspective why would she want to avoid a meeting with the King? Her husband Uriah is described in 2 Samuel 23:39 as being one of David's 'Mighty Men', so perhaps she understood that the King knew her husband personally and news of him? What is most important to remember here is that the power difference between the two characters was simply too vast for there to be any realistic opportunity for Bathsheba to consensually decline (Spielman, 1999: 254).³⁷

Brueggemann (1990) describes how the verbs which are present during the encounter between David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:4-5) demonstrate a sense of a rushed, urgent pace: 'The verbs rush as the passion of David rushed. He sent; he took; he lay' it is this rushed passion that points towards the emotionless transaction that happened between the two characters. 'The royal deed of self-indulgence does not take very long' (Brueggemann, 1990: 273) and the narrative describes the event in the same way that it was acted out, a momentary distraction for the king that brings to mind the image of Bathsheba agreeing to meet with David, to be grabbed and 'taken' almost immediately. Once the momentary passions of David were indulged, Bathsheba is then instantly dismissed. This is quite uncomfortable imagery, and yet quite insightful in its similarity to Tamar's treatment by Amnon in his instant dismissal of Tamar after he rapes her in 2 Samuel 13: 15-17. What is an important

³⁶ Pamela Tamarkin Reis in *Cupidity and Stupidity* discusses the notion of the consensual 'coming' of Tamar into Amnon's house and then separately into his bedroom. I mention this in relation to Bathsheba's suggested consensual 'coming' to King David for a sexual liaison that has striking similarities in its narrative language. Although I do not particularly agree with the overall argument of Reis in this paper, the point that Reis raises here about consensually entering into the houses of both Amnon and David is of interest to mention. See Tamarkin Reis, 1998: 48-49.

³⁷ See also McKenzie, 2000: 156-158

point to remember is that as Exum explains: ‘The point is not what Bathsheba might have done, or felt; the point is that we are not allowed to access her point of view’ (Exum, 1993: 173). We are not permitted to see view or consider the emotions of Bathsheba and at this point she considered by the narrative as something that the reader should not show much concern for.³⁸

The role of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 is to be the catalyst through which the fortune of David changes. In order to achieve this, the narrative presents Bathsheba as being outside of the usual parameters of permissible sexuality, she is something exotic; to be desired. She offers a dangerous new sexuality in her being a forbidden woman, she becomes ‘*femme fatale*’, appearing wordlessly in another man’s bed while her husband is out of town’ (Bach, 1997: 136) Bathsheba is the ultimate, dangerous and exciting fantasy for David. It can be assumed that this is indeed the way David viewed Bathsheba, as a momentary fantastical sexual indulgence which afterwards, like most fantasies; the reality never meets the expectation of the imagination. To which she is instantly dismissed to return home.

The passivity of Bathsheba’s character in the text raises the question as to whether or not David ‘took’ Bathsheba by force, a force that is ‘played down in 2 Sam. 11.4 [although]...it is not entirely edited out. ‘He took her’, the text says... [and]when David’s crimes are re-enacted as part of his punishment, David’s adultery with Bathsheba is replayed as rape’ (Exum, 1993:175-176). Exum is describing here how it is that the actions of Amnon in 2 Samuel 13 mirror the actions of David and the taking of Bathsheba, as Amnon desires

³⁸ What is interesting about Exum’s interpretations of this text is that she does not stop at the literal raping of Bathsheba, but much like I am attempting to do, she involves the violence of the narrator who figuratively ‘rapes’ Bathsheba in the silencing of her voice and the abuse and impersonal treatment of her character in 2 Sam. 11. See Exum, 1993: 172-176.

Tamar from afar, 'sends' for her and 'takes' her in the exact same way as his father did with Bathsheba.³⁹

The difference is that the narrative in 2 Samuel 13 has no trouble in describing the attack of Amnon towards his sister Tamar as rape. Nathan also in his rebuke to David in 2 Samuel 12:7 describes how Yahweh despises the actions of David within 2 Samuel 11 and goes on to represent Bathsheba as a victim of David's actions referring to her as a 'lamb' that was taken by David and 'prepared' to be eaten with 2 Sam. 12:4. This provides imagery of Bathsheba as a helpless victim of the terrible deeds of David, but also may be prophetic of the future rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13). Nathan refers to the poor man as raising the ewe lamb like 'one of his own children' (2 Sam 11:3) which seems to point towards the future events of David's daughter Tamar being 'devoured' or raped in 2 Sam 13 (Stiebert, 2013: 62-63).

David and Bathsheba's affair may have remained undiscovered had it not been for Bathsheba's resulting pregnancy and Bathsheba here was placed in to a very dangerous position at having conceived a child through an adulterous affair with the King. This is something that should be taken into account as perhaps 'Bathsheba has lived several weeks in the frightened uncertainty of her possibly having conceived' (Fokkelman, 1981: 53). A horrific time filled with the terrifying prospect of the punishment for adultery: demanding death (Lev. 20:10-17). The first time that narrative allows Bathsheba to speak is during her telling David that she is pregnant as she is described as 'sending' a message to David which reads 'I am pregnant' or 'Harah 'anoki' (2 Sam 11:5) (Brueggemann, 1990; 274). The way in which Bathsheba sends the message to David does appear in some small way quite ironic, as

³⁹ David Gunn (1982: 43-44) comments on how the character of Bathsheba in the text is depicted as a woman that brings 'death' to the story of David. He discusses how it is that characters such as Bathsheba are 'catalysts' through which negative events have the opportunity to manifest. Gunn mentions how the seduction of Bathsheba in turn brings the death of Uriah and her unborn child. I mention this in regards to Bathsheba's experiences representing the experiences of Tamar, as the rape of Tamar then in turn brings about war and destruction to the family of David.

it seems to reflect the way in which David ‘sent’ for and ‘took’ her previously. Bathsheba is now mirroring David through the ‘sending’ him a message and ‘taking’ from him his untouchability as to the consequences of his actions.

Lillian Klein discusses how the female body, Bathsheba’s body and its conceiving ‘gives her power’ over the King (Klien in Brenner, 2000: 50) as here Bathsheba who has been perceived as nothing more than a ‘sexual body’ previously now momentarily takes the power from David, showing him that power does not remove responsibility. This exertion of Bathsheba’s power is a small victory; however a victory short lived as Bathsheba becoming pregnant does eventually result in causing her more pain, through the resulting murder of her innocent husband Uriah and then the death of the child.

The narrative describes David as ‘sending’ for Uriah (2 Sam 11:6) in the same way he sent for Bathsheba, in a vain attempt to convince Uriah to sleep with his wife in the hope he would believe that her unborn child is his. The narrative conceals Bathsheba once more during this period and we know nothing about her involvement in or her thoughts about the plot to kill Uriah. It is easy to imagine trauma that her character must be experiencing here, as in a short period of time she has gone from bathing in what she thought was the relative safety of her own home, to being summoned by the King for a both momentary and meaningless sexual encounter. She then conceives his child and ultimately witnesses the murder of her innocent husband.

The fact that Bathsheba becomes pregnant is quite interesting as the ‘opening’ and ‘closing’ of the womb is within several parts of the Biblical text something that is exercised at the discretion of Yahweh: Gen. 20:18; 29:31 for example (Exum, 1992: 127). The fact that Bathsheba becomes pregnant after one encounter with David may well demonstrate a theological message in that Yahweh is beginning to turn against David. This point is

reinforced as Bathsheba's resulting pregnancy is the catalyst that brings about both greater theological and contextual changes to the entire David narrative and the remaining text of 2 Samuel. Nathan's rebuke of David's actions with Bathsheba and Uriah (2 Samuel 12) spells imminent war and death for David and his family.

In a desperate attempt to cover up his adultery and the pregnancy King David within 2Sam.11:6-26 demonstrates the behaviour of a man whose previously untouchable position of Yahweh's anointed begins to diminish. As a way of covering up his sin he chooses to murder Uriah (2 Sam. 11:14-26). Bathsheba remains passive to the scheming of David, perhaps too ashamed to face the world through the fear of her uncertain position and the fear of bringing shame upon her innocent husband. Uriah is portrayed as a character that demonstrates good morals that David should have demonstrated, almost 'holding a mirror' up to the shamed King David.⁴⁰

After the death of her husband Uriah and the death of her unnamed child, the narrative describes David giving Bathsheba very little time to recover, as within the space of a single sentence David acts: 'Then David consoled his wife Bathsheba, and went to her, and lay with her' and she bore him a son and named him Solomon' (2 Samuel 12: 24). The speed in which these words are placed within the sentence are reminiscent of David's first sexual encounter with Bathsheba in 2 Sam. 11:4 and now here, Bathsheba had hardly any time at all to recover emotionally from child birth and the loss of her child. David, once again, comes to her and she conceives a second time with her son Solomon.

⁴⁰ Mieke Bal (1987: 31) discusses the nature of the relationship between David and Uriah and in particular that of Uriah's morality as holding a 'mirror' up to the King, showing him how the qualities that he lacks as a leader. Through Uriah the flaws in David's character are revealed, Uriah represents that of morality and godliness: he represents the kinship and solidarity between men that David should have demonstrated from the very start and gone to war with the rest of his army.

For a character like Bathsheba who is used by the narrative as one dimensional tool as to way of explaining a much greater theological agenda of the text –in this case in explaining Yahweh’s condemnation of David- it is hard to uncover the true emotions of her character. It is a good to attempt to take from text what the narrative permits the reader to know about this woman, most notably in this case her conceiving a child and sending the news to David. In a text that is primarily concerned with the portrayal of the David story, any small victory or reclaiming of power that are recorded for a woman should be highlighted and celebrated. It is helpful to see through the traditional interpretations of Bathsheba as an opportunist; a dangerous woman who set out to ensnare the King and instead perceive her as a victim. Bathsheba: the victim of a narrative who in the one small portion of text of 2 Samuel 11 exposes her body to the reader and takes away from her any voice in which to protest at the events that she is helpless to control.

4. Tamar: A Princess Betrayed

The narrative of 2 Samuel 13 is a chapter that includes a shocking recollection of a brutal incestuous rape between the characters of Amnon and his half-sister Tamar. As a result of this a succession of murderous events are triggered that virtually dominate the rest of the book of 2 Samuel. My intention in this chapter will be to make the violent and tragic experiences of Tamar my priority, uncovering her experiences in the narrative in an attempt to realise the traumatic situation that Tamar was placed in. What is particularly important here is to empathise on the terror she must have felt during these experiences.

I shall discuss how it was that Tamar's horrific experiences were brought about as a result of the actions of the men who surround her in this narrative and how it is that 2 Samuel 13:1-22 may in fact be deciphered as a narrative that holds up a mirror up to the narrative of 2 Samuel 11. As previously highlighted in my Bathsheba chapter, it may be argued that Amnon copies his father's actions with Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11: 1-7, as he desires the beautiful Tamar from afar and proceeds to 'take' her for himself. Much like the characters of Michal and Bathsheba, Tamar through her abuse may be regarded as fulfilling a specific narrative agenda in that her rape acts as the catalyst through which greater narrative events are set into motion; most notably being her rape drives Absalom to kill his brother Amnon in revenge (2 Sam. 14:28-29).

4.1 The Sins of the Father

I argued in my previous chapter that the David and Bathsheba affair may be alternately interpreted as Bathsheba being a victim of David's sexual abuse. David is described as secretly desiring Bathsheba from afar, 'sending' for her and then 'taking' or 'laying' with her in 2 Samuel 11:4. Jan Fokkelman (1981: 99) discusses how the actions of abuse that are demonstrated by David towards Bathsheba are in fact mirrored by Amnon in 2 Sam.13,

through his actions towards his half-sister Tamar. Amnon is seen to desire his sister secretly from afar, send for her and then take her in the same way as his father does with Bathsheba. Fokkelman describes how it is that Amnon is in fact just a ‘chip off the old block’ through the similarities in their attitudes towards these women. Mark Gray (1998: 42-43) describes how both of these men are described as being sexually attracted by the vision of beautiful women and cannot help but to act upon their physical lust. The Bathsheba narrative does however remain ambiguous and open to interpretation as to David’s abuse being rape, whereas here in 2 Sam 13:1-22, the narrator is more open about describing Amnon as raping Tamar.

Theologically, David has set the scene of 2 Sam 13 previously in the Bathsheba affair of 2 Sam. 11 and then again in 2 Samuel 12:1-25 when Nathan condemns David for his actions in his parable of the ‘poor man and the ewe lamb’ (2 Samuel 12: 1-7). Nathan promises on behalf of Yahweh that: ‘I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house’ (2 Samuel 12:11). This trouble shall begin with Amnon’s rape of Tamar that acts as the catalyst⁴¹ that leads to David’s household descending into chaos as Absalom, Tamar’s brother, avenges his sister and murders Amnon (Bader, 2006: 185). Alice Bach (1997: 152-153) speaks of this in saying how: ‘the rape of Tamar...functions to explain violence between two groups of men’. In Nathan’s parable of 2 Samuel 12: 3, the ewe lamb may be representative of David and Bathsheba’s relationship, however it may also be regarded as prophetic in terms of the events that unfold in 2 Sam 13.⁴² Stiebert (2013: 63) considers Nathan’s parable in relation to David and Tamar’s relationship, in that the ewe lamb was for the poor man ‘like a daughter’ whom he loved and cherished like one of his own children. This is then contrasted with David’s own treatment of his daughter in 2 Samuel 13 and there

⁴¹ See Fuchs, 2000: 201-202 for a more in depth discussion of Tamar being the narrative ‘catalyst’ through which the war between David and Absalom can be realised.

⁴² See Fewell and Gunn, 1993: 159-160.

is a stark difference, as the true neglect of Tamar is revealed: all the paternal love and protection that David should have provided for Tamar is absent in this chapter.

This narrative recounts how, with the help of his cousin Jonadab, Amnon devises a plan to get Tamar alone in his bedroom through tricking David into sending her to him (2 Sam. 13:5). The once powerful King David is seen here to be easily fooled into believing that Amnon is genuinely ill and so sends Tamar into a dangerous situation. The power dynamic here is reversed: Amnon is the person who exercises the power in this chapter and David finds himself following his commands (Gray, 1998: 43).⁴³ David is appropriately described by Jan Fokkelman (1981) as ‘limping on behind’ the narrative (Fokkelman, 1981: 100) in 2 Samuel 13 as he remains entirely on the side lines to the events that take place in this chapter. He is clearly depicted as having no insight into Amnon’s plan prior to the attack and then after the attack, he fails to act in any way to punish Amnon and bring justice to Tamar (2 Sam. 13: 21).⁴⁴

We are introduced to the characters of Absalom, Tamar and Amnon in the first line of the text:

⁴³ I do believe however that Amnon gains his power from the people around him. Amnon may be regarded as a ‘weak, degenerate creature’ (Gray, 1998; 47) that relies on people around him. Without the help of Jonadab’s plan, he was simply laid down ill and despairing in his bed (2 Samuel 13:2-3). Although strong enough to overpower the terrified Tamar, he is not strong enough to remove her from his property without the help of his servant, or ‘lackey’ as Mark Gray (1998) calls him. Amnon is representative of cowardliness whose sly attack on his half-sister is shrouded in a greater context of sibling rivalry between Amnon and Absalom. See Esler 2011: 332-333

⁴⁴ It may be interpreted that the failure of David to intervene in 2 Samuel 13: 21 is due him being a man that witnesses his own sins laid out before him through the actions of his son. It would have been hypocritical of David to punish Amnon when he did something similar to Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 (Erickson, 1998: 455). Phyllis Tribble elaborates on this in how: ‘the father identifies with the son, the adulterer supports the rapist (Tribble, 1984:53) and David’s ambiguous position in the chapter is reinforced by his absolute failure as a father to protect his daughter (Stiebert, 2013: 61-64). The text of 2 Samuel 13:21 attempts to explain David’s inaction: ‘[David] became very angry, but he would not punish his son...because he loved him, for he was his firstborn’ (2 Sam.13:21). See also Exum, 1992:145.

‘David’s son Absalom had a beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David’s son Amnon fell in love with her. [And] Amnon was so tormented [by this] that he made himself ill’

(2 Samuel. 13: 1-2).

The language in this first line sets the scene for the rest of the verse in that the reader is introduced to the individual characters and their relationships to one another. It is interesting to take into account syntactical structure of the sentence in that Tamar is placed in-between her two brothers, which seems to demonstrate the place that Tamar will take throughout the rest of the narrative. Placed in the centre between her brothers who surround her on either side, they bring her into a violent web of confused familial relationships and power struggles (Keefe, 1993: 87).

4.2 ‘Love’ and ‘Desire’

The way the narrative constructs the first line of 2 Sam 13, from a superficial reading seems to offer the reader the beginnings of a great love story. As a reader I am introduced to a character called Amnon who loves a woman named Tamar, so much so that he has made himself literally ‘love sick’.⁴⁵ The syntax of the opening sentence obscurely places Tamar at the centre of the sentence, surrounded either side by the names of Amnon and Absalom. This seems to obscure the relationship of Amnon and Tamar, removing any real direct affiliation as to them being half brother and sister. The opening sentence seems to focus more upon Tamar’s relationship as being the full sister of Absalom and Amnon as being the heir to the

⁴⁵ Phyllis Tribble discusses the syntax of the sentence surrounding Amnon’s desire for Tamar. She observes that the way the sentence repeats several words beginning with the Hebrew letter ‘aleph’ one after the other: ‘*ani* and ‘*hb* for example. This alliteration then creates a series of sighs that reinforce the sound of Amnon’s despair. See Tribble, 1984:40-41.

Kingdom as the first son of David.⁴⁶ The reader is still made aware of the sibling relationship here; however the wording of the sentence strikes me as being overly ambiguous and perhaps even apologetic as to what is to come in the narrative. As the narrative then begins to develop, the true relationship between Tamar and Amnon becomes much clearer as to them being ‘brother and sister’.

In the second line of the chapter we are introduced to the emotional and mental state of Amnon, with the description of him being physically ill over his ‘love’ for Tamar. Upon analysis, the sentencing here offers some subtle insight into the horrific course that 2 Samuel 13 will soon take:

Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her.

(2 Samuel 13:2)

The narrative here goes into quite explicit detail in this line, making sure that the reader is made aware of just how unhealthy Amnon’s infatuation is with his ‘beautiful’ sister Tamar really is. The description of Tamar in verse one as being ‘beautiful’ suggests that it is the case that Amnon’s unbearable ‘love’ for her is in reality perhaps just an overwhelming physical attraction for his sister (Vreeland, 2008:164-165). It is crucial to the plot to get across the extent of Amnon’s sickness, with the narrator even penetrating the very mind of Amnon’s character making the reader aware that Amnon was both mentally and physically ‘tormented’ by his desire for his half-sister (Bar-Efrat, 1989: 242).

⁴⁶ There is a socio-historic context that is valuable to consider here as to why the narrator refers to the relationships between the characters in this way in that Tamar being Absalom’s full sister highlights her belonging to Absalom’s house. Therefore, Absalom has a sense of duty and responsibility to protect Tamar -like the rest of his property- from threat; particularly a virgin princess who would be a valuable asset. Amnon’s attack of Tamar may be regarded by Absalom as Amnon attacking his personal property (Esler, 2011: 328). See also Trible, 1984: 38. Also, Fuch’s analysis of Deuteronomy and the rape of a woman affecting the men of the household as to which the woman belonged: Fuchs, 2000:204-207.

The love that Amnon feels for Tamar being mistaken for a physical infatuation with her beauty becomes then even more evident when once more taking a closer look at the syntax of the sentence. In particular the awkward placement of the ‘causative’ clause towards the end of the sentence, after it is said Tamar is a virgin.⁴⁷ The cause of Amnon’s torment therefore becomes evident as being he finds it ‘impossible to do anything *to* her’.⁴⁸ In other words, because of her virginal status Amnon is tormented not because he loved her, but because he couldn’t see a way to do anything about her *virginity* when he *wanted* to.⁴⁹

Esler describes the nature of this sentence as harrowing in that “He [Amnon] is tormented to sickness *because* of Tamar’s virginity... His frustration at finding it impossible to do anything *to* Tamar can only mean that he wants to destroy her virginal innocence” (Esler, 2011: 332). The reality of the situation is that in the space of one line of text the true nature of Amnon’s motive towards his sister has become clear. Amnon has changed from being in ‘love’ with Tamar to being a man who poses a great threat to her safety. This tormented man has become dangerous, sick and fevered; driven by the twisted sexual gaze through which he is viewing his innocent half-sister and more importantly through which he is considering her virginity.

Amnon himself may have been confused into believing that the emotions he felt for Tamar were those of love, as he himself speaks to Jonadab in 2 Samuel 13: 4 of his feelings in that: ‘I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister’. As Alter (1999: 265) discusses, the word ‘love’ or ‘*ahab*’ used here when looking at the root Hebrew the word may actually be

⁴⁷ Bar-Efrat (1989) offers an incredibly in depth discussion as to the narrative representation of the text of 2 Samuel 13, especially in terms of the way the narrative constructs the sentencing around Amnon’s mental state and his emotions for Tamar in 2 Sam. 13: 1-7. The way that the sentences are structured offers a much more sinister interpretation of the text and interpretation of Amnon’s ‘love’ for Tamar See Bar-Efrat, 1989: 243-250.

⁴⁸ See Tamarkin Reis, 1998: 46 for a wider explanation on the detail of the Hebrew ‘to her’.

⁴⁹ It may be derived from this sentence that as a virgin princess Tamar would have been surrounded by people, being guarded and protected at all times. It was *impossible* for Amnon to do anything *about* Tamar’s virginity because the opportunity for them to be alone would never arise and so this is why he was becoming tormented. See Tamarkin Reis, 1998: 48.

regarded as being a word that is reminiscent of the love one feels for a material object, or particular *thing*. Amnon must possess Tamar, he desires her as one would desire a possession and when it is denied to him he becomes frustrated and sick. His treatment of Tamar as an ‘object’ becomes more apparent as the chapter progresses and his treatment of her once the rape has taken place.

4.3 The Plan is implemented

So, Amnon made sick by his desire for his half-sister Tamar is in turn visited by his cousin Jonadab who is described as a being a ‘very crafty man’ (2 Samuel 13:3). Jonadab inquires about Amnon’s illness and then devises a plan through which Amnon may get Tamar alone:⁵⁰

Jonadab said to him ‘Lie down on your bed, and pretend to be ill; and when your father comes to see you, say to him ‘let my sister Tamar come and give me something to eat’ ... Then David sent home to Tamar, saying, ‘go to your brother Amnon’s house, and prepare food for him’

(2Sam. 13: 5-7).

David did not give much thought in obliging to the request of Amnon that Tamar come alone to his house and prepare food for him and through this misjudgement Tamar suffers.

⁵⁰ The character of Jonadab within this passage is one that inspires a great deal of debate as to what exactly his role is in the narrative. Jonadab intentionally endangers his cousin Tamar by devising this plan to bring about her rape. To what benefit would Jonadab want to endanger his own family member? One particular suggestion is that through raping Tamar, Amnon also brings about his own demise also with 2 Samuel 13: 28-29, inspiring the debate that Jonadab was working in allegiance within Absalom in a way to eradicate Amnon as the King’s heir to the throne (Brueggemann, 1990; 290). This idea places Tamar reinforces the idea that Tamar’s character is collateral damage to the politics of men that surround her. See also Hill, 1987: 389 and Esler, 2011: 333-334.

Fuchs (2000:208-209) speaks of how it is Tamar is a victim of the power that men wield over women, as she follows without question the orders of her father the King and then manipulated by Amnon's words into entering his bedchamber. Tamar remains silent and loyal in going without a word to the house of Amnon to carry out the task charged to her by her father. This is strikingly similar to the behaviour of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11: 4 who comes to David without saying a word of protest, as his authority and power as King demanded that she attend.

So Tamar went to her brother Amnon's house, where he was laying down. She took the dough, kneaded it, made the cakes in his sight, and baked the cakes. Then she took them out of the pan and set them out before him, but he refused to eat.

(2 Samuel 13:8-9)

It is described in this verse that Tamar makes cakes in Amnon's presence, while he is 'laying' down. This is reminiscent once more of 2 Samuel 11:1-2 where David is described as lounging on his couch before he spied Bathsheba. Amnon being described as laying down also means that it immediately becomes clear that Amnon's bedroom -and more specifically the bed- becomes the central focus of the scene (Fokkelman, 1981: 103). For Amnon to have the object of his most tormented desires inside -or at least in sight- of his very bedroom is no doubt incredibly exciting for Amnon. He is present in the bed, the sexual epicentre of the scene as he watches Tamar go about her duty of preparing him some nutritious cakes in which to regain strength.

The making of the cakes for Tamar may be regarded as an uneventful, routine task however for Amnon it will be an act dripping with innuendo and connotation (Gray, 1998: 45). Amnon has dismissed his servants and now watches an oblivious Tamar go about her work from afar with a quiet intensity; he is ravishing her with his gaze as she slowly kneads.

There is much symbolism that the cakes that Tamar makes may demonstrate, especially due to the narrative attention that is given to Tamar making them within 2 Sam.13:8-9. Alice Bach (1997: 184-185) discusses in some detail the symbolism of the kneading and the shaping of the cakes as having erotic connotations of the body. It is easy to imagine Amnon ravishing the sight of Tamar as he watches her skilled hands move over the food that she prepares.

The narrative goes on to describe Amnon refusing to get up and eat the cakes by himself, and instead demands she approaches his bed, to feed them to him by hand (2 Sam. 13: 10) which seems to undoubtedly suggest a sexual image (Bach, 1997: 183). The cakes Tamar makes represent her body and so a mere 'entrée' for Amnon, prior to the event of him gorging on Tamar's actual body. It is easy to imagine there being a heightened tension in the room and with this, I find it hard to believe that Tamar did not feel uncomfortable under the gaze of Amnon, especially when he encouraged her to approach his bed. Tamar's slow realisation as she became aware that the situation she was in was unsafe is easily imagined as initially, Tamar had no reason not to trust her brother and with this there is a terrible sense of foreboding here on behalf of the reader. This is due to the dramatic irony of the situation as the reader is fully aware of the danger that Tamar is in. The reader is alone in the room alongside these two characters and as a result is made witness to the terrible deeds that are about to take place.

4.4 The Rape of Tamar

It is necessary to continue with the discussion of Tamar's rape as much as possible from her own perspective, in order to give as much recognition to her experiences as possible. The narrative allows Tamar to speak out in her protests against Amnon's attack and

her character certainly has considerably more vocal freedom in this text than that Michal and Bathsheba narratives previously:

Come, lie with me, my sister.’ And she answered him, ‘No, my brother, do not force me: for such a thing is not done in Israel; do not do anything so vile! As for me, where would I carry my shame? And as for you, you would be as one of the scoundrels in Israel...I beg you, speak to the King; for he will not withhold me from you.’ But he would not listen...and being stronger...he forced her.

(2 Sam. 13:11-14)

This is where the tension that has been present in the room for both characters suddenly becomes a stark sexualised reality, as Amnon reaches out and grabs for Tamar. The pace of both Tamar and Amnon’s vocalisations within this passage are split between Amnon’s desperate, pained urgency and Tamar’s slower, drawn out sentences of rationality. Tribble comments that the pace of Tamar’s sentences demonstrates that ‘In the presence of a rapist, Tamar panics not...she claims her voice. Unlike Amnon’s brisk commands, her deliberations slow the movement of the plot.’ (Tribble, 1984: 45). The tragedy in reading this passage is that I believe Tribble is correct in saying that Tamar effectively slows the plot momentarily and bides herself some time in attempting to rationalise with her attacker, however I cannot agree with Tribble is assuming that Tamar ‘panics not’. It appears that Tamar rapidly speaks her sentences in an attempt to say just about anything to Amnon that will get him to see sense. She begins by firstly chastising him and demanding that he stop, to then appealing to his personal honour and his honour in Israel;⁵¹ to finally claiming that King David would allow

⁵¹ The word that Tamar uses to describe the dishonour that Amnon attacking her would bring upon them is *Nebalah* which is a word that describes a violation or something senseless and disgraceful that goes against the life of the community (Keefe, 1993; 86). Tamar is represented within this chapter as defending patriarchal interests in her being greatly concerned about the shame and dishonour that the rape will bring to Amnon and herself in society, rather than the actual attack (Davies, 2003; 58).

them to marry despite the fact they are brother and sister.⁵² All of this is said in what seems like a split second of time and to no avail.

The reality of the situation was that despite Tamar's desperate pleas to her attacker and despite her courageous attempts at reasoning with Amnon, Tamar's strong words were no match for Amnon's physical strength.⁵³ The discussion of Pamela Cooper-White in *The Cry of Tamar* who takes notice of the narrative's inclusion of the fact that Amnon was 'stronger than her' and goes on to say how therefore: 'He [Amnon] kept her there as long as he wanted to, punishing her for her refusal, acting out every fantasy his mind had produced before when he had thought about her' (Cooper-White, 2012: 27). This is an image that I find helpful when imagining the reality of the situation, as when it is taken into account that Amnon and Tamar are alone and considering Amnon's tortured mental state, it is fitting to imagine Amnon acting out his fantasies upon Tamar. This raises the idea that this rape may not have been a quick, momentary encounter, but rather a drawn out traumatic experience through which Tamar finally emerged, bloodied and torn.⁵⁴

⁵² Robert Alter (1999) discusses how incestuous relations were forbidden, and Tamar bargaining in this way demonstrates her panic, finding any escape from Amnon's attack. David Esler (2011; 341) on the other hand discusses how Tamar's focus lies more with the shame and disgrace Amnon's attack would cause, which would be worthy enough of the King to allow marriage between two siblings.

Bar-Efrat (1984) states how there must have been some legal weight to Tamar's words in order for them to effectively convince Amnon to stop, and that there is another example of incestuous marriage in the Bible of Abraham and Sarah in Gen.20:12, suggesting it may have been permissible.

⁵³ Amnon was only successful in his attack due to the brute power of *physical* strength. This was the only real deciding factor in him succeeding in raping Tamar as the narrative portrays her as being strong enough in character to stand up to her attack and attempt to reason with him. See Esler, 2011: 345-346; See Siebert (2013: 61) on how it is Tamar is admirable in resisting Amnon with all her might and is only overpowered due to her physical weakness.

⁵⁴ Athalya Brenner in her book *I Am* creates an imaginary scenario in which the real character of Tamar gives a first-hand account of her rape. I find the midrashic approach of Brenner in this chapter particularly helpful in bringing Tamar into a contemporary setting, where the language that she uses is helpful in establishing a rapport to her character and her experiences. Brenner's argument as to what happened is opposite to what I have argued as she interestingly depicts Tamar as saying that the rape 'thankfully' did not last too long as Amnon was 'too excited, I suppose, to function properly (140)'. In Tamar saying this there is an image created of Amnon that removes any patriarchal ego in the passage of 2 Sam 13:11-14, as in undermining Amnon's sexual performance Brenner empowers Tamar in the way that a victim she should be empowered. Tamar does not let Amnon win although he is physically stronger; she now offers a scathing critique. See Brenner, 2005: 137-143.

Robert Alter (1999) makes a valid point in discussing that as Amnon acted out his depraved fantasies upon Tamar, the fantasy more than likely did not match the reality. The reality of the situation was that Amnon was faced with an incredibly vocal woman who was crying, protesting and pleading and struggling against him with all her might throughout the entire ordeal. This adds some prior insight into explaining the next part of the chapter, verses 15-19 and its description of how Amnon after his fantasies were fulfilled then looked upon Tamar with intense hatred: 'Then Amnon was seized with a great loathing for her;... [and] said to her 'Get out!'. Tamar is given a voice in the narrative once again here, as she protests against Amnon sending her outside 'No! My brother, for this is wrong in sending me away (2 Samuel 13:16)'. Esler (2011: 344-346) notes that contextually, after the rape Tamar's main concern lies not necessarily with the rape that she has just endured but rather with the social repercussions that she now faces. If Amnon does not marry her, as he draws upon the socio-historic importance of Tamar's virginity within the context of Ancient Israel in that without her virginity Tamar would be considered worthless and without honour, robbed of the security of a 'happy and honourable' life.⁵⁵

The idea of acting honourably appears to be of no concern to Amnon, who has carried out what he intended to do, and then cruelly dismisses Tamar demanding that she is cast out of his house and that the door is bolted after her. Tamar goes from being a noble virgin princess to a raped and violated woman, outside and slumped in the street disgraced, bloodied battered and torn. What is admirable here is that Tamar does not accept her disastrous fate

⁵⁵ The importance of a woman remaining a virgin until she was married was of great priority within the social context of the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel and there are many biblical references associated with the importance and value that the 'virginity' of a daughter and a potential wife brings to the father of this woman [Deuteronomy 22:13-21; Deuteronomy 22:28-29] (Frymer-Kensky in Matthews et al, 1998, 79-81). See also Eryl Davies (2003: 2-3) ; Edenburg (2009: 44-45).

quietly, as she rises from the ground and rips at her already torn clothes, she wails for her lost virginity, for her lost hope and for her guaranteed future of desolation.⁵⁶

The cries of Tamar's mourning must have filled the whole area as she demonstrated to everyone what had just been done to her, unlike Bathsheba she will not be silenced. Despite her efforts to defend herself, Tamar was overpowered in this narrative by the power of men and not just Amnon, but rather patriarchy itself. The rape of Tamar no doubt serves the purpose of a greater narrative agenda in that it serves a purpose in explaining the rise of war within the house of David. Due to her serving a purpose, it is the last time we hear of Tamar within the text of 2 Samuel, much like the character of Michal, Tamar's story finishes with her remaining childless and desolate in her brother Absalom's house.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ See Brenner (2005:140-141) once again here as Tamar describes her reasons in tearing at her clothes and mourning for her lost virginity. Tamar explains that she knew making her violation as public as possible was much better than running away and concealing herself and her violation from the world. In doing this Brenner paints a positive image to paint of the woman Tamar in that she will not be kept quiet, she will not leave the house in silence to return home with her shame.

⁵⁷ Unlike Michal who is forgotten from the text, Absalom honours his sister in the naming of his daughter after her in 2 Samuel 14:27.

5. Comparison of the Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar narratives

It will be the aim of this chapter to make a point of the similarities between the narratives of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar in order to highlight how it is that each of these women's narratives, although individual, are also related to one another through three shared themes. By shared themes I mean that there are certain similar experiences that these women each endure through being associated with the title of being one of 'David's Women'. The three main themes that I shall be discussing are: The Gaze; Location and Transition and Sexual Violence.

In highlighting the possibility that these three women endure similar circumstances it is my intention to make clear how these women are connected to one another on a much more complex, theological basis in 2 Samuel than just each other simply being associated by their relationship to King David. In having already conducted a close feminist reading of each text, it shall be discussed in this chapter how it is that Michal, Bathsheba's and Tamar's narrative experiences influence, prophesise and even represent the events that unfold in each other's narrative. In noticing the three main themes that these narratives share, it is believed that a unity is created between them that perhaps are not so obvious before. These shared experiences create a common bond that unites these women together under the title of 'David's Women', rather than them remaining segregated and separate from one another in the small portion of text of 2 Samuel that they inhabit.

5.1 Gaze

It appears to be the case that there are differences in the power and the influence of the gaze that comes with whether the gazer is male or female. The power difference between the male and female gaze is executed in the narratives of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar on several occasions, particularly when it comes to the character's holding each other in their

gaze before acting out a significant event. There is also a secondary theme of the gaze that comes from the perspective of the reader, as the reader is permitted by the narrative in certain scenes to almost be exclusively present in the text itself, gazing at scenes of a secretive and private nature that are laid before us by the narrative.⁵⁸

Alice Bach discusses how it is that typically the narrative construction in the Hebrew Bible demonstrates the male *characters* and therefore the male *gaze* as a dominant force. This relates to the discussion in my methodology in that the Hebrew Bible is a construction of books written by male authors, to promote the continuation of a patriarchal ideology. This ideology is then made a reality by the narrative continually giving the male characters victory through their dominant gaze, as from this dominance usually comes a *power* over female characters. Bach comments that: 'Except for brief moments of female focalization in biblical narratives... the gaze is owned by male characters' who direct the story through their gaze' (Bach in Sharp, 2009: 86). The dominant male gaze in the narrative is made obvious in 2 Samuel through Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar's powerlessness to protect themselves from the dominant gaze of David and Amnon.⁵⁹

Michal is depicted in both the narratives of 1 Samuel 18:17-30 and 2 Samuel 6:16-23 as gazing powerlessly at her estranged husband King David from her place behind the

⁵⁸ I believe it is beneficial here to mention Mieke Bal's discussion as to how it is that the reader becomes voyeur when reading or viewing certain biblical texts and artwork in her book *Reading Rembrandt*. Bal distinguishes between the voyeuristic, prolonged and scrutinizing 'gaze' of the reader coupled with the conscious momentary movement of the 'glance' of the art viewer. Bal points out that when an individual gazes, they may choose to scrutinize the detail that is laid before them, or may simply choose to glance across the entire scene (1991: 142-146). This idea may be introduced into the reader viewing the texts both the Bathsheba and Tamar narrative's as we become fully immersed in the text we have no choice but to scrutinize the scene that the narrative presents to us; there is no opportunity for us to glance and withdraw from the scene.

⁵⁹ 'Focalization' is a term that Mieke Bal describes herself as using in replacement of the terminology 'point of view'. Focalization regards the 'fabula' or the elements that make up the construction of a particular narrative and then from whose perspective these elements are then presented in the text to the reader (Bal, 1991: 154). Focalization is a particularly important method to engage with when attempting to decipher the narrative of a text, especially in this instance where the focus of the discussion is the moving power of the 'gaze'. Bal adopts a particularly scientific approach to the interpretation of narratology in her book *Murder and Difference* (1992:86) particularly when it comes to characters non-verbally 'moving' and 'acting'. See also Tribble:1984:41-45; 66-67; 84-85; and Exum in Clines & Loore, 1998: 229-230.

window frame.⁶⁰ In 1 Samuel 18:20 Michal is importantly described by the narrative as ‘loving’ David, raising the suggestion that she has gazed upon David enough to love him however frustratingly, she never experiences any demonstration of love from him in return.⁶¹ In 1 Samuel 19: 12 Michal then watches David escape from her window and flee, remaining powerless to bring him back to her.

This is contrasted with 2 Samuel 3:14-17 where the position of David’s gaze changes and is now upon Michal instead. David’s gaze is powerful enough to physically separate her from her new husband Paltiel and bring her to reside once more in his household. In 2 Samuel 6:16 Michal is described as hating David as she gazes upon him from her window, watching as David joyously brings the ‘ark of God’ into the city of Jerusalem, revealing to the crowds his nakedness brought about through his vigorous display of dancing. Michal gazing at the naked David is reminiscent of the future narrative of 2 Samuel 11, where David gazes upon the naked Bathsheba. Unlike Michal however, with David’s gaze comes the power to possess. Michal then goes out to confront David, and is condemned by him and the narrative for doing so.

I would like to make a point here towards my discussion on Michal in chapter one, where I speak of the masculinity of Michal’s character as demonstrated by the narrator. This does appear to uncover a flaw in me saying that the male or masculine gaze has dominant power

⁶⁰ The image of Michal at the window is one that Exum discusses in detail, particularly in terms of the socio-historic context of the image of the ‘woman at the window’ (1996:72-75). Exum in *Plotted, Shot, and Painted* (1996) draws upon the artwork of de Bray and the two biblical epic films *David and Bathsheba* and *King David*, discussing how it is their representations of Michal’s character in this artistic avenue promote the negative, sidelined, shrewish character that the biblical narrator tries to create. In discussing Michal in modern film, Exum brings a new variation to the viewer’s gaze as artwork and film allow the reader to witness Michal outside the pages of the text. Whilst doing this however, Exum makes it clear how easy it is for the negative portrayal of Michal that starts in the biblical narrative, to infiltrate and become accepted into society. See Exum, 1996: 54-79.

⁶¹ Lillian Klein (2003: 87) makes a particularly interesting point in the symbolism used to represent Michal’s relationship with David through her behaviour in 1 Samuel 19:13 where Michal places an idol of David in her bed to fool Saul’s messengers. Klein explains that: ‘the household idols that Michal places in the bed to deceive the King’s messengers may be seen as symbolic representations of her husband’s behaviour in their relationship...images of wood, stone, clay or metal, unresponsive to the love of Michal’.

over Michal's weaker female gaze, when I have previously discussed her character as demonstrating masculine characteristics. The point that I make in chapter one is that Michal appeared to occupy a space between the two gender roles of male and female; that in some way her role as female is purposely obscured in order for the narrative to be able continue with the course of the David story. Michal appeared masculine when the narrative needed to present Michal's character as unsavoury and not a 'good wife' and was then portrayed as appearing feminine through her easy manipulation under the power of the male gaze and the politics of men that surrounded her. The space that Michal's character occupies between genders allows for her to experience the weakness of being a female, therefore enabling her to feel the power of the male gaze.

The David and Bathsheba affair in 2 Sam.11 the role of Michal gazing at a naked David is reversed, as David now gazes from his rooftop watching the oblivious Bathsheba as she is naked whilst she is intimately bathing herself. Unlike Michal who witnesses David's nakedness and is powerless to possess her husband, David's gaze does have the power to possess Bathsheba. Almost instantly succeeding the Bathsheba narrative is the narrative of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, in which Amnon is similarly described as gazing at and desiring his half-sister Tamar from a distance. The gaze of Amnon in his narrative intensifies more as the prolonged agony of his desire to touch his half-sister increases. Much like his father lounging upon his couch before he sees Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11, Amnon lays down upon his bed to gaze at Tamar in 2 Samuel 13: 8.

Unlike David however, Amnon requires the help of other males that surround him, both his father and cousin Jonadab, to successfully get Tamar alone. This is interesting as the actual power of the male gaze seems to manifest itself in three different ways in this narrative: David exerts his power as King in order to command Tamar to visit Amnon;

Jonadab demonstrates his power as a cunning and devious thinker in order to devise a plan and Amnon is left then to exert *physical* power over the weaker Tamar during the rape.

In having identified the power differences between the male and female gaze, it becomes important to discuss how it is that these three women, when under the influence of the dominant male gaze are represented in the text as being powerless to stop or to control the events that happen to them. Bach (1997: 137) discusses how it is that: 'David's gaze carries an active force of action and of possession, both lacking in the female gaze' and this powerful gaze of David may also be extended to the character of Amnon. In Bach's words the 'active possession' of the male gaze conjures up quite vivid imagery as being a great force that ensnares the powerless woman, drawing them into destructive situations with such a force that they are helpless to escape.⁶²

There is enough force in the male gaze to physically move female characters from places of safety into areas of danger. The language used in the narrative to represent this is through the repetition of the same words as to David and both Amnon 'sending' and 'receiving' each of these women. After Michal lowers David from the window within 1 Samuel 19:12 as she watches David leave, she does not possess the power to physically bring David back to her. David however, has the power to physically make Michal return home to him when he 'sends' messengers to retrieve her within 2 Samuel 3:14, where she is then taken from her husband Paltiel.

⁶² Guest (2008) in her essay *Looking Lesbian at the Bathing Bathsheba* discusses how there is a dilemma raised for a lesbian feminist when looking at the bathing Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11. Guest makes the important point that as a feminist theologian, there is an expectation to resist the patriarchal dominance that comes with David's gaze as he watches the naked Bathsheba. However, 'looking lesbian' at the text of 2 Sam 11 adds a new perspective, as lesbian readers may actually *share* in the male gaze in desiring the naked Bathsheba. Guest goes on to speak of how initially it appears as though uniting with King David in desiring Bathsheba, what in fact happens is that the lesbian gaze becomes an *alternative* gaze. The lesbian gaze in its complexity disrupts and then adds new complexities to the straightforward, feminist approach of objecting to all things male. See Guest: 2008.

Again, in both the Bathsheba and the Tamar narratives there is much focus placed upon the verbs of David 'sending' Tamar to Amnon's house (2 Samuel 13:7) and both the 'sending' and 'receiving' of Bathsheba almost immediately after he first sees and desires her (2 Samuel 11:4). All three women attempt to retaliate by gazing back: Bathsheba 'sends' a message to David declaring to him that she is pregnant (2 Samuel 11:5) and Tamar challenges the gaze of Amnon directly during 2 Samuel 13:12-14 by speaking to him directly in trying to rationalise with him, but was overpowered by his physical strength.

It appears that when the narrative includes in the text the mention of these women returning the male gaze, it seems to precede significant traumatic events for these women: Michal has the audacity to confront David and is condemned for it; Bathsheba sends a message to David and as a result loses her husband and first child and Tamar attempts to reason with Amnon but still experiences a horrific rape.

5.2 Transition and Location

I shall expand upon the idea discussed above in how it is that the power of the male gaze in each of the Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar narratives is representative of a force that appears to have the strength to physically manoeuvre Michal, Tamar and Bathsheba. Under the power of the male gaze, these women are easily 'sent' and 'received' into certain situations that have nothing but a negative result on their character. The term 'location' shall be discussed as being a literal geographical place in which these characters are present and also as being representative of these women's status in the text in regards to how they are considered and treated by the narrative and other characters.

After having discussed the power of the gaze itself, the actual geographical location of the characters as they gaze at one another is a reoccurring theme. When looking at the narratives of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar it appears that dependent upon their location in the text, the safety of these women becomes more compromised and dangerous. As discussed above, the 'male gaze' represents a dominant force that has the power to physically move these women into dangerous situations. This is represented by the women leaving the safety of the 'inside' and stepping into or across the dangerous, male associated realm of the 'outside'. What I mean by the inside being the *safety* of the inside location for women is that there is a pattern of events in these three narratives in that negative events only happen to these women when their character is depicted as crossing the threshold of the inside place and steps into or through the outside space.⁶³

The locations of Michal and David within the narratives of 1 Samuel 19 and 2 Samuel 6 are depicted as being separate from one another, Michal is placed away from David who is upon the 'outside' as she herself resides upon the 'inside'. In order for Michal to gain the attention of her husband she takes it upon herself to physically step across the boundary of the household and enter into the outside domain to confront David (2 Samuel 6:20). In doing this, I argue that Michal places herself in a position of great vulnerability because other than stepping literally in to the outside, she steps metaphorically outside of her 'place' as a woman when she 'sees fit to criticise the king' (Exum, 1992: 90).⁶⁴

⁶³ Contextually in the Hebrew Bible it appears that rightful place of the woman is regarded as being 'inside', this is through the understanding that the rightful place of women is *figuratively* inside the household. In *Fragmented Women* (1993: 47) Exum discusses the figurative place of women upon the inside through the imagery of the woman (Michal in her example) at the window frame, gazing outwards towards the outside 'looking out upon the world to see what men have accomplished'. See also Exum, 1992: 90 and note 54 in Exum, 1992:171. The portrait of the woman was ideally painted as being a wife who provides her husband with many children and demonstrates herself to be a wise manager of her household and children (Bird, 1997: 57-58). Klein (2003: 97) also discusses how the female is centred around her household, her face is towards the inside and those people or things that cross into the 'outside' enter into the domain of the male.

⁶⁴ Jephthah's daughter also 'stepped out' from the safety of her household into the 'Danger' of the 'outside', and in doing so was condemned to death by the male (Judges 11:34). Jephthah's daughter emerges from the household much like Michal, in that she emerges inconveniently and unexpected to meet with the male. For this

I find it of particular importance to also mention the way that Michal's narrative in fact ends with her remaining upon the 'outside', as after David has finished speaking to her in 2 Samuel 6:22 the narrator does not make any mention of where Michal then resides only that she 'had no child until the day of her death (2 Sam.6:22)'. Michal metaphorically remains upon the 'outside', unlike Tamar whose narrative specifically states that after her rape 'Tamar remained, a desolate woman, at her brother Absalom's house (2 Samuel 13:20)'. Michal stepped into the dangerous location of the 'outside' place and here she was to remain, upon the metaphorical 'outside' for the rest of her life.⁶⁵

It is through the dominant power of the 'male gaze' that the negative experiences of these three women begin, as the male gaze brings with it the ability for action: the ability to bridge the gap between what it is to look at and desire something and what it is to physically seek to take what is desired. It is through the 'bridging of this gap' that the problems for these women are created. As the Bathsheba and Tamar narratives demonstrate so well, first the male characters within their narrative seeing and desiring them that then leads to the physical action of these men actively seeking to 'take' these women.

Both Bathsheba and Tamar were seen and desired from afar without their knowledge and what is important to mention is the location of these women when they were 'seen', and how it is that they were on placed in danger when they apparently stepped into the 'outside'. Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 is located upon her 'rooftop' (or at least somewhere in her house that was in sight of David from his own rooftop) and this inspired David to send someone to inquire about who this beautiful woman was. What we have gained from the narrative up

autonomous stepping out into the outside, both characters meet a 'death' in the narrative (Exum, 1993; 37-38). See note 21 in chapter one of this thesis that discusses other examples of women who 'step out' into the outside to their detriment.

⁶⁵ I pay particular attention to the line of 2 Sam 7:1 that occurs directly after the final mention of Michal in 2 Sam 6:22, as 2 Samuel 7:1 that states: 'now when the King was settled within his house (2 Samuel 7:1). This seems to figuratively reassert that Michal is now remains in the outside, and David is the one that re-enters into the house and continues with his life.

until now is the physical location of Bathsheba, the physical state of Bathsheba (she was naked, bathing herself) and the social status of Bathsheba as being from a politically important family (Bailey, 1990: 87).⁶⁶ What I am made aware of as a reader is that Bathsheba physically emerges from her location within or upon her own house, to enter into the palace of David.

In regards to Tamar, the fact that she is a virgin is made clear immediately in the text (2 Samuel 13:2) and although we are not aware of the specific location as to where Amnon first sees her, we are aware that they are related and therefore undoubtedly must have had previous contact. It is made clear by the narrator that David physically ‘sends’ Tamar into danger after falling for Amnon’s and Jonadab’s plan in 2 Samuel 13:7. This time it is Tamar and not Bathsheba who he has the power of physically moving into the outside space. It can be assumed that considering Tamar held the status of a valuable virgin princess she would have resided in the protected environment of the palace (Esler, 2011: 331). So Tamar emerges from the same place as Michal, steps into the outside like both Michal and Bathsheba and then like Bathsheba, steps back inside into a dangerous place.

I would like to elaborate on this point that when stepping into the ‘outside space’ Bathsheba and Tamar, unlike Michal who figuratively remains on the outside, are then described as re-entering into the ‘inside’ as represented by both the palace of King David and the house of her brother Amnon. In order to enter into these buildings it appears that first they must step into the outside which appears to act as the crossing of a ‘liminal boundary’. The crossing of this boundary represents the transgression from the safety of the inside to unsafety of the outside. Both these women re-enter into inside space that is David’s palace and

⁶⁶ ‘This is Bathsheba daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite’ (2 Sam 11:3) mentions Bathsheba’s familial connections which may point towards the political status of Bathsheba. This, it has been suggested, may have contributed to David’s interest in pursuing her. See Bailey (1990: 86-90); Kirk-Duggan (2003: 58); Dennis (1994: 147).

Amnon's house, but they now appear vulnerable having crossed this boundary of outside space. This point is further reinforced in that when these women leave David and Amnon's house, they return to the safety of their home tarnished and forever changed. Tamar is physically forced back into the outside space by Amnon to then resume her life in the home to live as a desolate, broken woman (2 Samuel 13:18). Bathsheba is sent back to her house by David, carrying with her the trauma of a sexual assault and soon after the fear of pregnancy (2 Samuel 11:4-5).

5.3 Sexual Violence

The presence of sexual violence in the narratives of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar is probably the most significant of the three themes as it has the most negative impact upon the lives of these women. Sexual violence is inflicted on these women in notably three different ways: The physical act of sexual violence and also the violence that comes from sexual disinterest; childlessness and the 'violence' that these women experience at the hands of the narrator.

In continuing with the last point of location how it may be considered that the information that the narrative gives to the reader places them in a location when reading the text of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar that could be deemed as abusive in its intrusiveness. The narrator exposes the reader to some of the most intimate moments of these women's lives and in quite an insensitive way (Exum, 1993: 174-175). As a reader I am made aware of Michal's love for David and I watch as she experiences the rejection of her husband and as she is condemned by him to remain estranged. I stand alongside David upon the rooftop gazing alongside him at Bathsheba's nakedness, I am aware of her menstruation and her sexual encounters. I am made aware of Amnon's plan to trap Tamar forced to then sit and

watch as Tamar is lured to his house and then raped. The narrative is brutal in exposing the intimate details of these women, all for the purpose of maintaining the greater narrative of 2 Samuel and ultimately serving the interests of the greater 'David story'.

The presence of physical sexual violence in the narratives of both Michal and Bathsheba is presented to the reader in two entirely different ways, in how King David perceives these women as sexually alluring bodies. What is interesting is that although Michal is the *actual* wife of David she is not portrayed in her narrative as being viewed by him with any obvious sexual desire. As discussed above in my first chapter, Michal's character demonstrates certain masculine characteristics which played their own part in Michal remaining childless. Michal through the nature of her narrative construction is denied David's lustful gaze, unlike Bathsheba who appears to be the total opposite to Michal and embodies everything feminine that Michal does not. It is noted by Phyllis Bird (1997: 31) that within Proverbs 31:29 for a woman to be a 'good wife' partly means to provide children for her husband.⁶⁷ Bathsheba fulfils this requirement, however at the same time that does not mean to be a wife is to be defined as being solely a sexual body either.

Michal in her narrative suffers a sexual abuse through her failing to be regarded sexually in anyway by her husband and as a result of this abuse she fails to have the opportunity to bear children.⁶⁸ The character of Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 may be considered to be the opposite of the character Michal in how she is regarded by David sexually. However

⁶⁷ I would like to make clear here that I realise that I am placing these women into certain patriarchal categories that may go against the liberation of these women's characters. I would like to make clear however that contextually to fulfil the role of a 'good wife' would probably have been important for these women, particularly when it comes to the ability to have children as the 'shame' that was felt at being barren was great, even considered a divine curse. See Davies (2003: 73-74); Fuchs (2000: 62-63).

⁶⁸ It is helpful to mention here an alternate feminist reading of Michal's childlessness in that perhaps she consciously *chose* to ignore or refuse the sexual advances of David, especially given his treatment of her throughout the duration of their marriage. There is no doubt that Michal possesses a certain autonomy in which this interpretation could be possible, although denied from being mentioned in the narrative. Exum describes the idea of Michal *refusing* David sexually as not being in line with the patriarchal ideology of the text and is therefore not considered an option in the narrative. See: Exum 1992:88; Sakenfeld, 2003: 82

as discussed in chapter two, Bathsheba suffers her own sexual abuse at the hands of David as she is regarded solely as a momentary sexual experience. If Bathsheba had not fallen pregnant after the sexual encounter of 2 Samuel 11: 4, it is highly doubtful that David would have regarded Bathsheba as a possible future wife.

Bathsheba and Michal's sexual abuse at the hands of David are polar opposites of one another but are both no less damaging to the woman. There is also an affinity shared by Michal and Tamar through their experiences of sexual violence. Although there are major differences in experience as Michal does not endure any physical sexual abuse and Tamar suffers the most horrific kind, at the end of their narratives they both share the same fate in residing upon the fringes of society as desolate and 'barren' women. They both remain childless and unaccepted for the rest of their lives after having been rejected by the men who instigated the violence upon them.

The 'childlessness' of Michal and Tamar and indeed the theme of 'children' throughout these three narratives is something that I regard as another shared affinity between these women. Michal and Tamar remain barren or 'desolate' (2 Samuel 6:23; 2 Sam. 13:20) and although Bathsheba conceives a child (2 Sam. 11:5), it is tragically condemned to death by Nathan who speaks on behalf of Yahweh (2 Sam. 12:14; 12:15-20). This means that at this time Bathsheba also suffers in the same way as Michal and Tamar. It seems that each woman here through the direct or indirect actions of King David, experiences what it is to suffer the loss of a child or a *potential* child.

Tamar although sharing in Michal's barrenness, in terms of experiencing sexual violence has a much greater rapport with Bathsheba. Tamar, like Bathsheba was caught in the power of the 'male gaze' and actively coerced into stepping into a situation in which she was physically raped. Although Bathsheba's narrative is ambiguous as to the matter of whether or

not it was rape, as discussed above in my chapter on Tamar it is as though the narrative of 2 Samuel 13 ‘mirrors’ the events of the Bathsheba affair in 2 Samuel 11. What is quite disturbing is that these two rape narratives are permitted to ‘mirror’ one another; it makes the events appear permissible and through the promised punishment of Yahweh in 2 Samuel 12, perhaps even theologically necessary. The rape of Tamar and Bathsheba, as I have discussed above, act as catalysts through which the narrative of 2 Samuel can continue with the discourse of 2 Samuel and the David story. These women are considered solely for their ‘beautiful’ and ‘sexualised bodies’ the thought of which drives both Amnon and David to distraction. This then ironically includes Michal within this circle of abuse, who is the actual wife of David, as discussed above experiences her sexual abuse through the lack of sexual attention she gains from her husband.

After laying out in this format the three ‘themes’ of experience that are endured by these women within their narratives, I hope that it has been demonstrated with some clarity how it is that although these women are apart in the books of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel, they are in fact united together under the banner of what it is to suffer at the hands of King David, and the actions of men.

6. Conclusion

In my introduction I stated that it would be the main focus of my thesis to evaluate the characters of Michal, Tamar and Bathsheba and the information that the narrative of 1 and 2 Samuel records about them in their texts. It was a part of my methodology to approach the texts critically from a feminist perspective in order to demonstrate how in its current form, the information that is presented to the reader about these women is by no means detailed enough. In my methodology I argued that the reason for the text muting these women's voices and experiences was due to the 'narrative agenda'. This agenda focuses primarily on the promotion of male dominance through constructing the text almost solely from the perspective of the male characters. Due to this, female characters and their experiences then become secondary to the male story, so it was important for me to penetrate these texts in order to seek out and retrieve the lost voices and experiences of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar.

I have presented this thesis in two parts: firstly I devoted a chapter to discussing each woman and their experiences individually. Secondly, a final comparison chapter highlights how it is that the individual experiences of these women actually unite them, through three central themes of 'gaze', 'location and transition' and 'sexual violence'. This demonstrates how even though these women remain separate in the text; they do in fact suffer together under the shared title of 'David's women'. This title is also an attempt to make it clear how David is a common cause for the negative experiences of these women as they appear to stem from the actions and choices that he makes in the text. However, what must be remembered is that David like Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar is a character and therefore cannot be blamed

for the way these women are represented in the text. This blame lies with the narrative representation of these women, which is ultimately the fault of the text's author.⁶⁹

It has been the main body of my argument to say that David's apathy towards his first wife Michal is brought about through her character having arguable masculine characteristics, which means that she occupies a metaphorical void between being feminine and masculine. These masculine characteristics are then juxtaposed in the Bathsheba narrative of 2 Samuel 11 where Bathsheba is perceived by David as being the ultimate female sexual body that he had to immediately possess. David uses Michal and her political influence to establish his position of power and then abuses that power in the taking of Bathsheba's body. These two women do however share in the experience of David having no intention of rekindling any romance with either of them once he was finished with them, if it was not for Bathsheba's resulting pregnancy.⁷⁰

While Michal is depicted as taking it upon herself to step outside of the house in 2 Samuel 6: 20 to confront David, both Bathsheba and Tamar are described as 'coming' into the houses of both David and Amnon. This point was raised briefly in my Bathsheba chapter as to the consensual act of Bathsheba and Tamar both 'coming' to the houses of David and Amnon.⁷¹ The consensual 'coming' of these women, I argue in my comparative chapter, was due to them being totally powerless to refuse the authority that comes with the male that coerces and 'sends' them into danger. It became a part of my argument to then suggest how it appears the symbolic stepping across the boundary that separates the 'inside' from the 'outside' space that alters the safety of these women; as it appears that their positions of

⁶⁹ This refers to a point that was made on page nine and Alice Bach's accusing the text's narrator as being the 'henchman' of the text's author (1997: 16).

⁷⁰ Mieke Bal, 1987: 31

⁷¹ This point was mentioned briefly in chapter three, note 35, when discussing the idea that Bathsheba may have consensually liaised with David. Pamela Tamarkin Reis (1998) discusses in detail in *Cupidity and Stupidity* an alternate interpretation that may be gained from Bathsheba and Tamar appearing to consensually attend the company of both David and Bathsheba.

safety in the text changes as soon as they are described as stepping into or through the 'outside' space.

The characters of Bathsheba and Tamar share an affinity through their experiences of sexual abuse. In Bathsheba's text however there is some obscurity through the omission of details as to whether or not David actually raped her, whereas the narrative of Tamar makes it clear from almost the very start that she was raped by Amnon. It may be argued that this clarity in Tamar's narrative means that Tamar receives perhaps a more sympathetic narrative than Michal and Bathsheba, as both her character's experiences and her voice are certainly given much more attention in the text.⁷² It is still important to remember however that, as discussed in chapter four, although perhaps sympathetic the narrator still uses the rape of Tamar as a catalyst through which the continuation of the story of 2 Samuel may be explained.

This brings me on to my argument that the narrative uses Michal, Bathsheba's and Tamar in order to help shape the direction of the text. Michal's symbolic narrative 'death' in 2 Samuel 6:23 brings a final end to the house of Saul, whilst Bathsheba and Tamar's experiences of sexual abuse both act as catalysts that explain the greater theological context of the text: King David finds himself falling out of favour with Yahweh after the Bathsheba affair of (2 Samuel 12: 7-14) and then the rape of Tamar allows for Yahweh's punishment for David's his immorality to be realised. Therefore, the suffering of these women becomes 'necessary' in order for the narrative thread of 1 and 2 Samuel to remain continuous.

It is my belief that the argument I wanted to achieve from my methodology has been well executed, in particularly in highlighting how Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar's characters are used in continuing the greater narrative of King David. However I do also believe that

⁷² Phyllis Tribble discusses the sympathetic narrative of the Tamar text in *Text of Terror* 1984: 46- 57.

there is some room for improvement in terms of the successful execution of uncovering the lost *voices* of these women. Whilst I believe that I have successfully uncovered the concealed *experiences* of Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar and then successfully united them through their shared experiences, their voice regarding their experiences still remain somewhat concealed in the text. I wanted to engage with a feminist midrashic technique in order to develop these women's characters into dimensional beings, which I believe I have done to some extent through me considering the texts of 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel solely from the perspective of the woman. However, having read some feminist midrashic work for this thesis, I believe that there is a greater opportunity for more first person, midrashic accounts from these women.

I believe that there is a great deal of potential in this topic that may be expanded on in greater depth, perhaps even at PhD level and I would like to conclude with mentioning how it is that whilst carrying out my research upon Michal, Bathsheba and Tamar I have come to believe that they are each three inspirational women. These women are inspirational in the sense that they each silently endure significantly damaging experiences and still remain strong and ever present.

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