JUDGES 19–21 AND RUTH: CANON AS A VOICE OF ANSWERABILITY

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I gratefully dedicate this dissertation to my dad, Alan Warren Kenny, who

taught me how to listen and wade deeply in the mysterious depths of silence.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation was birthed out of a desire to investigate the possibility of potential canonical voices of answerability (responsibility) for the voiceless women of Judges 19–21. Bakhtin's dialogism became the heuristic in which to pursue this investigation. Bakhtin's use in Biblical Studies has influenced this project in three main areas: (1) the polyphonic nature of canon, (2) the quest for marginalized voices, and (3) genre considerations of Judges 19–21 and the book of *Ruth*. This study will also, in thinking with Brevard Childs, takes a canonical approach to the texts in polyphonic dialogue.

Previous scholarship has hinted at the connection for Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* (as set in dialogue), but there has yet been a study to articulate just how these two texts are set in dialogue. This study has sought a way forward to understand the canonical place of dialogue for Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*. In this study, the primary placement of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* in dialogue was established for three primary reasons: (1) its placement in the Septuagint and Vulgate immediately after Judges, (2) the literary connection in Ruth 1:1—i.e., in "The days the judges were judging," an (3) The juxtaposition of feminine silence (Judges 19–21) with feminine dialogue (*Ruth*).

The outcome of this research has illustrated that there are canonical intertextual voices for the voiceless women in Judges 19–21. The intrinsic genre of משל within the Hebrew Bible proved to be a constructive pursuit in identifying the form and function of these two texts, illustrating that genre provides another canonical voice of answerability. Finally, through a close reading of intertextual utterances (significant words and idioms), Ruth as a text and as a woman embodies a voice of response and responsibility to the silenced and abused women in Judges 19–21.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Judges 19–21 and Ruth in Canonical Dialogue

Artistic representations often utilize aspects of negative and positive space to communicate meaning to their viewer(s). Absence, in the form of silence, is intentional in the literature of the Hebrew Bible, as an *expression* of negative space. Silence takes shape in this negative space, within these intentional gaps. In particular, texts of gendered violence with voiceless victims are disturbing and create moral and emotional dissonance for readers who understand these texts as sacred scriptures. Silence, according to Bakhtin, contributes another voice in the form of an utterance. For Bakhtin, an utterance is the primary unit of speech. One aspect of this fundamental unit is that it is directed to another with an expectation of a response.

This dissertation was birthed out of a desire to understand how conflicting voices in the Hebrew Bible, including the utterance of silence, are in dialogue. With a closer investigation of these texts, voices from the margins will be drawn into an intertextual and canonical conversation.

Judges 19–21 present three of the most difficult chapters to understand due to the literary silencing of victims and the lack of ethical response. This silence and gaps within Judges 19–21—this negative space—silences the violated women. In this thesis, I set Judges 19–21 in dialogue with the book of Ruth in the quest for an ethical response. *Ruth*[1] becomes a conversation partner due to the interplay of three initial reasons: (1) its placement in the

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[1] In order to distinguish clearly between the book of Ruth and the character of Ruth, I will italicize 'Ruth' when referring to the book.

Septuagint and Vulgate immediately after Judges, (2) the literary connection in *Ruth* 1:1, "The days the judges were judging," and (3) The juxtaposition of feminine silence (Judges 19–21) with feminine dialogue (*Ruth*). Several scholars have hinted at the idea that Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue, but there has yet been a detailed study of how they are set in dialogue.

This dissertation provides a pathway through interdisciplinary methods, using key concepts from Bakhtin combined with a canonical approach, to provide a comparative case study of how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue. Although Bakhtin did not specifically address gendered language dynamics nor the biblical canon within his work, Bakhtin's literary and philosophical theories contributes a valuable way forward by de-centering authoritative voices. Three areas of primary focus—Bakhtin's theories, gender, and canon—interweave three critical components that invite marginalized voices into this crucial inquiry of how diverse voices within the canon contribute to an ethical voice of protest and resistance.

The collection of texts within a canon enables the reader to reflect on the intentionality of certain texts in conversation. The canon contributes to the shaping and identity of countless worshipping communities. Even so, the violent texts within their sacred scriptures are often problematic, and even violate the message of peace, restoration, and reconciliation that most communities seek to adopt and promote.[2]

This study illustrates how the story of *Ruth* offers an alternative voice within the polyphonic nature of the canon, which enlightens readers to the intentional gaps in the biblical story. I argue that the story of *Ruth* can be read as a voice of canonical ethical response, a voice of canonical answerability (responsibility). This alternative voice is critical within a canon of

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[2] For a helpful survey attuned to the Christian theological perspectives and divine violence, see Eric Seibert "Recent Research on Divine Violence in the Old Testament (With Special Attention to Christian Theological Perspectives), *Currents in Biblical Research* 15, no. 1 (October 2016): 8–40.

texts that often displays dramatic gendered violence. *Ruth*, in the canons, subverts and creates a path forward through intentional intertextuality. *Ruth* as a story is unfinalizable, remaining open within the story of Israel, illustrating through one text, an alternative voice of non-violence.[3]

These insights will be highlighted through a close reading and comparative analysis of intertextual and lexical connections, specifically revealed through idioms, contrasting themes of חרם ("ban") and חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"), silence and speech, abuse and potential for abuse, gendered violence and feminine agency. The two texts within this case–study (Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*) will be individually investigated and then analyzed together in the final chapter (chapter 10). I offer a fresh perspective for the genre designation of Judges 19–21 (chapter 3), which presents a persuasive case for Judges 19-21 to be considered a dialogic משל ("proverb/parable").

I will argue for the function of *Ruth* as a משל (chapter 6). Contrary to Block's assertion, which involves a limited definition of משל— explicitly stating that Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* cannot be designated as a משל— my detailed proposal will suggest a משל genre identification for Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.[4] Genre itself contributes a voice within the multiplicity of voices within the canon, and Bakhtin's attentiveness to the historical and social aspects inherent within genre broaden readers understanding of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth,* and the books' relationship within the canon.

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[3] This proposal of Ruth as a voice of non–violence is not to suggest that the story of Ruth is devoid of violence. Many scholars have noted the violence apparent within the story of Ruth. When juxtaposed to Judges 19–21, the Ruth story offers an alternative pathway forward to a similar crisis in Judges: lack of progeny.

[4] Daniel I. Block, "Ruth 1: Book Of" in Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns, eds. *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008), 677. See also *Judges, Ruth: Am Exegetical and Theological Exposition of the Holy Scriptures* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 602.

Gendered violence within relationships haunts the final three chapters of Judges. The response to the dark deeds of rape, kidnapping, slaughter, and mutilation within the text is the meager refrain: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 19:1; 21:25). Are there any voices to answer for those persons silenced and abused other than this apology for a monarchy?[5] Intertextual utterances provide voices from the margins. Scholars note that the texts of Judges 19–21 and the book of *Ruth* are "connected" and in "dialogue" with one another.[6] The scandalous, abrupt, and violent ending to the book of Judges leaves the reader in a place of despair.

Alternatively, the book of *Ruth* has been noted to bring the reader "welcome relief."[7] Many have challenged this idyllic notion, taking note of the darker contours within the story of *Ruth*.[8] Yet, close readings reveal the complexity within the *Ruth* story, set within a violent period in Israel's past. Whatever similarities emerge, the reader cannot escape the obvious oddity that, in Judges 19–21, every woman has been silenced. Conversely, the book of *Ruth* contains of a significant proportion of dialogue: fifty-five verses out of eighty-five, with a large portion of feminine direct speech.

By utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism as a heuristic to facilitate this conversation, this research will seek to uncover intertextual voices within these two stories, along with the broad

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[5] Kirsten Nielsen illustrates this apologetic approach when she writes that "Chapters 19–21 depict the impotence of women, whereas Ruth tells of how even a foreign woman such as the Moabitess Ruth can be chosen by Yahweh to save the family of David. Through this foreigner the new institution of monarchy is created in Israel." See Nielsen, *OTL Library*: *Ruth* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 40.

[6] Nielsen illustrates that the canonical placement of Ruth in the LXX forms "a dialogue with the last chapters of Judges." Tod Linafelt shows how Ruth provides a point of "connection" between Judges and Samuel. See Nielsen, *Ruth,* 40, and Tod Linafelt, *Berit Olam: Ruth* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1999), xx.

[7] Daniel Block, *Judges, Ruth* (Nashville, TN: B & H, 1999), 588.

[8] David Shepherd has shown how gendered violence is evident in Ruth 2 with the vulnerability of the women in the fields. Permission from private communication. David J. Shepherd, *Ruth in the Days of Judges: Women, Foreignness and Violence* (Forthcoming in Biblical Interpretation, 2018). See also *A Feminist Companion to Judges,* Athayla Brenner, ed. (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

constellation of texts around them. My hope is that this research provides a path forward in analyzing texts in dialogue, listening creatively and constructively to the plurality of voices that emerge within a careful intertextual reading.

The goal is not a finalized reading or answer; rather, I seek to let the utterances within the text–the disharmonic subversive voices of silence–emerge as voices of canonical answerability. The main purpose of this project is to place Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* within a dialogue so as to discern and differentiate between the subversive canonical voices within the negative space of the silent and mutilated women of Judges 19–21.

1.1 Bakhtin and Genre

The study of genre within the long history of biblical studies has previously been a restrictive enterprise, attempting to impose a rigid set of standards to understand the structure of texts. Bakhtin offers a more expansive understanding of genre. For Bakhtin, genre embodies the form and function of the past. The social memories take into account the structure of a text but also employ the present, creatively embodying memory and future trajectory.

Genre is itself a voice, an utterance in the dialogue. Each utterance is unique and never again repeated in its chronotope (time-space). Genre holds the tension of "creative memory," while moving forward into "the process of literary development."[9] The flexible, elastic aspect of genre can uniquely contain the stable (yet always creative) aspects of genres in their social setting.

Genre is a significant key component in understanding Judges 19–21 and the story of *Ruth*. Each text carries memory and trajectory separately. Intertextually, these texts (Judges 19–

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[9] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, ed. and trans., Caryl Emerson (Minneapolis, MN: University of Michigan, 1984), 106.

21 and *Ruth*) explore a path forward within the trajectory of Israel. Genre considerations reveal that the story of *Ruth* provides one voice of canonical response to the gendered violence of Judges 19–21.

Martin Buss writes, "The theoretical statements of the Bakhtin circle can be considered partially superior to Gunkel's."[10] Gunkel did not explore as readily the "intrinsic connection" by which speech plays a role in the bearing of a genre rather than "purely external" aspects of a situation or setting.[11] Buss hypothesizes that there was most likely an exchange between the Bakhtin circle and Gunkel because of some of the similarities with biblical form criticism, in particular with Gunkel's "threefold structure of genres," which may have been readily available to the Bakhtin circle.[12]

This threefold pattern (published between 1924–1925) refers to the forms of literature with language which interweave: "(1) Thoughts and moods, (2) linguistic forms (sounds or written symbols), (3) a normal connection with life."[13] The overlap of analyses, noted by Buss, included the attention to social setting (similar to Gunkel's *Sitz im Leben*). Along with attention to the life settings, attention by Bakhtin and the others in the circle encompassed a fuller attention to speech and the "life situation is then not simply an objective condition lying outside language but an interpretive structure, which is an aspect of discourse."[14]

The Hebrew canon provides an interesting place to discover this discourse, and to find voices of answerability that provide other points of interpretive discourse between texts. As

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[10] Notable members of the Bakhtin circle include M.I. Kagan, L.V. Pumpianskii, V.M. Iudina, V.N. Voloshinov, and P.N. Medvedev. See also Martin J. Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism: A Relational Approach* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2010), 163.

[11] Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism*, 163.

[12] Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism*, 162.

[13] See Buss for the analysis of the possible connections with Gunkel and the Bakhtin circle via M.I. Kagan (friend of Bakhtin) and the circle's interest in theology. Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism,* 162; and Buss, *Biblical Form Criticism in Its Context* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 15.

[14] Buss, *The Changing Shape of Form Criticism*, 158.

Buss's treatment illustrates, genre embodies not only form but the social aspects of discourse. What is pertinent to this study is to investigate the form and function of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.

Interpreters have put forth multiple theories but have yet to offer a satisfactory genre identification with these two texts. This study will offer an intrinsic genre signifier for both these texts, highlighted in the genre conventions of the משל. Judges 19–21 will be identified in *form* and *function* as a משל, a more elastic category in the Hebrew Bible.[15] Building upon this study in Judges, and in conversation with the genre approaches of Collins and Newsom, *Ruth* will be identified in *function* as a משל. [16]

1.2 Canon and Answerability

How does canon provide a response of ethical answerability? In many ways, canon provides an important selection of materials for ancient and modern communities to begin this inquiry. Defining what is meant by canon, a canonical approach, and an early canon consciousness will initiate this discussion. In order to understand the relationship between the texts within the canon, it is necessary to demarcate the idea of intertextuality. Three of Bakhtin's terms will be helpful to this reading: polyphony, heteroglossia, and the utterance. Polyphony describes the multiple voices one finds within literature, a "plurality of independent and unmerged voices", which are "not merged" with the author or other characters and remain distinct and independent.[17]

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[15] Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2007); Carleen R. Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogic Theology of the Book of Lamentations* (Semeia Studies, 58) (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 2007)*,* 59; Newsom, *Job,* 82.

[16] This study will propose a wider sense of the משל genre (without the need for narrator pleas), to propose that Ruth's dialogic nature in the canon can be classified as a משל. In my purview, the משל designation can withhold the tension of historiography and dialogic polemic which other genres considerations seem to dichotomize. See Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 602.

[17] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 6.

The polyphonic nature of canon will take into account each canonical voice/text of

Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*, and this will be expanded on in chapter 2 (along with closer attention to

heteroglossia and utterance). With a careful intertextual reading of the voices/texts of Judges 19–

21 and *Ruth,* each text will reveal ideology and perspectives of extralinguistic features that

Bakhtin describes as heteroglossia. Heteroglossia ("other tongues") became a term that Bakhtin

later introduced to further define the "extralinguistic feature of all languages, features such as

ideology, assessment, and perspective."[18] A close intertextual reading will pay attention to the

polyphonic nature of these texts, along with their social heteroglossia, which encompasses the

ideas embedded within what is presented—each voice is full of ideology, gender, ethnic

diversities, historical, and social conventions. This highlights the interconnectedness of how

Bakhtin's philosophy of language reveals by what means words contribute to meaning as they

"bounce, ricochet, and rebound in utterance, transmission and reception."[19]

The utterance is Bakhtin's fundamental unit of discourse and encompasses the verbal and

non–verbal in literature. Intonation within the utterance, specifically within the space of silence

and abuse within a text, allows for an intertextual reading that pays attention to what is

communicated within the silence. Closely investigating the utterance will allow a sympathetic

and productive reading of its silence and gendered violence. The silence within these violent

texts is pregnant with response. There are voices/texts within the canon that speak for the

violated women. A non–response to Judges 19–21 within the canon is ethically immoral and re-

traumatizes the reader.

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[18] Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical*, 2.

[19] Roland Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical,* 3. Barbara Green provides a helpful example of heteroglossia with the rhetoric of Saul in 1 Samuel 18:24–25, concerning the report of the servants and the bride-price of a hundred Philistine foreskins. Green writes that Saul's words are quoted in the third person, and she carefully teases out multiple options within this very intense section. See Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2003)*,* 310.

A modern–day example could reveal the importance of voices to speak for the dead. After the Rwandan genocide twenty–five years ago, it has proven critical to re–tell the stories of trauma in order to move forward towards healing. Those slaughtered and silenced need other voices of responsibility to share their stories.

How is this possible in the Hebrew Bible, when one encounters silenced victims of violence, as evidenced in Judges 19–21? *Ruth* provides an intertextual voice for the violated women. In this thesis, I contend that the story of *Ruth* is more than just a change of scenery or "welcome relief" within the days that the Judges were judging.[20] *Ruth* is an intertextual voice of protest in the canon, a voice of answerability.

Finally, to demonstrate the concept that texts within the canon contain ethical responses, Bakhtin's concept of answerability will be elucidated. An example pervasive within the Hebrew Bible, which calls out for the people of Israel to be attentive to their ethical responsibility, their answerability, is witnessed within the indictments by YHWH where Israel has failed to respond to the needs of the triad the orphan, the widow, and the foreigner. Judges 19–21 not only demonstrates a refusal to take care of the other: the final chapters present the people of Israel making widows by slaughtering families. Chapter 10 will be the summation of how *Ruth*, a story that begins with widows as the main characters, reveals a response of answerability to Judges 19–21 within the canon.

The term, *canon,* in its original Greek means "straight rod" or "ruler." Although this was a late term imposed on the collection of Hebrew Bible, it has its origin in Christianity with Church Fathers in the fourth century. The sense of an authoritative collection of writings was not new for ancient communities. Rabbis referred to the collection of Hebrew texts as "sacred

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[20] Block, *Ruth*, 588.

writings." Although the term, canon, came later, the idea was present from the early Jewish communities. These texts held significant authority for the faith communities that held them as sacred literature.

The canonical nature of the Hebrew Bible enables potential voices to emerge. Thiselton summarizes Bakhtin's contribution in contradistinction to others, such as Gundry, who views multiple voices as contradictions. Polyphony in Bakhtin's theory can be a fruitful lens when applied to canon for several reasons. Bakhtin's emphasis on the *other* allows multiple voices to exist together within a "complex framework" and "may lead in a coherent direction, using, rather than suppressing, the voice of 'the other.'"[21] Thiselton writes:

> Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) draws on philosophy, literary theory, theories of communicative action, aesthetics, and even post-Einsteinian physics to formulate an understanding of communicative action through multiple voices that is more fruitful for discerning how diversity within the canon nevertheless leaves ample room for legitimate theological construction, albeit of an 'open' and ongoing kind . . . [l]ike Hans-Georg Gadamer, he traces *dialectic* discourse to Socrates and the early *Dialogues of Plato.* Like Gadamer and Ricoeur he stresses the vital role of *'the other'* and *alterity* for the processes of creative textual communication. This derives in part from the concept of *sobernost*, 'togetherness', in the Russian Orthodox Church. He rejects abstract literary formalism, urging that communication is performed *as an act within a concrete situational context.*[22]

Although Bakhtin did not deal with the biblical canon within his writings, his approach can provide a productive literary/philosophical framework for the analysis of multiple voices within the canon. I will develop this a step further with the text of *Ruth*, applying Bakhtin's ideas to *Ruth's* placement within different canons. This additional level creates a richer theological discourse around the question of canon. This richer discourse reveals how *Ruth* becomes a voice of answerability, contributing a unique perspective depending on the canon list that *Ruth* is

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[21] Anthony Thiselton, "Canon, Community and Theological Construction," in *Canon and Biblical Interpretation*, Vol. 7 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 24–25.
[22] Thiselton, "Canon, Community, and Theological Construction," 25.

placed. I will also focus, following Charles Altieri on the "*normative* and *imaginative* aspect of canon with its ability to 'generate life.'"[23]

According to Altieri, canons form and endure not by presenting the truisms of their current day, but by compelling readers to reach *beyond* them."[24][25] [conflate these two footnotes]. This reach is open to potential futures within the life of Israel. Rather than canon functioning as a lifeless delimitative bookend to the stories of a past people, it is a collection of texts that provide "relative stability," and also open up "the possibilities of recreation."[26]

Answerability is the literary term introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin that encompasses the ethical responses within dialogue. It weaves together the accountability and opportunity that an individual has within a unique moment in time.[27] The Russian word for "answerability" could also be translated as "responsibility." Vadim Liapunov explains that in his translations of Bakhtin's work, he desires to "foreground the root sense of the term-answering; that point to bring out the 'responsibility'" involves the performance of an "existential dialogue."[28] Answerability contributes to the ethics and aesthetics of accountability.[29] The voices that I am searching for on the margins are voices of answerability, voices of responsibility, and voices of liability.[30] To make a way forward to discover where voices of answerability can be found, a close intertextual reading will liberate marginalized voices within the canon.

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[23] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 107.
[24] Stephen B. Chapman, *The Law and Prophets: A Study in Old Testament Canon Formation* (Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 106–107.
[25] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 107.
[26] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 109.
[27] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, eds., and Vadim Liapunov, tr., (Slavic Series 9) (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1990), 1.
[28] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 226.
[29] Aesthetics is not so much describing beauty in Bakhtin's work but "has to do with the mysterious concepts of 'isolation,' and 'outsideness,' and 'consummation.'" Also, "This shaping or finishing off, this *consummation,* is then treated as an act of authorship." See Michael Holquist's Introduction in Bakhtin's, *Art and Answerability*, xxv.
[30] Bakhtin writes that mutual answerability also involves "mutual liability to blame."

The Hebrew Bible contains many intentional intertextual references. Several scholars have argued that the canon demonstrates scripture consciousness: that is, an awareness of the national and political stories that would have contributed to the shaping of the canon.[31] Childs contends that scripture consciousness and canon consciousness came relatively late. Barr, in contrast, acknowledges that there was some level of scripture consciousness evidenced in Deuteronomy. Barr only deems "explicit references" as substantial confirmation of scripture consciousness, while "mere glosses" do not qualify.[32] Iain Provan humorously points out the fuzzy descriptor of "mere gloss" when he writes, "I confess that I no longer know what a 'mere' gloss is."[33]

Richard Hays's distinction of an echo and an allusion within intertextuality may prove helpful at this point. An echo is described as a subtle intertextual connection while an allusion is an "obvious intertextual reference."[34] Canon consciousness as evidenced in intertextuality reveals not only the polyphonic nature of canon but also the heteroglossic nature as well. Julia Kristeva noted this interplay of text, author, and reader in Bakhtin's writings, which correlates to canon formation, and open to transformation. Bakhtin's sense of intertextuality is more open-ended and unfinalizable. It is rooted in time and place but open as part of a process. "Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and

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[31] Provan makes this point in reference to Barr's understanding of the nature of Scripture Conscious.

[32] James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon, 1983).

[33] Parallels with Deuteronomy 2 Kings can be evidenced in an example of instructions for Israel's kings. See 2 Kings 23:1–3; 2 Chronicles 34:31 and Deuteronomy 17:18–20; 31:9–13. For one example of an explicit intertextual reference, see 2 Kings 18:17–20:19 and Isaiah 36:1-38:8. Iain Provan, "Canons to the Left of Him: Brevard Childs, His Critics, and the Future of Old Testament Theology," *Against the Grain: Selected Essays* (Vancouver, BC, Canada: Regent College, 2015), 116.

[34] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1989), 29.

into which he inserts himself by rewriting them."[35] Intertextual lexical connections illustrate the polyphonic voices within the canon.

An early scripture-consciousness can be attested to with the high degree on intertextuality within the canon, contributing to an early canon consciousness. This directly influences the nature of how one reads the simple and complex intertextuality of the Hebrew Bible. Provan writes:

> It is not a trivial or marginal matter, this reality of cross-referencing. It is, rather, a central matter. It is, for example, an intrinsic feature of the nature of our Old Testament narrative texts that have come into their present form in relationship with each other and with Torah and prophetic texts, the very form in which they are written inviting reference time and time again to these other scriptural texts.[36]

With this being noted, this study also sustains the argument that (along with the notion of an early scripture consciousness) this contributes to the proposal that there was also the possibility of an early canon consciousness. Stories passed down orally were chosen for their importance for identity and memory. Some had priority over others, reflecting the religious and national identity of the people of Israel. Without a national identity tied to land, stories of identity and memory are what keep a nomadic people rooted and unified.

Contrary to the caricature of canon oppressive and limited, the canonical formation process involved a high degree of literary artistry and intentionality. As a more standard exponent of canon puts it "a canonical reading involves hosting a dialogue."[37] A canonical reading informed by the work of Bakhtin enables me to make the 'dialogic' component of canon more precise and explicit.

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[35] Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1966), *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art,* ed L.S. Roudiez, ed. and T. Gora, A. Jardine, and L.S. Roudiez, trs. (New York, NY: Columbia University, 1980), 65.

[36] Provan, "Canons to the Left of Him," 116.

[37] William P. Brown, *A Handbook to Old Testament Exegesis* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 2017), 190.

Following the work of Stephen Chapman, I argue that *Ruth* can be considered an authoritative voice within the canon, in particular as a woman's response and answer to the negative space of the silence in Judges 19–21. As Chapman asks, "Are the Writings to be interpreted as a commentary on, and an application of, a 'more authoritative' Law and Prophets?"[38] With *Ruth's* early and almost undisputed acceptance in the canons, we can imagine the voice of *Ruth* speaking with the Law and Prophets in a non-hierarchical field.

A Bakhtinian-canonical methodological approach seeks to reposition voices within the canon by pursuing an ethical response to the gendered violence in Judges 19–21. By utilizing a canonical approach, it provides limits to the texts that I will be dealing with in the intertextual conversation. One of the important tasks in this particular approach will be to also consider the different placement of the text of *Ruth* within diverse canons. Placement within the different canon lists —within the *Ketuvim* in the MT, after Judges in the LXX and Vulgate, and even before Psalms listed on some Qumran scroll fragments— reveals the distinctive interpretive function of *Ruth* within the canons that strengthen and extend the interpretive possibilities.

The alternative voices in the canon can provide an ethical response to the horror in the particular biblical texts which utilize violent gendered images. This study aims to highlight the alternative voices of answerability that chart a new creative vision of the people of Israel, as they are *becoming* a community together*,* within these canonical stories.

 A secondary aim of this investigation points out that within this small body of literature, there are spiritual communities that seek to maintain the importance of these texts and value them as sacred scripture. This aim provides a way to interpret difficult and violent texts. Rather

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[38] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 289.

than a quick dismissal, it envisions the possibility of dialogue within the canon that may provide an approach for communities to offer voices of response to the gendered violence.

There is value in challenging the difficult, violent, and abusive texts within the Hebrew Bible. This approach provides a constructive pathway for groups that value the sacredness of the texts, and desire to challenge difficult stories with close and creative intertextual re–readings within the canons. This pathway also enables the canon to become one of the voices of answerability.

1.3 Reading Silence

In the dialogue of silence within a narrative, there is potential for dialogical contact to create meaning for the reader. This silent negative space is evident in the gaps and ambiguity.[39] The text artisans, text, characters, and reader all come into the interplay of negative space (gaps, ambiguity, silence) and positive space (dialogue, narration, activity).[40] In order to further highlight this dialogue, the genre of biblical texts will be addressed in order to expose the inherent dialogical nature of the biblical canon.[41]

Dialogic encompasses Bakhtin's concepts that focus on interaction and the plurality of voices. Dialogic is not to be confused with dialectic, which can privy one voice and lead to finalization. Bakhtin's philosophy of language resists this closure and examines not only the

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[39] Tod Linafelt writes that the "ambiguity" is intentional in the text and, in particular, in the threshing floor scene in Ruth. See Linafelt, *Berit Olam: Ruth*, 55.

[40] Karel Van Der Toorn employs the designation, "text artisans," and points out that the work of the scribes is likened to the work of "artisans," rather than "artists." Creating original documents was not the aim of these scribes. These "co-productions" focused on "skill" and "technical mastery," and the focus of the message of the texts is the communal disposition. Modern quests for the author prove dissatisfying until one realizes that there was a scribal community behind these documents. See Karel Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, England: Harvard University, 2009), 5.

[41] A Bakhtinian model provides a productive method to hear the "plurality of voices" within the canon. See Anthony Thiselton, "Canon, Community and Theological Construction," 25.

words but also (and not limited to) intonation, anticipation of response, even genres imbedded within the language. A close examination of both Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* within their own unique settings will lead to their reintroduction for the purpose of canonical dialogue. This canonical dialogue will encompass a dialogue of answerability.

Answerability is the literary term introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin that encompasses the ethical responses within dialogue. It interplays the idea of accountability and opportunity that an individual has within a unique moment in time.[42] Receiving scant attention, the canonical dialogue between Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* is often briefly touched on by scholars and yet seldom further explored. What is missing is a detailed investigation of how these texts are actually in dialogue. The gaps and silence in the text of Judges 19–21—the negative space—requires careful consideration because of its alarming and violent nature. *Ruth* provides a voice of response, a voice of canonical answerability.

This interplay between both negative and positive space in dialogue became physically tangible to me while stumbling upon an outdoor piece of artwork. The sculptor's re-interpretation of an art piece previously created by another artist became a dialogue of interpretation for the new artist. Enlisting the outdoor elements to reflect aspects of negative space, the sculpture, named, *Apollo* (1993)[43] by Albert Paley (Figure 1), is a "response to a ceramic mural of the same name by the French master Henri Matisse."[44] These works of art in dialogue represent a conversation between two distinct pieces of art in different chronotopes

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[42] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays by M.M. Bakhtin*, Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, eds., and Vadim Liapunov, tr., University of Texas Press Slavic Series 9 (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1990), 1.

[43] Matisse's *Apollo* (1953) is currently located in the Toledo Museum of Art. Paley's *Apollo* (1996) is created from weathering stainless steel.

[44] This description is found on the plaque in front of the sculpture in Depot Park, Sonoma, California.

(time-space). The description on the placard of the sculpture captures the conversation of the

play of negative and positive space:

> The sculpture translates the two-dimensional graphic imagery of Matisse's leaf-inspired
> shapes into three-dimensional forms. Paley was particularly attracted to the play of
> positive and negative space, and here in Depot Park the sculpture leads our eyes to take in
> not only the branches of the surrounding trees, but the shapes of the sky between them.[45]

Figure 1: Apollo (1993) by Robert Paley. This piece was originally created for the "Art to Art" at the Toledo Museum of Art. It was a response piece to Henri Matisse's Apollo (1953). Paley's Apollo (above) was part of the public art installations series in Deppt Park, Sonoma, CA from July 1–October 1, 2017.

The original ceramic mural by Matisse (Figure 2) reveals similar patterns and contours,

which the above interpretation has expanded in order to be placed in the outdoor elements.

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[45] This quote was taken from the description on a placard in Depot Park in Sonoma, California. The piece is no longer on display in this location.

Figure 2: Apollo (1953) by Henri Matisse (French, 1869–1954). Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio.

Negative and positive space at play captures the dialogic image of art. Words and life, ambiguity and clarity, past and future—all meet for a moment to become something new in the present. As highlighted earlier, negative space in the biblical text are the gaps, the ambiguity, and the strange images that appear out of sync with other parts of the narrative. The canon echoes within both the negative and positive spaces, capturing an artistic dialogue within the intentional gaps in the literature. Similar to the above pieces of art (Paley and Matisse), Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* represent a dialogic image of literary art.

Ruth echoes into the negative silent space of Judges 19–21. These women in Judges 19–21 are portrayed as "unspeaking objects, unhearing and unanswering," through word-violence. Bakhtin illustrates the oppressive nature of "word-violence," which corresponds to the literary, symbolic, and violent use of women and their bodies in Judges 19–21. Bakhtin describes word-violence:

> Word-violence presupposes an absent and unspeaking object, unhearing
> and unanswering; it doesn't address the object and doesn't demand its consent;
> it exists in absentia. The content of a word about an object never coincides
> with the object's content for itself. The word gives the object a definition,
> with which the object can never and out of principle, agree from within.
> This word-violence (and the lie) aligns with a thousand personal motives in
> the creator, which cloud its purity—thirst for success, influence, recognition
> (not of the word, but of the creator), with the aspiration to become a force
> that oppresses and consumes.[46]

Uncovering intertextual voices within the canon unearths utterances that speak into the negative space of silence, such as the literary word-violence within Judges 19–21. The canon provides voices of answerability. Bakhtin writes that this word-violence, "presupposes an absent

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[46] Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Dark and Radiant Bakhtin: Wartime Notes," Irina Denischenko and Alexander Spektor, trs., *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 2 (2017): 206.

and unspeaking object." *Ruth* becomes a powerful intertextual voice of answerability. The story of *Ruth* refuses to allow the abused women of Judges 19–21 to be buried in literary silence. *Ruth* reveals how the functional aspect of genre contributes to the polyphonic (multi-voiced) and imaginative nature of canon.

The next section will introduce Mikhail M. Bakhtin and then expound on the key terms used in this thesis: answerability, polyphonic, monologic, double-voiced discourse, loophole, utterance, chronotope, heteroglossia, grotesque realism, and threshold. I will then consider the use of Bakhtin by biblical scholars and outline their influence on the present study.

1.4 A Brief Biography of Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin

Mikhail Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895–1975) was born in Orel, Russia, November 16, 1895, into a family of untitled nobility. He was one of five children, with one brother and three sisters.[47] He and his older brother, Nikolai, were very close. In fact, Clark and Holquist have titled the chapter on their relationship, *The Corsican Twins.* Besides their love of European culture, classics, and philosophy from an early age, Nikolai was in fact Bakhtin's most significant "other."[48] They were vastly different in personality. Bakhtin was "even-tempered, sanguine, reserved, and socially unassuming" while Nikolai was "outgoing, impulsive, flamboyant, and moody."[49]

Throughout his years, this relationship was deeply important for Bakhtin, even though he and his brother would become separated during World War I. It is interesting to detail Bakhtin's life in conjunction with his philosophy, family relations, and geographical movements. One

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[47] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1984), 16.
[48] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist observe that it is "interesting that alterity is a major component of the philosophies of both brothers." See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 17.
[49] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 17.

cannot help but speculate that the origins of dialogism were rooted in the earthy Russian soil of his familial life, along with the philosophical influences of his time.

Bakhtin's early life has been biographically sketched later on and will not be reiterated in entirety, here.[50] Briefly, I will portray the season in which Bakhtin met his wife, Elena, and the difficult and arduous attempt to attain his doctorate degree. This difficult journey brought up questions in relationship to my own pursuit in doctoral studies, which I discussed with leading Slavist and renowned scholar and authority on Bakhtin—Caryl Emerson, from Princeton University. She generously put me in touch with Robert Louis Jackson, the B.E. Bensinger, Professor (Emeritus) of Slavic languages and literatures from Yale University.

While on a trip in Moscow, Jackson was able to share an honor bestowed upon Bakhtin from Yale University. Jackson was also able to meet Bakhtin through a personal mutual friend— Vadim Valerianovich Kozhinov. This meeting took place just three weeks prior to Bakhtin's death. I will return to this anecdotal story after a brief sketch of Bakhtin's struggle to obtain his advanced degree and the events leading to his death.

One area of interest that is worth repeating has to do with the process of the rediscovery of Bakhtin, and it is owed, in part, not only to the graduate students (Vadim Kozhinov, Sergei Bocharov, and Georgy Gachev) who discovered he was still living, but also from his wife, Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich, who extended the invitation for these young scholars to visit.

In 1921, while living in Vitebsk, Bakhtin met Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich (1900–1971). The initial meeting was one of patient and caregiver. Bakhtin had become seriously ill with typhoid. His friend, Voloshinov, had originally moved from Nevel to Vitebsk[51] to care for

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[50] See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*.

[51] Vitebsk was a vibrant place to live during this period. Chagall was from this town and it is said that Bakhtin, "liked him personally." See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 48.

Bakhtin, but had himself met and married Nina Arkadievna Alekseevskaya. Elena came to Bakhtin's aid after his operation while he was alone and ill. Soon thereafter, they wed.

Bakhtin's chronic illness did not stop his writing. It is estimated that Bakhtin worked on several important pieces in the years between 1918 and 1924. Some of these include the following: "Art and Answerability"—a Dostoevsky book that was likely a pretext for the major piece later birthed later in 1929; and many other pieces that Holquist and Clark collectively note that the "most descriptive title is *The Architechtonics of Answerability (Arxitekonika otvetstvennosti).*"[52]

During the 1920s, Bakhtin was a strong opponent to much of the Neo-Kantianism which pervaded that era. With a continuous consumption of tea and smokes, Bakhtin continued to write in virtual obscurity through the next couple of decades. His consistent dedication to writing, through a variety of less than ideal settings, leads one to conclude that Bakhtin's writing was an extension of himself and his lifework. He did not remain completely isolated, however. Even in exile, he continued to share ideas, lecture, and befriend others. The scope of this lifework was experienced among uneducated workers in an abandoned jail, where he and Elena shared with others during a difficult season.[53] Bakhtin was a living example of a dialogized life.

Part of Bakhtin's passion was in his religious convictions. Michael Holquist and Katerina Clark interviewed Victor Schklovsky on March 25, 1978. In this interview, Schklovsky shared that Bakhtin "was known as a '*ceerkovnik',* a 'churchman' or 'adherent of the church,'" and it

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[52] Along with these texts, there are a plethora of notebooks of different colors that have been found. Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 54.

[53] Bakhtin and his wife, Elena, lived in an old jail in 1945 in Saransk. Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 322.

was within the intellectual circles of his day wherein he found himself in religious dialogue. It has been noted that he "remained a believer in the Orthodox tradition all his life."[54]

In 1924, the Bakhtins moved to Leningrad, with his illness as the driving force behind their move. He was freed up from working as his illness entitled him to receive state pension.[55] By this time, most of his friends had already moved and taken up serious academic posts.

Although his friends returned and found their "niches," Bakhtin largely remained at home, writing. This space enabled him to continue to study and debate on the theories that were continuing to bloom. His "ideas about authorship were being tried in dialogue with two other theories of the text: the Formalist on the one hand and the Marxist on the other."[56] In Nevel, Bakhtin debated the Marxists. During this time, some of the disputed texts were written.[57]

The 1920s–1930s saw a shift in the nature of the intellectual debates. Earlier on, Bakhtin and his friends would discuss areas of "aesthetics, the status of the subject, and the philosophy of religion (which is not the same as religion itself)—topics heavily influenced by contemporary events in German intellectual life—to the great issues of the day in the Soviet Union."[58] Discussions abounded in regard to these disciplines and their impact on the doctrine of communism. Holquist writes that the main question at the heart of these controversies included,

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[54] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 120.

[55] During these years, Bakhtin engaged heavily with the psychological theories of Freud. The texts Bakhtin wrote that purportedly engaged with Freud are part of the disputed text collection, published under different names. Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 171–185.

[56] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 96.

[57] Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (London, England: Routledge, 1990)*,* 7–8. Clark and Holquist would agree that these disputed texts are indeed Bakhtin's but Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson would disagree. See *Creation of Prosaics* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University, 1990), 3. For their full discussion on their assertion that he did not pen these texts, see 101–119. Emerson and Morson point out that in Bakhtin's "notes of 1970–1971" he rejected "Marxism (and dialectics) along with semiotics and structuralism (with their concept of "code") as twin errors" (101). They point out that in being opposed to Marxism, Bakhtin could not have written the disputed texts that are Marxist (see Bakhtin's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* translated by V.M. Voloshinov; and as well as Medvedev's *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*).

[58] Holquist, *Dialogism*, 8.

"How would psychology, linguistics, and literary theory look when inter-illuminated by Marxist theory and Bolshevik practice?"[59]

Bakhtin wrote and debated these issues, which eventually led to his arrest and accusation of "corrupting the young" in 1929.[60] Bakhtin was sentenced to ten years in the harsh labor camps located on the Solovetsky Islands.[61] Due to his ill health, he would not have survived very long. Bakhtin's wife approached Maxim Gorky's wife to try and intercede on Bakhtin's behalf. With her help, as well as aid from Bakhtin's long-time friend Kagan, Bakhtin was able to get a sentence reduction and was instead exiled to Kustanai, Kazakhstan. [62] Because of charges of corruption, he was not allowed to teach young eager minds.

Although his exile formally ended in 1934, Bakhtin remained in Kazakhstan for two more years. By staying in Kazakhstan, he and Elena could remain more obscure and safer than in Moscow or Leningrad. In these major cities, many of the intellectuals who were released from exile often were then immediately arrested for a second time.

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[59] Holquist, *Dialogism*, 8.

[60] Issues surrounding his arrest are probably connected to his ties with the church as well. He was also a strong voice in several published works. "Bakhtin . . . in the 1928 Medvedev book . . . took exception to work done by Russian formalists, while also pointing out limitations in the still very poorly developed area of Marxist literary theory. In the Voloshinov books, he attacked Freud for his inability to imagine a collective subject for psychoanalysis, and Saussure for failing to recognize the importance of history and everyday speech in his theory of language…and under his own name, he published a book (*Problems in the work of Dostoevsky,* 1929*)* that argues against the hegemony of absolute authorial control." Holquist continues that in all this Bakhtin continued to "underline the need always to take others and otherness into account and continuing to emphasize plurality and variety—also lent itself to the *new* conditions as arguments against the increasing homogenization of cultural and political life in the Soviet Union that would culminate in the long night of Stalinism." See Michael Holquist, *Dialogism*, 9. Indeed, there were probably several issues, as Holquist has clarified here, that would indicate reasons why Bakhtin would be part of the intellectual rounded up for arrest. See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 254.

[61] The Solovetsky Islands are in the northern part of the Onega Bay in the White Sea, Russia. It is estimated that over a million prisoners died there. Because of its remote location, it was one of Russia's first gulags. In this same area, ironically, is one of Russia's most famous monasteries (built in the fifteenth century). This monastery is now a World Heritage Site.

[62] During this period, Kagan was well known in in the "prestigious governmental commission on energy reserves." Kagan had moved his career into the area of mathematics and was able to focus his abilities in this much needed area for the Soviet Union. See Holquist, *Dialogism*, 9.

In the latter half of 1938, The Great Purge of the 1930s under Stalin began to decline. The Bakhtins eventually returned to Saransk. This created a much safer space for the intelligentsia. This creative and safer space to dialogue would continue until June 1941, when Russia entered World War II.

For Bakhtin, the years prior to Russia entering the war were very productive. Completing essays and finishing a book, Bakhtin also wrote his dissertation for the Gorky Institute, "Rabelais in the History of Realism." Holquist and Clark comment that Bakhtin "was never formally a graduate student at the institute, but he took advantage of the right that one had to present a work for a postgraduate degree without going through formal studies."[63] Bakhtin's association with the Gorky institute came through the invitation to lecture. These two lectures occurred on October 14, 1940 and March 24, 1941. The first was on "Discourse in the Novel" and the second was on "The Novel as Literary Genre."[64] The institute could not initiate hire for Bakhtin due to his political record.

The war created a difficult phase for Bakhtin with his scholarship and moving along on his dissertation on Rabelais. From 1941–1945, Bakhtin taught German and later Russian due to a shortage of teachers in Savelovo. These years enabled Bakhtin to once again gain credibility against his bleak political record. After the war, Bakhtin and Elena returned to the Saransk and Bakhtin carried on at the Morodovia Pedagological Institute. In 1947, Bakhtin's dissertation on Rabelais was finally accepted after being submitted in 1941 to the Gorky Institute of World

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[63] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 263.
[64] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 262.

Literature. It would be published, but not for another eighteen years.[65] Bakhtin was scheduled to defend his dissertation on November 15, 1946.

Unfortunately, a major shift in cultural perception and party regulations took place that same year, with academic journals being censored. The leading voice in this censorship was A.A. Zhdanoz, the leading party spokesperson on concerns and questions of ideology. Bakhtin's dissertation would receive heavy backfire because Zhadonov had outright "sounded an end to the idolization of folk forms in literature and criticism and condemned works that made Soviet people and the Soviet reality seem 'primitive.'"[66] This very issue was problematic for Bakhtin because a major part of Bakhtin's method in creating a voice of freedom for monologic ideologies (especially politically) was "in his theory with the notion of Gorky and other authorities that folk forms and folk humor had played a major role in the evolution of literature."[67]

Although many thought Bakhtin's dissertation was commendable and even wanted it considered for a doctor's degree (it had been a candidate's degree, originally), the ideological party backlash would prove too great as "they found the Rabelais dissertation objectionable for its blasphemy and scorn of dogma."[68] The committee reviewed the dissertation a second time and debated for seven hours, only to come to a vote of seven to six. This was then released to a reviewing committee known as the Higher Attestation Committee. With the political issues abounding, the committee ended up postponing their decision. The final judgment was not made

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[65] Rabelais was published in 1965. Bakhtin's book on Dostoevsky went through a second publication in 1963. The timing was perfect for these two books to be released so close to each other, and Bakhtin created quite a stir in the Soviet Union.

[66] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 322–323.

[67] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 322–323.

[68] Clark and Holquist note that "the doctor's degree is roughly equivalent to a D. Lit. In the West; the candidate's to a PhD." See *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 323–324.

until 1951. Bakhtin was awarded a candidate's degree, not the higher doctorate's degree, on June 2, 1952—after twelve years of waiting.

Bakhtin continued his post at the University in Saransk. In 1957, the institute in which he lectured became the Ogarev University of Mordovis. This elevation in rank of the school was followed by an elevation in position for Bakhtin. He was named Chairman of the Department of Russian and Foreign Literature.[69] With things beginning to fall nicely into place for Bakhtin, he was notably offered to a full professorship. He declined the invitation every time. He also declined invitations to join the Writers Union. He appreciated his space to write, and he knew these additional responsibilities would impinge on the time he had come to treasure. When offered prestigious jobs in other cities, Bakhtin refused to consider them due in part to his and his wife's declining health.

Bakhtin's life in the shadow lands of academia would soon come to an end in the late 1950s as the Formalists (young, brilliant, budding, literary scholars) began to shine light on this shadowy figure of Bakhtin. In a sense, the "resurrection" of Bakhtin's work was due to a group of admirers at the Gorky institute. They were surprised to learn that Bakhtin had survived the Great Purges of the 1930s. This group of literary scholars made it their mission to find Bakhtin.

They "dedicated themselves to rescuing Bakhtin from the obscurity into which he had fallen."[70] Among the young literary scholars were Vadim Valerianovich Kozhinov. It became Khozoniv's personal mission to bring Bakhtin's work to the light. While a graduate student at the Gorky Institute, he was introduced to Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky and later the Rabelais dissertation. Because he had not heard of any new material from Bakhtin, Khozinov assumed

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[69] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 330.
[70] This literary group at the Gorky Institute included: Vadim Kozhinov, Sergei Bocharov, and Georgy Gachev. See Holquist, *Dialogism*, 10.

that Bakhtin had perished along with the countless intellectuals during the purges. He and a few fellow students decided these works needed to become published. To their surprise, they found out that Bakhtin was indeed alive.

Khozinov immediately wrote to Bakhtin. After some initial correspondence, Bakhtin's wife, Elena Aleksandrovna Okolovich (1900–1971), answered, inviting them to visit in a letter dated June 6, 1961.[71] This important aspect to Bakhtin's rediscovery should not be minimized. Bakhtin would have been content to remain obscure, but the warm invitation of his wife created an opening for his work to resurface, along with friendship with these young students. This would be the first trip of many for the three literary scholars: Vadim Valerianovich Kozhinov (1930–2001), Sergey Georgievich Bocharov (1929–2017), and Georgi Dmitrievich Gachev (1929–2008).

Bakhtin was finally encouraged to republish his book on Dostoevsky. Soon to follow (after several frustrating re-workings and attempts) the Rabelais dissertation would follow in publication. This was a successful publication, riding on the coattails of a well-received republication of his *Problems in the Work of Dostoevsky*.[72]

Bakhtin had retired during the time of the reworking of his manuscripts. His retirement meant time to write, drink tea, and meet with former students. In 1966, the health of both Elena and Bakhtin became very grave and they needed extra assistance. They did not want to move or become separated, and this proved to be very difficult. Fortunately, with the help of the daughter

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[71] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 323–333.

[72] Kozinov knew that the Rabelais dissertation would need to be carefully released. His strategizing, although brilliant, would in the end not rush publication of either book. After requests, letters and even a "lost letter," Kozinov pressed on with the publishing house and finally on September 26, 1963, the Dostoevsky book was accepted. Although it never felt finished for Bakhtin, he finally allowed Kozinov to attempt to get the Rabelais dissertation accepted for publication and it was in 1962. Another interesting point that Holquist and Clark bring out on the issue of Bakhtin and publication is that "Bakhtin's problem in publishing, however, continued to be his phlegmatic nature and his inability to bring any text to completion." See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 333–334.

of Yuri Andropov, head of the KGB (and future General Secretary of the U.S.S.R), it was arranged for them to stay together in the Kremlin hospital in Moscow. Holquist and Clark note that this was a "prestigious" hospital and the Bakhtins were placed in the wing with patients from the third world. Heteroglossia abounded, even in this place and time in the hospital.

Unfortunately, they were not able to stay indefinitely and were eventually moved to Grivno. This home was for aging individuals. The Bakhtins were again generously afforded the opportunity to stay in the personnel quarters, and thus able to remain together. The Bakhtins were generous with the residents. Bakhtin had space to write. He turned seventy-five during his time in Grivno in 1970. He was showered with cards.

The personnel at the residential home where they lived were in awe and inquired of his identity. Upon finding out, the teachers in that town asked for a lecture, "which he did in August, showing that he had not lost his ability to hold an audience under his spell with long recitations of poetry, this was probably his last public lecture."[73]

Not long after in 1971, Elena's heart condition took a turn for the worse and she died on December 13th. This was a strong blow for Bakhtin, as they were very close. Holquist and Clark note that, at this point, he "lost his zest for life."[74] He needed to move locations because he could not live without assistance any longer. He was placed at the House of Creativity in Peredelkino with the condition that he joined the Writer's Union. He agreed and was then able to stay without a fee for a "creative stay" with the benefit of the medical clinic.[75]

Members of the Writer's Union petitioned for Bakhtin to be able to register as a resident of Moscow because another move was inevitable. He was granted this request and was able to

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[73] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 338.
[74] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 338.
[75] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 338.

purchase a flat. He moved into it in September of 1972. Holquist and Clark add, "It was on Krasnoarmeyskaya Street, no. 21, flat 42. The numbers pleased Bakhtin, for he liked both three and seven . . . and 21 was the number of his wife's grave plot."[76]

He continued to work on a book on Gogol that he would never finish. His emphysema worsened and the pain from the osteomyelitis became unbearable.[77] He began taking injections for pain. During his final days, he had three nurses rotate shifts so that he was never without care. He asked to be read a favorite story as he was dying.

The story was a tale in *Decameron.* The twist in this tale is that "miracles are performed at the tomb of a man regarded as a saint, but who had in fact been a dreadful rogue."[78] Holquist and Clark respond that this story provided insight into grasping a bit about Bakhtin in that, "the most significant one (*moral*) for an understanding of Bakhtin is that there is always a loophole: 'Life is full of surprises,' or 'God works in strange ways, his wonders to perform.'"[79] He died at 2:00 a.m. on March 7, 1975. His night nurse was present and heard his last words which were, "I go to Thee."[80] Even in his last breath, he was in dialogue with the Other.[81]

The mysteriousness of these final moments is highlighted by Bakhtin's refusal for last rites as he lay on his deathbed. It is noted that "refusal of last rites was not in itself significant, since there is an established Orthodox tradition of refusing them."[82] Yury Seliverstov came to the apartment to visit his friend Bakhtin and to make a death mask of him the night after he died.

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[76] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 339.
[77] Osteomyelitis is a severe bone infection.
[78] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 347.
[79] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 347.
[80] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 343.
[81] Clark and Holquist observe that he may have been speaking to his wife or to God. *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 347.
[82] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 343.

"Then Seliverstov and other friends arranged to have Bakhtin's body laid out according to the ritual for a monk's burial because they considered him a religious figure."[83]

On a final anecdotal note, I wanted to share an email exchange which summarizes the unfinalizability of Bakhtin's academic journey. Bakhtin's life of obscurity has deeply and profoundly marked my own. As I began my work, engaging with Bakhtin and biblical studies, I quickly sensed the deep irony that I was working towards a doctorate and that Bakhtin was never fully awarded the Russian doctorate because of the political climate during his defense.

This prompted me to email Caryl Emerson at Princeton University to inquire if Bakhtin ever received a posthumous doctorate. Caryl responded, "Thereby hangs a tale, Jennifer."[84] She proceeded to share with me that Bakhtin came very close to receiving an honorary doctorate from Yale University in 1975. Robert Louis Jackson, Yale professor of Russian Literature, was in Moscow and able to inform Bakhtin that he had been awarded this honorary doctorate.

Officially, at that time, a person had to be physically present to receive such an award, but Bakhtin was too ill to travel. The department had hoped that Bakhtin could receive the degree, "*in absentia,* given his illness and immobility of this great figure." Unfortunately, Bakhtin was too weak, physically to travel. Jackson emphatically added, "The University *would have granted him a degree* had he been able to be present. Need I say that history and posterity will note this honor."[85]

This photo (Figure 3) was taken by Robert Louis Jackson on that visit. Jackson relayed to me that he normally would not take a picture of someone in such an ill state of health, but because of the honor Bakhtin was receiving, it was indeed most appropriate. Bakhtin whispered

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[83] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 343.
[84] Permission to publish through private correspondence with Caryl Emerson (March 16, 2017).
[85] Permission to publish through private correspondence with Robert Louis Jackson (March 21, 2018).

that he was "honored" to learn that he would have been bestowed this honorary doctorate had he traveled to the university. Jackson took several photos of Bakhtin and Khozinov on that visit.

One cannot help but see such a gift in that visit for reasons extending even beyond the honor of the degree award. Jackson noted that although Bakhtin was at such a late stage of illness, he had an "extraordinary presence," and "in a phenomenal way, spoke of depth, sensitivity, and receptivity of being; eyes, too, glistening, watchful, but with a poignant suggestion of vulnerability."[86]

The photo was taken by Jackson and subsequently, Emerson took a picture of the photo. If you look close at the photo, you can see Emerson's reflection, which beautifully represents an artistic representation of dialogism. Our reflections are witnessed through our voices in dialogue,

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[86] Permission to publish through private correspondence with Robert Louis Jackson and Caryl Emerson (March 21, 2018).

wherein mutual shaping takes place. The original picture by Jackson was taken three weeks

before Bakhtin passed away in March 1975.
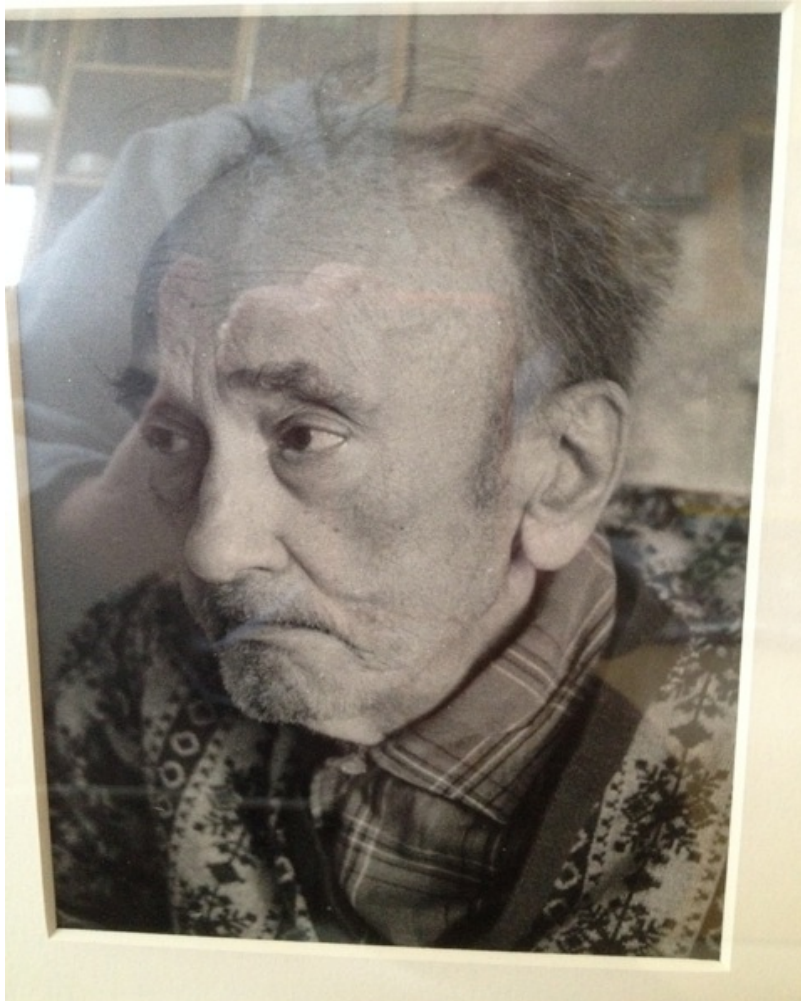
Figure 3: Photo by Robert Louis Jackson

Bakhtin's life displayed a struggle to maintain stability, whether professionally or

personally. His own life paralleled his theories and philosophies in that no person is ever

finished. He was able to press on in that space of uncertainty, anchoring himself in that hope of

becoming. He lived his description of the novelization of other genres, which he described as "a

certain semantic openness, a living contact unfinished, still evolving contemporary reality (the open-ended present)."[87]

1.5 Key Terms

Bakhtin's work as a Russian literary theorist and philosopher encompasses an ethical component of responsibility. His influence has gained more scholarly awareness, posthumously, due to the discovery of his survival during the Great Purges. His literary theory of dialogism has been widely influential in a broad range of academic disciplines.

Dialogism is the broad umbrella term that has come to signify the breadth of Bakhtin's literary, artistic, philosophical, and social-linguistic ideology and concepts. Dialogism is not a word Bakhtin used, but one popularized to explain his overarching theory. Although the term, dialogical would be more accurate, this study will use the term dialogism, due to its permeation within previous scholarship, in order to avoid confusion.

Barbara Green humorously points out that "*dialogism* is the rather ugly English word that catches all the implied intersections among partners."[88] Dialogism, then, functionally embodies the sense of mutual interaction between different voices. This mutuality enables multiple voices to be present and yet retain their individuality.

Polyphonic describes the many voices inherent in the dialogue, rather than a single, unified, and monologic voice. Bakhtin cites Dostoevsky as illustrating the polyphonic in his work, and claims that Dostoevsky is the "creator of the polyphonic novel."[89] In describing

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[87] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel," in *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays,* University of Texas Press Slavic Series, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1981), 7.
[88] Barbara Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen? A Dialogical Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel*, 21.
[89] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 7.

Dostoevsky's ability to "try out new orientations" in his writings, Bakhtin maintains, "It must be emphasized that in Dostoevsky's world, even agreement retains dialogic character, that is, it never leads to a merging of voices and truths in a single impersonal truth, as occurs in the monologic world."[90] *The Brothers Karamazov*[91] provides an example of polyphony along with the use of loopholes and double-voiced utterances:

> A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning for one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole, this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. This potential other meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow.[92]

This loophole retains an opening and resists closure. The ultimate word has not been spoken and is continually open to possibilities. This openness to the future, which resists closure, is what Bakhtin calls unfinalizability.[93]

Double-voiced is Bakhtin's literary term that described the utterances that one uses in dialogue that contain the speech of another yet is being mutually shaped to become something new in the dialogic process. Double–voiced discourse can be revealed through intertextual allusions.[94] Although Bakhtin did not address allusion in his writings, close intertextual readings within a canonical collection create the possibility to read double–voiced discourse (through irony and word choice) and utterances. Some examples within the text may be more obvious (allusion), while others less so at other points (echo).

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[90] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 95.

[91] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, first published serially in *The Russian Messenger*, 1879–1880.

[92] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* 233.

[93] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 166.

[94] Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University, 1990), 146. For a fuller treatment of the connection between double–voiced discourse and allusion, see Bula Maddison's "A Bakhtinian Reading of Biblical Allusion in Dostoevsky's Novel *Crime and Punishment*" in *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 32.3 (2005): 267–279. See also Robert Alter, "Allusion," in *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 111–20.

Newsom uses an example from the speech of Job to illustrate this process: "Job uses the words of Psalmic discourse yet overlays them with his own intentions."[95] Newsom insists that the polyphonic ending of Job "succeeds better than Dostoevsky" because it resists harmonization, each voice contains an important point yet resolution resists finalization.[96]

Bakhtin's basic unit of meaning is the living utterance. The utterance encompasses not only the words, but also the inclinations, tones, and everything that is left unsaid. The exchange is the confluence of these utterances, what is exchanged and even what is anticipated in response.[97] Bakhtin writes,

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—it does not approach the object from the sidelines.[98]

The utterance encompasses all of these dialogic threads, which impregnate not only the words but also the silence. Green provides a helpful summary of the permeative qualities of the utterance—"An utterance (from the monosyllabic to a novel) is what one of us says to another of us, so what I say to you: it is grounded and specific to our shared circumstances, framed in terms of what I want to communicate to you, what I think you are needing and ready to hear, and what I anticipate as your likely response."[99]

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[95] Carol A. Newsom, "Bakhtin, the Bible, and Dialogic Truth," *The Journal of Religion* 76, no. 2; *The Bible and Christian Theology* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago, 1996), 290–306 (297).

[96] Carol A. Newsom, *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 2003), 293.

[97] Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," *Speech Genres and Other Later Essays.* ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1990), 75.

[98] Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 276–277.

[99] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen,* 23.

One of the voices of this living utterance is the voice of canon. There is a voice within that community as well as an authorial voice found from the text artisans. Bakhtin has a helpful footnote in his discussion of the writer of a novel that attests to the scribal community of the biblical text—"That is to say, the words are not his [the author] if we understand them as direct words, but they are his as things that are being transmitted ironically, exhibited and so forth, that is, as words that are understood from the distances appropriate to humor, irony, parody, etc."[100]

Utterances are both verbal and non-verbal; they consist of what is explicit within the text and what is implicit. This is where context helpfully constructs potential responses.[101] What is left unsaid is another utterance in the text. Silence is "intentional gapping" or similar to the negative space in Paley's artwork (Figure 1), *Apollo* (1993)*.*

Bakhtin defines chronotope as "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships artistically expressed in literature."[102] Chronotope roots dialogism in the specific "time-space" of the artistic represented world to the world as a reader would understand. This enables a dialogical exchange of meaning between author, text, and reader. Without a rooted reference point, the text becomes strange and "other," which results in disengagement from the reader. "When a reader retreats from a text, it does not make sense; the retreat is but the recognition that the text is other."[103]

Mario Valdés continues to show that through common points of reference, such as suffering, a place of connection can occur. In a similar manner, chronotope enables a place of connection between distant worlds that enable the reader to maintain dialogue with the literature.

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[100] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 299.
[101] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 206–208.
[102] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 84.
[103] Mario J. Valdés, *Hermeneutics of Poetic Sense: Critical Studies of Literature, Cinema, and Cultural History* (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto, 1998), 78–79.

One of the ethical components that this study will expand upon is how marginalized voices contribute as a voice of answerability—a voice of ethical response. Answerability will be sought through voices of the individual and the community within the canon. The Russian word for "answerability" could also be translated as "responsibility." Vadim Liapunov explains that in his translations of Bakhtin's work, he desires to "foreground the root sense of the term-answering; that point to bring out the 'responsibility'" involves the performance of an "existential dialogue."[104] Within Bakhtin's theory is a double-voice of answerability that contributes to the ethics and aesthetics of accountability.[105] The voices that I am searching for on the margins are voices of answerability, voices of responsibility, double-voiced discourse, and voices of "liability."[106]

Bakhtin's work on Francois Rabelais's texts with folk humor and culture in the Middle Ages will be useful for a reading Judges 19–21, through the literary lens of grotesque realism.[107] Bakhtin's socio-linguistic analysis of Rabelais provides groundwork for identifying the function of obscene materiality in the work of Rabelais. The spirit of carnival is an inversion of sacred and political institutions through folk humor. Grotesque realism is a feature of the carnivalesque that resists a politico-theological cultural hegemony.

Subjugated voices are given a platform to speak through Bakhtin's literary theory of carnival, the medieval genre of folk humor which highlights the inversion of social roles. The grotesque body imagery within this idea of carnival deals with the lower stratums of the body through wildly fantastic body imagery. Bakhtin writes that Rabelais attempts to "disunite those

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[104] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 226.
[105] Aesthetics is not so much describing beauty in Bakhtin's work but "has to do with the mysterious concepts of 'isolation,' and 'outsideness,' and 'consummation.'" Also, "This shaping or finishing off, this *consummation,* is then treated as an act of authorship." See Michael Holquist's Introduction in Bakhtin's, *Art and Answerability*, xxv.
[106] Bakhtin writes that mutual answerability also involves "mutual liability to blame."
[107] Chapter five will illustrate חרם as a function of grotesque realism.

things that have been falsely brought together" in order to reveal "false connections that distort

the authentic nature of things, false associations established and reinforced by tradition and

sanctioned by religious and official ideology."[108]

Rabelais's literary artistic method is illustrated in these following basic categories of

artistic method:

1. Series of the human body, in its anatomical and physiological aspects
2. Human clothing series
3. Food series
4. Drink and drunkenness series
5. Sexual series (copulation)
6. Death series
7. Defecation series[109]

The human body becomes representative of greater realities—i.e., the world, or human

race. A grotesque reading of Judges 19–21 resists the light-hearted spirit embodied in the folk-

humor model. Nevertheless, it is applicable with the exaggerated nature of feasting and

hospitality (Judges 19:4–9), violent sexual activity and kidnapping (Judges 19:25; 21:12, 23),

dismemberment (Judges 19:29), and finally, death and destruction (Judges 19:29; 20:24. 35, 44–

46, 48; 21:11).

Bakhtin's attention to *threshold* is woven throughout his writings and he describes the

chronotope of threshold as connected to "moments of crisis" along with decisions or

indecisiveness that "changes a life."[110] I will develop my own unique use of the concept of

threshold, in dialogue with the book of *Ruth*, deliberately going beyond the use of the concept by

Bakhtin. The literary idea of the chronotope of threshold will be pervasive throughout this

project in the following three ways: (1) threshold representing intertextual lexical connections

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[108] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 169.
[109] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 170.
[110] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel" in *The Dialogic Imagination*, 248.

within the canon throughout the research and most notably in chapter 6, (2) specific Hebrew terms סף ("threshold") and מפתן ("threshold") in Judges 19 that signify intertextual connections within the Hebrew Bible, and (3) the identity of women in literary threshold moments, which signify internal and external threshold crossings, such as the פילגש (Judges 19) and *Ruth*.[111]

In Judges 19, the identity of the woman is distinguished as a פילגש when she is with the Levite, a נערה ("young girl/maiden"), when she is with her father, and a אשה ("woman/wife")– when not in the Levite's presence. Ruth's identity (chapter 8) signifies internal and external threshold crossings as noted in the distinctive terms for self–referencing by Ruth herself, along with the terms used by Boaz, Naomi, and others. Examples of identification terms are נכרי ("foreigner"), נערה ("young girl/maiden"), שפחה (maid servant, not eligible for marriage), and אמה (maid servant, eligible for marriage).

In respect to canon, threshold crossings can signify intertextual readings of lexical connections. Within the canon, several threshold crossings are noticed between Judges 19-21 and *Ruth*. In particular, a careful reading of Judges 19 reveals that the Hebrew word for threshold (סף and מפתן) signals a combination of intertextual lexical connections. This signifies a broader conversation amongst the literary texts in conversation, especially with the singular use of סף within the entire Judges text (see chapter 3 for the political and theological intentional use of this threshold term). Threshold crossings signify ideological changes throughout the story of *Ruth*, as she enters and exits new spaces as a daughter and a Moabite. The person of Ruth and the text of

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[111] פילגש has been translated as "second wife" and "concubine." In examples within the Hebrew Bible, it is clear that a פילגש is distinguished from an אשה (see Genesis 25:6; 35:22; 2 Samuel 21:11). The Hebrew term, פילגש, will be used throughout this research to highlight the distinction and ambiguity within the terms of identity of this particular woman (Judges 19–20), how she is referenced, along with terms of identity for the other victims revealed throughout Judges 19–21.

Ruth are chronotopes of threshold crossings within the canon, as a voice of protest and becoming within the story of Israel.

1.6 Bakhtin Scholarship in Biblical Studies

Though far from an exhaustive list, scholars who have engaged Bakhtin and biblical studies have directly impacted the work in this study's search for voices of answerability.[112] The search for voices weaves through much of the appropriation of Bakhtin's usefulness within biblical studies. Newson touches on the double-voiced discourse of Lamentations by suggesting it is found in voices of the people of Judah reverberating "Zion personification"—e.g., Isaiah 51-52).[113] Carleen Mandolfo argues for a full embodied voice and identity for Daughter Zion through reading Lamentations 1 and 2 as "as Zion's response to the closed and finalized portrait painted of her in the prophets, as her attempt to regain agency."[114] EunHee Kang uses Bakhtin's dialogism as a reading strategy for uncovering a new way of understanding the silent community of the triad (sojourner, fatherless, and widow) through a careful investigation of the utterances in Deuteronomy.[115]

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[112] Scholars who have appropriated the work of Bakhtin in Biblical Studies include Nehama Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian lens: The Carnivalesque in a Biblical Tale", *JBL* 126, no. 3 (2007): 437–453; Kenneth M. Craig Jr., *Reading Esther: A Case for the Literary Carnivalesque* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1995); Barbara Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship: An Introduction* (Atlanta, GA: The Society of Biblical Literature, 2000); Carleen Mandolfo, *God in the Dock: Dialogic Tensions in the Psalms of Lament* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Robert Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part 1: Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges* (New York, NY: Seabury, 1980); Polzin, *Samuel and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part 2: 1 Samuel* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1989); Polzin, *David and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomic History. Part 3: 2 Samuel* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1993).

[113] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 150–151.

[114] Carleen Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion*, 3.

[115] EunHee Kang, *The Dialogic Significance of the Sojourner, The Fatherless, and the Widow in Deuteronomy Through An Analysis of Chronotope Using Bakhtin's Reading Strategy* (Dissertation) (Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA 2009).

Job has been a very popular text because of its inherent dialogic nature. Bakhtin's literary theory of dialogism has proved to be a helpful lens when approaching a text with competing voices, such as the text of Job. Newsom and Terje Stordalen have dealt extensively with careful readings of this competing dialogue with an eye to genre considerations in connection to analogous ancient Near Eastern texts. Stordalen applies an analysis of Bakhtin's theories and terms to Dostoevsky in order to show how Bakhtin's "metalinguistic" theory can also be applied to Job.

Newsom uniquely brings into the interpretive dialogue the situated interplay of moral imaginations. Newsom juxtaposes the divergent moral imaginations within the dialogue between Job and his friends,

> The moral imagination that represents Job's situation by telling a certain kind of story, for example, is strikingly different from that which represents it by means of a clash of unmediated opposing voices. Each invites its readers into a differently structured world of values and commitments. Similarly, the friends' moral imagination, articulated, for instance, in Bildad's generative metaphor of good and evil as well-watered and dry plants not only frames the world in a particular way but also entails patterns of response to misfortune that are incontrovertible, as long as one moves within the logic of the metaphor. Appropriate action is very differently configured, however, if the generative metaphor is that of legal injury. As Job eventually comes to claim. [116]

These voices do not merge because they are moral imaginations in dialogue. Rather than a reduction or a system in language, metalinguistcs "never gravitates towards a single consciousness or single voice . . . the word does not forget its own path and cannot completely free itself from the power of these concrete contexts into which it has entered."[117] These voices in dialogue in the work of Dostoevsky illustrate the "non-hierarchal" display of voices that

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[116] See Newsom, *Job*, 262.
[117] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 202.

Stordalen finds evident in the book of Job.[118] Along with the polyphonic interplay of voices, Stordalen sought to portray how the author orients voices to one another.

In a more recent article, Stordalen uses the text of Job as an "illustration for the presence and significance of dialogical thought in ancient Near Eastern literature."[119] In an investigation of a Bakhtinian approach to Job 1–11, Seong Whan Timothy Hyun advances the dialogic approach set forth by Newsom and Stordalen with a closer investigation of "how" each voice is used to "complement each other and create one big picture, which is Job's identity and reason for his suffering."[120]

Another important contributor to Bakhtinian Biblical Studies is Barbara Green, who engages a close reading of the Saul narrative (1 Samuel). In this study, Green illustrates the ways in which Saul is constructed through dialogue—not only through himself (Green presents Saul's easily suggestive nature), but also Saul's portrayal through the speech and agency of others—i.e., the biblical characters of David and Jonathan.[121]

Resisting an ultimate finalized portrait, Green helpfully reveals the complexity of a character portrait that resists closure, or in Bakhtin's definition, resists *finalization*. Bakhtin's dialogism has proven to be a useful heuristic to unearth voices—whether personified as a city (Mandolfo), the voice of a community (Newsom, Kang), or voices of individuals (Green, Newsom, Hyun, Stordalen).

For Green, Bakhtin is such an important interlocutor for biblical scholarship because he is able to sustain the chronotope and genre (historical-social) of a text while at the same time,

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[118] Terje Stordalen, "Dialogue and Dialogism in the book of Job," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 20 (2006): 18–37 (24).

[119] Terje Stordalen, "Dialogism, Monologism, and Cultural Literacy: Classical Hebrew Literature and Readers' Epistemic Paradigms," *The Bible and Critical Theory* 10 (2014): 2–20 (6).

[120] Seong Whan Timothy Hyun, *Job the Unfinalizable: A Bakhtinian Reading of Job 1–11* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 2013), 17.

[121] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 219.

sustaining a relationship with the artistic and literary aspects of a work. She comments that this is an area which "current biblical study is struggling to keep related."[122]

Gendered language dynamics was not an issue addressed by Bakhtin. Mandolfo writes that Bakhtin was "mute"[123] on the subject and Green writes: "Bakhtin had virtually no interest in gender and never mentioned it as a category of particularity; aside from an inevitable attention to bodies and social roles when working with Rabelais, he is virtually mute on the subject of gendered language, viewpoint, or culture."[124]

Using his work for a feminist project may seem outlandish, Green notes; yet, his work is still helpful in several ways. Bakhtin's work with dialogue de-centers the authoritative voice and invites the reader to listen in, to pay attention, and to find voices in the margins with an ear to, and a glance at the ethical components of such dialogue. This has been Mandolfo's scholarly focus, and it is evident that Bakhtin has provided a useful intersection with the biblical text.

1.7 Methodology and Research Questions

The methodology proposed for this dissertation will utilize the heuristic of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism in order to illuminate how the texts of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue within the Hebrew canon. First, each text will be analyzed separately with a close reading through literary and comparative methods. Each chapter will be investigated utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism through a canonical and intertextual lens. Finally, after each "voice" (Judges 19–21; *Ruth*) has been heard through a canonical and intertextual lens, Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* will be placed in dialogue. Questions this study will also address include the following:

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[122] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 21.
[123] Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion*, 7.
[124] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 58.

1. Is there a potential canonical voice of answerability (responsibility) for the voiceless women of Judges 19–21?

2. Is there double-voiced speech found within Judges 19–21?

3. Is there anything new to add to the genre designation (aspects of form and function) with the texts of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*? If so, what are the possible genre designations?

4. How does *Ruth* provide an authoritative voice of answerability for the silent and abused women of Judges 19–21?

5. Does the placement of *Ruth* after Judges in the LXX prove an intentional dialogic choice within the canon? What is the significance of Ruth as an almost undisputed text within the different canons?

6. Through the comparison of these two seemingly disparate stories, does the sense of alterity include only those outside Israel or is there a case for alterity within the national identity through the dialogue in the narratives of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*?

1.8 Project Outline

Chapter 2 will establish a voice for the silent women of Judges 19–21 through an investigation of Bakhtin's definition and explication of the term, *utterance*. Next, a brief survey of the contribution of the canon will be detailed to illuminate how the canon in itself becomes an utterance—a voice of answerability in the dialogue. Finally, an investigation of the Hebrew verb, נתח ("to cut"), will detail how intertextual utterances become voices within the canon to highlight voices of resistance into the horror of Judges 19. נתח ("to cut") in the Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History and in the prophetic text of Ezekiel reveal that its use in Judges is atypical as applied to a woman's body, adding to the revulsion of her abuse as the intertextual use of נתח as religio-political symbolism, linking the Levite's actions to priestly animal sacrifice. The unusual use of נתח ("to cut") highlights the extreme abusive nature of these chapters, laying the foundation of a desired response to this gendered abuse, the horrific silence that this one

scene exemplifies. In order to interpret this horror story, understanding the genre of Judges 19–21 is an invaluable endeavor.

Chapter 3 explores possible genre identification of the Hebrew term, משל ("proverb/parable"), with Judges 19–21. The performative nature of this genre will become evident with a syntagmatic analysis of משל. To read these final three chapters with an eye toward genre designation will enable the reader to grasp potential meanings within the text. With the assistance of Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, this chapter uncovers theological and political nuances in close readings of the text, especially with the Hebrew terms, סף ("threshold") and המאכלת ("the knife"). In order to establish the theological and political intention communicated in a violent text such as Judges 19–21, parallel texts within the Hebrew Bible, along with an ancient Near Eastern analogy, will be considered. This investigation will shed light on one of the possibilities of the didactic purpose of this story, building the foundation of an expected response within the canon, a voice of answerability. This foundation will come to fruition with the case study in chapter 10, of how *Ruth* is a voice of answerability to Judges 19–21.

Chapter 4 will look closely at reported speech and reported actions in order to investigate the discrepancies of the irony of authority (kingly activities), unity, anonymity, and activity (oaths and weeping). Through a survey of reported speech and double-voiced discourse, this section will seek to unveil diverse ideologies through intertextual utterances.

Chapter 5 will continue this search with an analysis of the functional aspect of חרם through Bakhtin's literary theory of grotesque realism to amplify the distinctive and unusual use of חרם in Judges. This literary lens will provide a heuristic to illustrate the intentional and didactic irony of the use of חרם as an engagement of canonical dialogue. *Ruth* becomes an

utterance of protest and answerability to the horrors through this lens, as one of the canonical births of the Judges narrative.

Chapter 6 will investigate the book of *Ruth* as a *traveling text* with consideration of *Ruth's* chronotope in the canons, along with an inquiry into form and function of *Ruth's* genre. A rationale will be generated that proposes that the genre of *Ruth* functions as a מָשָׁל. With a brief intertextual study of Ruth and Tamar, this chapter will seek to illuminate the dialogic nature of *Ruth* as an influential voice in the canon.

Chapters 7 through 9 will continue to explore *Ruth's* intertextual utterances, Ruth's agency as a character, loopholes of identity, and an exploration of the extravagant display of חסד. This engagement will provide the groundwork to illustrate *Ruth's* authoritative voice within the canon, in particular dialogue with the Torah.

Chapter 10 will culminate in an examination of *how* Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue. Through an intertextual investigation of idioms and identity, this study will make a case for *Ruth* as a response to Judges 19–21 as a reversal פילגש. Finally, a survey of the dialogical utterance of earth-keeping and people-keeping will consider the trajectories of the extravagant displays of חרם ("ban") and חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") within Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.

My research with Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* has provided a productive opportunity to provide a detailed case study of how these two texts, one in the Prophets (DH) and one that travels within the canon(s)–being located in the Prophets and Writings–are polyphonic in the canon. The goal of this analysis is to reveal how *Ruth* offers an authoritative voice of canonical answerability.

Chapter 2: THE ANSWERABILITY OF CANON

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the violent nature of Judges 19–21, with a focus on the Levite character as a pretender, whose words and deeds reveal strange inconsistencies. Following this introduction, I will set out to demonstrate how Bakhtin's utterance (verbal and non–verbal) can chart a path forward in discovering marginal voices to speak into the horrific silence within Judges 19–21. The aim of this demonstration will be to reveal how Bakhtin's utterance, through an intertextual reading within the canon, reveals voices of answerability for the violence witnessed in Judges 19–21. The utterance anticipates response, and its nature within these violent stories anticipates an ethical response– a response of answerability.

This chapter ends with a detailed investigation of the Hebrew verb, נתח ("to cut"), to illustrate that its use in Judges 19 is unique, highlighting the atypical violence surrounding the dismemberment of the פילגש. Towards this goal, the intertextual analysis of נתח ("to cut") suggests that the use of נתח is meant to provoke and connect with other stories, inviting readerly response. This invitation reveals an opportunity for an utterance of response, a voice of answerability, to this unusual display of horror.

2.0 A Voice for the Voiceless in Judges 19–21

The final three chapters of Judges reveal a strange story, full of anonymous figures and an obscene amount of gendered violence. In chapter 19, the wealth possessed was a woman, the Levite's פילגש. She was possessed and then brutally dispossessed. Her body was mutilated and repossessed for war. Chapter 19 begins a spiral downward, descending into the collection of

burnt towns, animals, and bodies.[1] חרם ("to ban/destroy," Judges 21:11) will become enacted on two groups: Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead. The haunted silence of Judges 19–21 permeates the borders of this epilogue.

Every woman is nameless and voiceless in these three chapters. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism will be the heuristic to illuminate voices within the canon. Close intertextual readings can reveal the intentionality of word choices and phrases that are part of the purposeful literary artistry within the canon. This polyphonic nature of the canon brings in multiple voices. Some of these intertextual voices can be missed when texts are read in isolation from one another. When read together, these intertextual voices from the margins can speak directly into the silence of the nameless and voiceless women.

The main voice to enter into dialogue as a case study with Judges 19–21 will be the text of *Ruth*. Each "voice," each text, will be listened to in chapters 2–9 of this study, and culminate into dialogue in chapter 10. What will be discovered through a canonical approach utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism is that *Ruth* will become an authoritative voice of canonical answerability within the horrific silence of Judges 19–21.

Dialogism provides a way forward with how the texts produce meaning within canonical dialogue. Meaning takes shape through dialogue; it is open-ended and is always re-birthed with new possibilities. Bakhtin's work centered around the question of how parts work within the whole, and how separate entities relate together and ultimately to the whole. With multiple stories in the canon, this is one of the central interpretive issues with which readers must contend. How do these disparate stories relate? How does one interpret the shocking and

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[1] Although requiring further comparative analysis, the idea of possessing an inheritance, along with the ensuing destruction in Tolkein's story, contains many comparative elements with Judges 19–21 (possessions, inheritance, destruction). See Tolkien, *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (New York, NY: Random House, 1982), 207.

offensive actions of an individual that do not seem to align with the larger message or themes woven throughout the corpus?

For Bakhtin, one of the worst offenses in life and in literature is to live as *the pretender*.[2] The Levite in Judges 19 embodies this characteristic. His strange anonymity reveals a strong lack of identity—when juxtaposed with his ability to persuade the assemblage of the Israelites for war. His agency, coupled with a lack of identity, reveals one who is characterized "without an identity of his own," as a pretender.[3] "[P]retending, in this sense can also mean to overrate the self one sees in the mirror."[4]

The narrative of this pretender Levite reveals inconsistencies within the life and ethic of this individual as understood within the Hebrew canon. The Levite's identity is shrouded in ambiguity and mystery. Conversely, the פילגש is given several terms of identity: נערה ("a young girl," Judges 19:3, 4, 5, 6, 8) in relationship to her father; אשה ("a woman or wife," Judges 19:1, 26, 27) when not in the presence of the Levite. This dark tale at the end of Judges ends in discord and violence.

More questions come to the unsettled mind of the reader as the matter is seemingly settled. The Levite exits the scene abruptly in Judges 20 after calling for vengeance on the Benjamite tribe. Immediately following the massacre of the Benjamite tribe, the people of Israel weep after fulfilling their eager battle cries. Twenty-five thousand Benjamite warriors are killed in the narrative. In an ironic twist within the summary, the text identifies these dead warriors as men of valor (Judges 20:44). The irony adds to the repulsion in these narratives.

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[2] The pretender reveals this lack of personal identity and ethics by living "representatively" and "ritualistically." See Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 31. Green shows that "such false living may come from over-identifying with the image of oneself that one finds in the mirror rather than attending more courageously to what an 'author other' shows." See Green, *How the Mighty are Fallen*, 45, f.n.38.

[3] Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics* 31.

[4] Morson and Emerson, *Prosaics*, 31.

The artistic literary representation of violence against women resists becoming devoured into the silence within the literary gaps. As evidenced in the following section—"Mute and Mutilated"—there is a vast array of scholarly "name-calling" regarding this section–from grisly metaphor to a homeless piece of literature.[5] Do these three chapters end and as readers, we move on without crafting a response to the horror? Is there a way other voices in the canon speak into this along with us, the reader? In order to begin to find a voice for the silent, and to look for a canonical voice of answerability, it is critical to think with Bakhtin concerning the dialogic nature of an artistic image that resists being silenced.

Judges 19–21 is regarded as a second appendix to Judges, and according to Brevard S. Childs, "There is no consensus regarding its canonical effect."[6] The artistic image of the mutilated body and the silent victims within the text resist becoming finalized. The voices within the canon continue to speak with Judges 19–21. Bakhtin warns against the deadening of an artistic image,

> What constitutes the deadening force of the artistic image: [an attempt] to circumvent the object from the side of the future, to display it in all its exhaustiveness, and thus deprive it of an open-ended future, to present the object with all of its boundaries—both internal and external—without a way out of this boundedness. The object is all here and nowhere else; and if it is all here, in its entirety, then it is dead and can be devoured. It is extracted from unfinalized life and becomes an object for possible consumption, it ceases to be an independent participant in the event of life, walking further alongside you; it has already spoken its last word and no inner open kernel is left to it, no inner infinity.[7]

One central concept for Bakhtin was that becoming was never finalized in life.[8] Being and becoming is not just a philosophical state, it is an event. Holquist expands on Bakhtin's use of the Russian term *sobytie.* Holquist writes*:*

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[5] The genre of this section will be dealt with in detail later in chapter 3.
[6] Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979), 258.
[7] Bakhtin, "Dark and Radiant Bakhtin," 206.
[8] Bakhtin's work flowed out of a place of exile—a backdrop of dictatorship, hardship, loss, and poverty.

The obligatory grouping of these words in this way is a syntactic doubling that points to the mutuality of their meaning. It points as well to etymological relations of the two words. In Russian, *event* is a word having both a root and a stem; it is formed from the word for being (*bytie*) with the addition of the prefix implying sharedness—so-, co- (or, as we should say in English, 'co' as in co-operate or co-habit)—giving *sobytie,* event as co-being. 'Being' for Bakhtin then is, not just an event, but an event that is shared. Being is simultaneity; it is always *co*-being.[9]

Being-as-event (*bytie-sobytie*) encompasses for Bakhtin this idea of utterance and ethics. Words and the ethics are integrated with ethical aesthetic kindness towards the other. Bakhtin continues:

For the first time, there appeared an infinitely deepened *I-for-myself*—not a cold *I-for-myself,* but one of boundless kindness toward the other; an I-for-myself that renders full justice to the other as such, disclosing and affirming the other's axiological distinctiveness in all its fullness.[10]

To enter into a truly dialogic relationship with the shared potential of becoming, is at the heart of Bakhtin's dialogism. To dismiss another in a dialogic relationship is to define them prematurely. This treats the other as a depersonalized thing and not a personality.[11]

In the case of the pretender, Bakhtin asserts there is always answerability. This answerability is an example of Bakhtin's Christocentric view, which formed his understanding of relationships and ethics—between people and with God. Because this was so foundational for Bakhtin, it is worth noting. This dynamic in relationship informs the many depths of Bakhtin's dialogism as it relates to art, literature and life, while beckoning this potential shaping that happens in dialogue and in relationship.

Green highlights how this concept is threaded throughout Bakhtin's writings. "His concept 'answerability,' . . . [r]oots in the same dialogic sense of reality that permeates all of his

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9 Holquist, *Dialogism*, 25.
10 Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability,* 56.
11 "Thingness" is the finalizing intonation of how another is treated when not responded to openly. See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 86.

thought and writing. Most succinctly, answerability is the lifework of becoming a self."[12] This lifework involves an ethical responsibility, which Bakhtin calls one's *non-alibi in being.*

Bakhtin's moral and ethical philosophy converge in the concept of answerability enacted in this event, which is the "deed" that makes another's "being more complete."[13] There is a particularity to each person that corresponds to ethical responsibility in the moment of the event. This responsibility is, therefore, heightened rather than diminished in the non-alibi for being. This is the place where one enacts an "answerable" deed, and in this situated place, once cannot be exempted of their responsibility.

Every life is responsible to another in the unique time and place wherein one is positioned. Taking this ethical and moral consciousness seriously adds an integral facet to the many utterances within the polyphonic nature of canon. There are voices for the silent unnamed ones, which speak responsibly and answer against the horrors and abuses in the story.

Bakhtin describes the event of being as a place of enrichment between the *I* and the *other.* He explains, "One cannot be neutral within the unitary and unique event of being. It is only from my own unique place that the meaning of the ongoing event can become clearer, and the more intensely I become rooted in that place, the clearer the meaning becomes."[14] For the silent concubine, there is no *neutral* place. Through careful intertextual study, voices (verbal and non–verbal utterances) within the canon will be discovered for the ones without speech.

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[12] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 226. Liapunov explains that he desires to "foreground the root sense of the term-answering; that point to bring out the 'responsibility' involves the performance of an 'existential dialogue'" (existential as relating to existence). See Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, eds Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist, trans. By Vadim Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1993), 80, n. 9.

[13] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act,* 42.

[14] Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 129.

2.1 The Polyphonic Nature of Canon

The Bible has been described as polyphonic (Hays, Mandolfo, Hyun, Newsom, Green), but, in spite of this claim, where does one begin to find a voice for the voiceless in the Bible? The many voices in a polyphonic (multi-voiced) work seek to "represent the dialogic nature of an idea."[15] These merging voices include the author, the text, the reader, and the characters. In this dialogue, what emerges are "voice-ideas."[16]

The polyphonic voices that emerge from the text are often pregnant with values and perceptions of their own. These values reveal that within these many voices, the polyphonic work is also heteroglossic. Heteroglossia focuses on what is involved within a character's speech—her ideology, socio-economic status, life perspectives, and even geography. Gender also contributes to the heteroglossia, although gender was a factor not presented in Bakhtin's writings.[17]

Through close attention to heteroglossia, one can begin to hear the "other tongues" that participate and impregnate a voice. This is where one can begin to tease out double-voiced discourse and loopholes within the language. Bakhtin writes that heteroglossia,

> [Is] another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse . . . this serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character speaking and the refracted intention of the author . . . [I]n such a discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions . . . [a]ll the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they—as it were—know about each other . . . [i]t is as if they actually hold a conversation with each other.[18]

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[15] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 23.
[16] Newsom, *Job*, 175.
[17] Green makes this point in *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 54.
[18] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 324–325

Bakhtin continues, "Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized. [E]xamples of this are comic, parodic . . . a potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages."[19] It is in the close examination of the text that the unearthing of this double-voiced dialogue will become apparent.

This double-voiced discourse is directed between individuals, in community, and between texts in the canon. Bakhtin describes an act as needing the "unity of two-sided answerability." Each unique act is "like a two-faced Janus." One face is the unique life situation that will never again happen in that exact way and in that exact moment; the other face looks "at the objective unity of a domain of culture."[20]

The event of being will require what Bakhtin calls the "unity of two-sided answerability—both for its content (special answerability) and for its Being (moral answerability)."[21] This responsibility through life and language to the *other* is fundamental to Bakhtin's thought. The polyphonic nature of canon reveals voices from the margins through the utterance (verbal and non–verbal). These voices become voices of answerability for the silent and the abused women in Judges 19–21—voices for content (special answerability) and being (moral answerability).

Green asserts, "A polyphonic work attempts to represent the dialogic nature of an idea."[22] Although Bakhtin did not approach the Bible in the same manner as he did with the novel in literature, his dialogic approach has much to offer in biblical studies. Green notes that in the case

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[19] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 324–326.
[20] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 2.
[21] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, 3.
[22] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 23.

of genre with Bakhtin, "There is little in his thought that seems patient with texts talking to texts; Bakhtin liked to think of particular readers, historically situated, as juxtaposing texts."[23]

Because of the nature of biblical texts as "Holy Writ" in Bakhtin's convictions, he does not deal as extensively with biblical texts as he does the novel. Although he may not be "patient" with the idea of texts speaking into one another, this is where his theories will be incredibly helpful with the dialogic nature of the Hebrew canon.

The social aspect of genre becomes is evidenced within the canon of the Hebrew Bible. The communities within the texts, along with those who hold these texts together as canonical, invite an even more extensive dialogue. Christopher B. Hays alludes to the potential voice of canon at the end of his article, "The Silence of the Wives: Bakhtin's Monologism of Ezra 7 and 10."[24] Hays details the monologic unity of Ezra, asserting, "Ezra's monologism is radically undermined"[25] within the polyphony of the canon.

He writes:

Ezra is not only God's trustworthy representative, but for this moment, for a sensitive reader or hearer, he is elevated to the status of lawgiver—which is traditionally the place of God. At the very least, he is represented as a new Moses. All this convergent narrative diversity could cause the reader to overlook the voices that are *not* heard: those of the women who are sent away. To say that they have no voice does not put it strongly enough: in fact, they are not really characters at all. They are nameless, unlike their husbands, and we see neither their reaction nor their departure.[26]

With the sending of the silent foreign wives, Hays sees a canonical dialogue within other narratives in the canon (such as in the case of *Ruth* and even the defense of Moses' foreign wife in Numbers 12). At the end of his article, he asks the question (in a "Clines-ian" manner), "What

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[23] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 23–24.
[24] Christopher B. Hays, "The Silence of the Wives: Bakhtin's Monologism and Ezra 7–10," *JSOT* 33, no. 1 (2008): 59–80.
[25] Hays, "The Silence of the Wives," 68.
[26] Hays, "The Silence of the Wives," 68.

does the book of Ezra do to you if you read it?" One answer would be: something rather different than what the canon as a whole does."[27] Hay's dichotomy reveals the tension that the canon holds in the Bible, asserting that Ezra's monologic text is free from "conflicting viewpoints."[28]

Conversely, in Ezra 10:15, there is potential opposition to what Ezra is demanding with the sending away of all foreign wives. "Only Jonathan son of Asahel and Jahzeiah son of Tikvah opposed this, but Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite, supported the proposal." Fensham notes that this is one of the most difficult passages in the text of Ezra. This could indeed be a dissenting voice among the "monologic unity." This verse presents an alternative view, an alternative utterance giving voice to the silent wives within the text of Ezra itself.

Although Hays finds no voice for the silent wives within the Ezra narrative, he does assert that canon has potential to become a voice of dialogue. Utilizing Brueggemann's idea of testimony and counter-testimony, Hays highlights the discordant voices in the larger corpus of the canon. Ezra sends away the foreign wives, although he shows the difficulty in Numbers 12, when the Lord defends a foreign woman in the presence of Miriam and Aaron.[29] This illustrates the literary artistry of a dialogic canon. Thus, I will argue that the canon is not a monologic voice. Conversely, canon provides a rich resource of multiple voices to speak through intertextual utterances (verbal and non–verbal).

2.2 On the Quest for a Voice: Discovering the Utterance

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[27] Hays is playing off of David Cline's, "Why is there a Book of Job, and What Does it Do to You if You Read it?", and "Why is there a Song of Songs, and What Does it Do to You if You Read it?", in *idem, Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (*JSOTSup*, 205; *Gender, Culture, Theory*, 1; Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 94–144.

[28] Hays, "The Silence of the Wives," 71.

[29] Hays, "The Silence of the Wives," 80.

The aim of this section is to show that a voice for the silent can be found in Bakhtin's basic unit of meaning, the living utterance. He writes:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. After all, the utterance arises out of this dialogue as a continuation of it and as a rejoinder to it—It does not approach the object from the sidelines.[30]

Green provides a helpful summary of the permeative qualities of the utterance. She summarizes,

> Bakhtin named the utterance as the fundamental unit of social intercourse. An utterance (from the monosyllabic to a novel) is what one of us says to another of us, so what I say to you: It is grounded and specific to our shared circumstances, framed in terms of what I want to communicate to you, what I think you are needing and ready to hear, and what I anticipate as your likely response . . . in my utterance there is intonation, and there is all that is unsaid—however it may be sensed.[31]

Green underlines Bakhtin's effectiveness when applied to the biblical text: "I find Bakhtin immensely challenging and helpful for the reading of a good deal of biblical text…[B]akhtin's philosophical anthropology sets in creative tension (dialogically) both the particular historical-social and the literary-creative aspects of speech, two realms current biblical study is struggling to keep related."[32]

This living utterance is the voice and voices of canon. There is a voice within that community as well as an authorial "voice" found behind the artisans of the text. Bakhtin has a helpful footnote in his discussion of the writer of a novel that attests well to the scribal community of the biblical text, "That is to say, the words are not his [the author] if we understand them as direct words, but they are his as things that are being transmitted ironically,

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[30] Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 276–277.
[31] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen,* 22–23.
[32] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen,* 23.

exhibited and so forth, that is, as words that are understood from the distances appropriate to humor, irony, parody, etc."[33] Along with the texts in themselves, part of the rich dialogue of utterances is found within their intertextual connections in the canon. These other canonical voices create an even broader context, rich with diverse intonations, potential through the struggle of the utterance.

As stated in chapter 1, utterances are both verbal and non-verbal, encompassing what is explicitly stated within the text and what is implicit within the text. [34] Each utterance consists of the "speaker, the listener and the topic." [35] Intonation is the liminal space that exists between what is said and what is left unsaid. This is where Bakhtin sought the aesthetic, "where it has been traditionally avoided, in the totality of author/text/reader relationship."[36]

An illustration proves useful to demonstrate intonation within a text and in speech:

> A common illustration of this tendency is found when we hear someone talking on the telephone to another person whose identity we do not know, but whose relation to the speaker we can guess form the speaker's speech patterns. Intonation serves as the material means for stitching together the said, in the speech of the speaker, and the unsaid, in the context of the situation. The community of shared values gives the physically articulated acoustical shifts in pitch or loudness different semantic weight. Through intonation we express a judgment on what we are simultaneously conveying as information in an utterance: 'The commonness of assumed basic value judgments constitutes the canvas upon which living human speech embroiders the design of intonation.'[37]

Silence and intonation are the "intentional gapping," which could go unnoticed if the reader is not made aware of the artistic intentionality of the gap. This is reminiscent of the

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[33] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 299.

[34] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 206–208.

[35] For Bakhtin, the "speaker, the listener, and the topic" are all contained within an utterance. Holquist and Clark show how Bakhtin anthropomorphizes this with the idea of the topic as "the hero" and this becomes a "form of struggle," a place where the verbal and nonverbal meet. See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 205–206.

[36] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 208.

[37] Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 208. See also V.N. Vološinov, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art," in *Freudianism: A Marxist Critique,*" I.R. Titunik, tr. (New York, NY: Academic, 1976), 103.

warning "mind the gap" in the London Underground. One takes notice of the gap and mentally

notes, "Well, there it is," and then proceeds to hop over quickly as not to injure oneself.

In Hebrew narrative, it can be proposed that when readers "mind the gap," they must

remain in the gap and listen for another voice of intonation, another utterance. Yvonne Sherwood

comments on these "gaps" in the story:

> Those who have explored the literary style of the Old Testament/Tanakh, from
> Erich Auerbach to Robert Alter, teach us that the style is sparse, full of gaps. The
> tendency is not to keep in but leave out. So-called "ideological criticism" of the
> Bible tends to assume, quite reasonably, that writers tell stories in ways that serve
> their own interests. But on reflection, this assumption seems far too
> straightforward. No one who has read very far into the Prophets can assume that
> the biblical texts are written by people who want to feel good about themselves. It
> does, however, seem reasonable to assume that writers faced with the task of
> recording the story of their own people's origins would be free—and would be
> tempted—to make the story as neat as possible. We might expect them to validate
> their group's own identity claims and keep all awkwardness out.[38]

The reader is invited to remain in the gap with the text artisan, within these awkward spaces in

the narratives. These gaps are also connected to relatable texts within the canon. This place of

intertextual intonation becomes what is left unsaid, and what is unsaid often becomes the most

important voices in the story. These are the utterances that must be voiced.

What is discovered in these gaps is irony, counter-ideology and even voices of

answerability (responsibility). To "fill an empty gap" may seem counterintuitive, but if done in

dialogue within the voices of the canon, a rich complex conversation could potentially lead to

new discoveries which create a continuous open dialogue. Too often, the biblical texts are

viewed as "God's word to humanity," as if each word is a direct monologic command, resulting

in every movement of the corpus deforming into apodictic law.

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[38] Yvonne Sherwood, "Hagar and Ishmael: The Reception of Expulsion," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 68, no. 3 (2014): 288.

2.3 The Chronotopes

The literary artistic representations of the chronotope (time-space) in Judges 19–21 and in *Ruth* create the nexus of meaning within the utterance (speaker, listener, topic). Bakhtin asserts that this chronotope is usually through a familiar place, not an alien one. The chronotope is the bridge between the literary world created by the author and the world in which the author resides. Roland Boer writes, "The intersection between actual and fictional worlds happens by means of chronotope."[39] This will become part of the heightened irony with the text of Judges. What is alien or foreign and what is familiar? These questions are woven throughout both narratives.[40]

The three main chronotopes that the reader encounters in various stories is the chronotope of encounter, chronotope of road, and the chronotope of threshold. The chronotope of encounter in the novel is most often an encounter on the road. The chronotope of threshold as an intertextual utterance reveals significant intonation for the silent פילגש in chapter 3 of this study, as the words used for threshold reveal a heightened significance, inviting a dialogue within the liminal space of the literal and metaphorical threshold in Judges 19:27 as the פילגש's hand lay upon the סף ("threshold").

As stated in chapter one, the chronotope of threshold will be used most extensively throughout this project in the following three ways: (1) intertextual lexical connections within the canon, (2) specific Hebrew terms סף ("threshold") and מפתן ("threshold"), (3) the identity of women in literary threshold moments.

As previously stated, within the process of canonization, one discovers a community of voices within the canonical process itself and the finalized canon. This polyphonic process

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[39] Boer, *Bakhtin and Genre Theory,* 2.
[40] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 243–244.

contributes to the quest for a voice for the silent concubine. Is there any answerability in this

gruesome epilogue?

Bakhtin notes well the tension and interpenetration that will remain in the text, the corpus

of texts that constitute the canon, the text artisans, and readers.

> Every work has a beginning and end, the event represented likewise has a
> beginning and end . . . but they lie in different worlds . . . in different chronotopes
> that can never fuse with each other or be identical to each other but are . . . at the
> same time . . . interrelated and indissolubly tied up with each other . . . we can put
> it as follows. Before us are two events: the event narrated and the event of
> narration itself . . . we participate in the latter as listeners and readers . . . in
> different places and times but at the same time these two events are indissolubly
> united in a single but complex event that we might call the work in totality of all
> its events, including the external material givenness of its work, and its text, and
> the world represented in the text and the author-creator and the listener or reader;
> thus we perceive the fullness of the work in all its wholeness and indivisibility,
> but at the same time we understand the diversity of the elements that constitute
> it."[41]

In order to discover another voice, one must begin with an investigation of the communal

process of canonization. Barton wisely cautions the reader about new methods that attempt to

"excommunicate its predecessors."[42] Bakhtin's theories allows multiple voices to contribute to

the methodological dialogue—i.e., scholars like Beor, Green, Newsom, and Mandolfo.

2.4 Canon as a Voice of Answerability

The voices of canon (and the Hebrew Bible) are important in the dialogic nature of the

texts as we have them.[43] The complex process of canonization would have involved the earliest

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[41] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 254–255.
[42] Using Bakhtin as a lens to analyze these texts is another voice in the many voices of methods in Old Testament studies. John Barton illuminates this well as he writes, "Much harm has been done in biblical studies by insisting that there is, somewhere, a 'correct' method . . . [which will] unlock the mysteries of the text." Many of the methods used have something of value to offer. See Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 5.
[43] For a fuller discussion see Childs' *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 50. See also Eugene Ulrich's *The Notion and Definition of Canon* in "The Canon Debate" (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002), 21–35.

selection of story, with an "interplay" of oral story and how it influences the written story.[44] The

process of canonization, although not central for this study, is interesting to juxtapose with the

nature of early scripture consciousness as it would involve the process of ideological selection

and the historical preservation of identity stories.

> As Provan has argued in dialogue with the work of Brevard Childs:

> Canon does not represent, as many have claimed, an arbitrary and late imposition
> on the Old Testament texts but religious authorities, alien to and distorting of the
> essence of the Old Testament without hermeneutical significance. Canon is rather
> a complex historical process within ancient Israel that entailed the collecting,
> selecting and ordering of texts, to serve as a normative function as Scripture
> within the continuing religious community.[45]

This process of collecting story, as described by Provan and Niditch, is indeed complex and

varied. Niditch shows the influence of the repetition we discover in the texts, along with key

words, refrains, repeated words, and the rhetoric of metonymy. This interplay reveals "[A]n oral

aesthetic [that] infuses the Hebrew Scripture as it now stands."[46] The high degree of the

intertextuality of the Hebrew Bible, when juxtaposed to the idea of an early Scripture

consciousness, reveals that the canonical voice of answerability is even stronger than one might

have imagined.

Even if the final form of the texts was late, this does not indicate a late canon

consciousness. Kelle insists, "There does not seem to be sufficient reason for assuming that the

Persian period society was radically discontinuous with pre-exilic Israel and Judah."[47] With this

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[44] Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word: Ancient Israelite Literature* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 81.

[45] Provan, "The Historical Books of the Old Testament," in *Against the Grain*, 176.

[46] Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word*, 24.

[47]Brad E. Kelle, "Ancient Israelite Prophets and Greek Political Orators." Megan Bishop Moore, Brad E. Kelle, John Haralson Hayes; *Israel's Prophets and Israel's Past: Essays on the Relationship of Prophetic Texts and Israelite History in Honor of John H. Hayes* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2006), 59, fn. 5.

in consideration, an early canon consciousness is not only likely, but quite probable taking into consideration oral history traditions prevalent in ancient cultures.

V. Philips Long illustrates the move away from a diachronic approach to a synchronic approach in a survey of the historiography of the Hebrew Bible. "Confronted by biblical texts that are no longer silenced by dissection and fragmentation but are able to speak, some scholars see an opportunity to hear more clearly what the texts have to say, including what they may have to say about the historical past."[48] Because texts are *in* a canon, to read them in isolation is to silence voices.

Newsom illustrates three distinct qualities that embody a polyphonic text in her work on Job; a polyphonic text "embodies dialogic sense of truth," "the author's position, although represented in the text is not privileged," and "the polyphonic text ends without finalizing closure."[49] Discovering what the dialogic sense of truth is communicating involves reading the text carefully, noting consistencies and inconsistencies in what is articulated by the individuals, and the congruence and incongruence in their actions. Texts will draw in other texts in the Hebrew Scriptures as part of this dialogue.

The process of canonization and the final form of canon indicate a voice and voices in the process. The canon itself becomes a voice in the dialogue. This is the *dialogical contact* of the canon. For Bakhtin, this dialogical contact is evident in the novel and in the work of the author: "[F]ar from neutral in his relationship to image: to a certain extent he even polemicizes with his own language, argues with it, agrees with it . . . interrogates it, eavesdrops on it, but also ridicules it, parodically exaggerates it and so forth."[50]

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[48] V. Philips Long, "Historiography of the Old Testament" in *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches,* David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, eds (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic), 162.

[49] Newsom*, Job*, 21.

[50] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 46.

The Hebrew narrative poetics reveal dialogical contact through irony and word choice. The text artisan contributes to this canonical voice in the dialogue. This is evidenced in the Judges narrative. Being *one in voice* is ironic during this period. Unity of thought and belief was never a characteristic of this era, so to have such unity reveals an intonation of another utterance within the story.

The process of dialogue with the Hebrew texts continued even after canonization. How does one move from the Hebrew wisdom texts, the narrative, Law, Prophets to the ethics of everyday living? And the dialogue continued as evidenced in later works such as the Mishnah, Gemara, Targums, Midrashim.[51] A canonical approach to this study invites voices—deemed less authoritative in the past—i.e., the Writings vs. the Prophets and the Torah—but are dynamic and powerful intertextual voices of protest and subversion, to become voices of resistance that birth new possibilities and new ways to navigate similar dilemmas. Canon offers voices to speak into the horror and silence of Judges 19–21.

Brown writes,

The dialogical quality of Scripture complicates the issue of biblical authority, for the task of canonical interpretation requires the exegete to find new ways to mediate the Bible's contesting voices, its testimonies and counter testimonies. The canonical critic wrestles with whether there are theological perspectives and claims that should be privileged over other perspectives and claims, all represented in Scripture. And what about the voices muted in Scripture that cry out for a hearing, such as the voice of the resident alien or the Canaanite assigned to destruction, as well as the countless voices of nameless, marginalized women?[52]

Walter Brueggemann describes the importance of the final shape of the canon, as outlined by Brevard S. Childs. Brueggemann highlights questions of pedagogical application implicit therein. Brueggemann lists the range of authoritative weight of the sections of the canon in order

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[51] The Mishnah and Gemara together are the Talmud.
[52] Brown, *Old Testament Exegesis*, 177.

of its function and significance (the tripartite canon) within the realm of authority and in descending order of "rank of importance."[53]

As evidenced from Qumran, the Pentateuch appeared to hold the most authoritative weight, over and against the historical books. The early view is that the canon was shaped through three successive phases: the Law (*torâ)*, then the Prophets (*nebî'îm)*, and last the Writings (*ketubîm)*. The Torah would hold most weight in authority, followed by the Prophets (the former and latter prophets),[54] and finally the Writings.

 Far from a defunct text in need of a historical-critical autopsy, "Canon has to do with life."[55] As the individual texts became a whole, and three notes became a chord, the final shape of the canon became a voice of the community.

According to Trebolle and Kugler, the historical books seemed to have a supportive nature to the Pentateuch, Isaiah, Minor Prophets, and Psalms. As evident from Qumran findings, before canonization status, they remained more "fluid" as evidenced in the minor divergences within the texts discovered at Qumran.[56] Robert Retzko cites an example from Judges.

> The literary complexity and textual fluidity of biblical writings create difficulties for linguistic dating and historical linguistic arguments and theories which are based mainly and exclusively on the MT . . . many linguistic changes in the biblical manuscripts frequently stand at odds with the traditional views on the chronology of linguistic forms and uses in BH. [57]

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[53] Walter Brueggemann, *The Creative Word: Canon as a Model for Biblical Education* (Nashville, TN: Fortress, 2015), 9.

[54] Former Prophets include Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the Latter Prophets, constituting the twelve (minor) prophets. Brueggemann's list coincides with the classic view of the formation of the biblical canon as a "three staged theory developed in 1871 by the German scholar Heinrich Graetz and elaborated and disseminated in the works of Frants Buhl, Gerrit Wildeboer and Herbert E. Ryle." The classic view is indebted to the theory of the closure of the canon which took place at a meeting at Jamnia by the rabbinical council but this meeting is speculation and highly doubted today to have actually taken place. See Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 234–235.

[55] Brueggemann, *The Creative Word*, 7.

[56] For a detailed discussion of the fragmentary scroll of Judges 21:12–25, see Robert Rezetko in "The Qumran Scrolls of the Book of Judges: Literary Formation, Textual Criticism, and Historical Linguistics," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 13, no 2 (2013): 1–68.

[57] Rezetko, "Qumran Scrolls," 3.

The process of canonization and the final shape of canon reveal that the Qumran community was a community in dialogue with these texts. There are indicators in the text itself that point towards meaning and interpretation. These factors reveal that the polyphonic nature of the canon is nothing new.

According to Brueggemann, in his monumental work, *Theology of the Old Testament*, the dialogical focus is the voice of the people to God. They are the ones who place God on the witness stand. God is the defendant; the words of the people are the Judge and the Jury. Who is answerable? Whose words are weightier? God is answerable to them.[58]

From courtroom imagery taken from Paul Ricoeur's metaphor of trial, Brueggemann begins his exposition of Old Testament Theology. All we have access to is eyewitness testimony. For Brueggemann, this is where the metaphor begins. He continues:

> I propose that this imagery of trial indicates the way in which the *logos* of Israel evokes the *theos* of Israel. And in the *theos-logos* process of the Old Testament, everything depends on the rhetoric of Israel, which in the first instant is subject neither to explanatory doubts of historical-criticism nor to the overburdened hedging of supernatural theology that seeks to make the advocacy of testimony more coherently compelling. Thus, we begin by asking the single, simple question: How did Israel in the Old Testament speak about God?[59]

Indeed, for Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament*, everything does depend "[up]on the 'rhetoric of Israel.'" This dialogue between Israel and YHWH is described as Israel's counter-testimony**.** Brueggemann reveals that in this counter-testimony, YHWH is distant and hidden, at times abusive, and even contradicts himself.[60] The space does not allow for full treatment of these accusations of Israel (so says Brueggemann) against YHWH, but it is critical to note the shift in authority in Brueggemann's scenario.

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[58] Walter Brueggeman, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1997).
[59] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 135.
[60] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 333–367.

With this image of testimony, the authoritative weight is given to the voice of the people. While this is an important point within the courtroom imagery, this depiction is not a fully adequate representation of the relationship between Israel and YHWH. Chapman views Brueggemann's solitary focus on human agency as "reductive" because they treat "individual texts" as representing either "social legitimation or critique."[61] The voice of human agency is one of the components in the dialogue but not the only voice.

In the canonization process and in the shaping of the canon, there are more voices that emerge. The polyphonic nature of canon enables the rhetoric of Israel, along with the voice of YHWH, the voice of the foreigner, and the voice of the silenced person and the voice of community to be heard. Chapman writes that "'Life' emerges from the *multiplicity* of voices contained within the canon, for only in the *chorus* of these voices are we able to learn to hear a voice other than our own."[62] Rather than a constraint, canon represents a dialogue of texts with "imaginative power."[63]

Bakhtin's philosophical project of Architectonics reflects this idea as well—how art and life relate to one another. To uncover another of these canonical voices of the community in the text, a close intertextual reading text may provide a way forward. How the texts are collected and put together add another level of canonical dialogue in this quest for voices for the voiceless.

A good question concerns how one can unearth a voice for the silent women and men in Judges 19–21. Instead of letting the text stand on its own, it is crucial to read the text as part of a

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[61] Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets*, 98, n. 2.
[62] Chapman, *The Law and the Prophets,* 108–109.
[63] Chapman writes that the way in which canon creates life is in "*Both* its imaginative *and* its normative functions." See *The Law and Prophets*, 107. See also Kevin Van Hoozer, who states, "The imagination is the cognitive faculty by which we see as a whole what those without imagination see only as unrelated parts . . . Where reason analyzes . . . imagination synthesizes, making connections between things that appear unrelated." See "Lost in Interpretation: Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics," *JETS* 48, no. 1 (2005): 89–114 (109).

whole. The whole is to be understood here with Judges as part of the Deuteronomic History (Deuteronomy–2 Kings).[64]

The placement of Judges after Deuteronomy creates a dialogue of texts—the dialogical contact of the canon. Deuteronomy is a Janus text, looking behind at Genesis through Numbers and then forward, conversing with Joshua through 2 Kings. This brings even greater clarity as one reads refrains such as "In those days, Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" (21:25), which draws the reader into an assessment of the narrative, becoming *one* of the voices in the text. Although Judges has unity as a text in itself, it is by no means in isolation from those around it.[65] The placement of this addendum (Judges 19–21) of Judges *must* be read in dialogue with the texts of canon around it in order to be understood as the communities of these texts would have read them.

In the next chapter, the argument for the genre of Judges 19–21 as a משל of dialogue will be made in order to understand the form and function of the text. Along with genre, questions of authority will be a necessary component of evaluation in this search. How would a text contribute a voice to another text? This quest for a voice will involve a short excursus into the scribal creation of texts looking at how authority grew from an oral/non-literate culture to an authoritative text–dominated one. This quest will enable a dialogue of texts to emerge in order to find a voice for the silent at the end of Judges. An epilogue in isolation creates a story cut off from the whole, and prematurely *finalizing* a conversation in the story.

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[64] Martin Noth proposed a single unitary reading of Deuteronomy through Kings in his 1943 thesis titled, *Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft.* See *The Deuteronomistic History* JSOTS 15 (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1981).

[65] This is seen in the "literary integrity" within the text itself. There are introductory and concluding formulas, and also evidence for unity within the structure and theological themes. See Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 49–54. Also, Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012), 32–35.

2.5 The use of נתח as a Voice of Canonical Answerability

> Then he went out to his house and he took the knife and he seized at his פילגש,
> then he *cut her* in pieces *to the bone* (limb by limb), in twelve pieces and sent her
> among every border in Israel (Judges 19:29).

The root נתח ("to cut") occurs twenty-two times in the Hebrew Bible in thirteen passages. In its verbal form, it is only in the *piel*. The root is also found in the nominal form. In the Judges text, it is found in only two places and is in the verbal form. In Judges 19:29 and 20:6, it is in the verbal form in the context of the woman being dismembered by the Levite. When observed in a wider scope in the Hebrew Bible, its syntagmatic use results in some very interesting findings.

The use of this term generally occurs in a sacrificial, priestly or prophetic context, including one parallel passage with Saul in 1 Samuel 11:7. Again, the intertextual dialogue indicates that in this Judges narrative, this משל,[66] is highlighting a religio-political voice with the dismembering of the woman. This study will look at each of its uses to highlight the intentional didactic use of this term as an avenue to uncover a canonical answerability for this slain woman, with the broader scope of her dismemberment as a political and theological voice in the canon.

2.5.1 *נתח in the Pentateuch and Deuteronomistic History*

The Hebrew word, נתח, is found within the Pentateuch in Exodus and Leviticus. In Exodus 29:17, נתח is the verbal and nominal form. The root is found only in the *piel* verb form, the meaning denotes, "to cut up, to divide into pieces, divide by the joints."[67] In its use in

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[66] I will argue for the genre of Judges 19–21 as a משל of Dialogue in chapter 3.

[67] Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Lafayette, LA: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1981), 677. נתח signifies a more cultic use, rather than the more common verb כרת ("to cut"), which is used in every book of the Hebrew Bible with the exceptions of Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Jonah, and Habbakuk.

Exodus, its depiction is that of the consecration of priests. In this verse, it provides the instructions for Aaron and his sons on how to prepare the sacrificial ram for a burnt offering.

In Leviticus, נתח is only in the nominal form and in every use, is referring to a burnt offering (1:6, 8; 1:12; 8:20; 9:13). The עלה (burnt offering) was performed twice daily including special days such as annual feasts, Sabbath, and the new moon festival (Numbers 28–29; 2 Kings 16:15; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 31:1-3; Ezra 3:3–6). It was also performed ritualistically, along with a sin offering, for the unclean and defiled—i.e., Leviticus 12:6–8; Leviticus 15:14–15, 29–30; and Numbers 6:10–11.

2.5.2 *DH: Kings and Samuel (נתח in the Parallel Passage in 1 Samuel 11:7)*

In the Deuteronomic History, נתח is found in 1 Samuel 11:7. This passage is also a parallel to the Judges story in 19:29–30. The actions of the Levite with the פילגש mirror the actions of Saul with the oxen. Each employ the same verbs: *he took, he cut up, he sent.* The limbs of the slain woman (Judges 19) and animal (1 Samuel 11) were a threatening message to incite a quick assembly. If one chose not to assemble, what had been done to the animal would be the fate of the receiver.[68] The oath stipulations were "bound up in the cutting."[69]

As will be further detailed in chapter 3 of this study, this was not a normative symbolic action in the Hebrew Bible as a way to call for an assembly. The message was clear and is evidenced in the Israelites' response that this has not been done since the "days of Egypt" (19:30). Furthermore, the message sent through limbs is attested to in ancient Near Eastern oral archives.

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[68] M.J. Haunan, "The Background and Meaning of Amos 5:17b," *Harvard Theological Review 79* (1986): 341–343.

[69] Haunan, "Amos," 342.

One parallel example is found in a Mari document, in a letter from Bahdi-Lim to his king, Zimri-Lim. This letter details the desire to seek the dismemberment of a prisoner to incite an assembly for war.[70] Another parallel is an Aramaic inscription that correlates the cutting up of the calf with that of the noblemen.[71] The graphic political and theological overtones are evidenced in each of these examples.

The graphic nature of the Judges 19:29–30 depiction of a woman being sliced into pieces highlights the intensity and violence of the message. Given the intertextual connections of נתח, with such a broad range of priestly and prophetic material, the message sent in her body indicates a dark and violent twist on not only the nature of this assembly, but also in the outcome of a civil war—culminating in an internal tribal execution of חרם.

2.5.3 *נתח in a Prophetic משל: Ezekiel 24*

נתח ("to cut") is depicted in Judges and in Ezekiel in the nominal form; these are the only two places used to describe people. In Judges, it depicts the פילגש, and in Ezekiel 24:6, it is used to describe the siege and the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will be taken out of the boiling pot, piece by piece, and eventually exiled. The death of Ezekiel's wife ensues later in the chapter. What is also notable in the Ezekiel passage is that נתח depicts a political shift with the pronouncement of the beginning of the siege.

In Judges, the dismembered woman is sent as a message, which ignites the course of events for the beginning of a civil war and the execution of חרם against the tribe of Benjamin, and later, Jabesh-Gilead. Both depictions reveal that the prophetic use of נתח in Ezekiel 24:6 משל

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[70] Abraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1998), 103.
[71] This treaty was between two Kings, Barga'yah of HTK and Matti'el of Arpad (Sefire I, A, 40), *ca.* 750 BCE. See Joseph Fitzmeyer, *The Aramaic Inscriptions of Sefire* (Rome, Italy: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1967).

(with prophetic parabolic use) with the extended metaphor of Jerusalem as a wife in that context, coupled with its use in the Judges' משל, reveal an intentional didactic thrust to these two uses for נתח.

2.5.4 נתח *as Canonical Answerability of Judges*

The intertextual use of נתח reveals a ritualistic and symbolic use of נתח in each משל (Judges 19–21; Ezekiel 24), along with a literal use in priestly texts of consecration that also signify symbolic ritual sacrifice. The severing of animal or person was an intentional, priestly, prophetic and political message. The appropriation of this term, נתח, indicates a broader theological political thrust in a transitional period for Israel before the monarchy and into the exilic period.

The horrific and abusive symbolic use of a woman's body terrorizes the reader even more once the actions of how she is cut up is equated to sacrificial animal slaughter. Men's bodies are not abused in this way. The gap of dialogue for the voiceless and nameless woman of Judges 19 waits for an utterance to challenge the silent acceptance on the surface of the text. Through the answerability of the canon, voices of repulsion and resistance emerge. The intertextual uses of נתח indicate that the use of this term by the text artisan communicates something atypical and bizarre in this graphic depiction. Readers are required to remain in this horrific and traumatic gap in order to listen to the voices within the canon.

The next two chapters of Judges will indicate that what follows is an extravagant portrayal of חרם, revealing loopholes and double-voicedness akin to grotesque realism. The extraordinary amount of female abuse in Judges 19–21 will find voices of subversion and protest within the canon. In Chapter 10, *Ruth* will provide a response to the horrific silence. Through her

agency, the person of Ruth will embody a voice of answerability as a reversal פילגש,

demonstrating an extravagant display of חסד.

2.6 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter is to establish a voice of canonical answerability for the voiceless

women in Judges 19-21 through utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism as a heuristic to discover marginal

canonical voices. By employing Bakhtinian concepts (such as answerability and the utterance), a

way forward is chartered toward an intertextual close reading within the canon. The goal of this

reading is to uncover voices for the silent in the final chapters of Judges. The intertextual

example of נתח highlights the canonical answerability of voices of the dismemberment of the

פילגש as revealing much more intention than a mere gruesome story or something akin to the

Brothers Grimm fairy tales.

This chapter presents an investigation of the Hebrew verb, נתח ("to cut"), illustrating that

its use in Judges 19 is unique, highlighting the atypical violence surrounding the dismemberment

of the פילגש. The intentional didactic nature of the use of נתח invites a closer look at the

theological and political graphic depiction of this woman's dismemberment. The intertextual

analysis of נתח ("to cut") reveals that the use of נתח is associated with other stories in the canon,

inviting an ethical response to this violent rendering.

The next chapter takes into consideration the genre designation of Judges 19–21 as a משל

("proverb/parable") of dialogue. This strange narrative is the longest cohesive unit in the Judges

text, yet every character is anonymous except for Phinehas. A detailed investigation of the

theological and political nuances in Judges 19–21 will shed light on the didactic purpose of this

story.

Expanding on the intertextual analysis of נתח ("to cut") highlighted in chapter 2, chapter 3 will give careful attention to the canonical answerability with the intertextual dialogue of the terms סף ("threshold") and המאכלת ("the knife"). The intertextual strangeness and unique use of these terms will begin to build the foundation of an expected response to this violent משל ("proverb/parable") of Judges 19–21 within the canon, culminating in the case study of chapter 10, demonstrating how *Ruth* is a voice of canonical answerability to Judges 19–21.

CHAPTER 3: Judges 19–21 as a משל of Dialogue

This chapter continues the exploration of the heightened violence depicted in Judges 19–21 in order to build the expectation of an intertextual response, a voice of canonical answerability. In the previous chapter, the intertextual analysis of נתח ("to cut") demonstrated that the use of נתח ("to cut") in Judges 19:29 is atypical. The graphic violence in Judges 19 is calling for an ethical utterance of response, a voice of answerability, to this unusual display of horror within the canon. This utterance of response will come to fruition in chapter 10, with the text of *Ruth*. *Ruth* will be located as one example of a response to the extravagant violence witnessed in Judges 19–21. Laying the foundation for this case study will require attention to the critical issue of genre designations within scholarly inquiry surrounding Judges 19–21.

This chapter will be an exploration of assigning a more effective genre designation to Judges 19–21 than what has been previously designated. This particular endeavor has perplexed scholars on several fronts. Most notably, genre designation has been difficult due to the significant genre shift within the Judges story in these particular three chapters, Judges 19–21.

The משל ("proverb/parable") genre can be a fruitful designation due to its anticipatory and didactic nature. The משל genre beckons for the canon and the reader to offer voices of response within the intentional silent gaps within the story. Taking into account the extreme gendered violence coupled with unqualified feminine silence, much headway for possible interpretive ethical responses can be sought out with this particular genre designation.

Chapter 3 explores the possible genre identification of the Hebrew term, משל ("proverb/parable"), with Judges 19–21. These three chapters contain an excessive amount of horrific violence with the dismemberment of the פילגש, the internal execution of חרם ("the ban")

within Israel's own people and borders, and the final kidnapping of young women at Shiloh to serve as reproductive agents to repopulate Benjamin. Anonymity marks another distinctive shift within these three chapters which is not observed in the previous eighteen chapters. In Judges 19–21, only one character is named: Phinehas. The performative nature of the משל ("proverb/parable") genre will become evident with a syntagmatic analysis of משל with the assistance of Bakhtin's dialogism, in particular with attention to genre and the utterance. This chapter uncovers theological and political nuances in close readings of the text, especially with the Hebrew terms סף ("threshold") and המאכלת ("the knife").

In order to establish the theological and political intention communicated in a violent text such as Judges 19–21, parallel texts within the Hebrew Bible, along with an ancient Near Eastern analogy, will be considered. The aim of this chapter is to continue the exploration of the atypical use of violence through a close intertextual analysis. Genre is a critical component to this canonical conversation in order to highlight the intertextual intentionality. The extravagant use of חרם ("the ban") is unusual and thus will be more fully explored in chapter 4.

3.0 Understanding Judges 19–21 as a משל of Dialogue

The final three chapters of Judges are indeed one of the "worst places of the story."[1] They have become an icon for the most horrific points in the Hebrew Bible, an equivalent to the genocide in Canaan, but condensed into a single figure as horror personified. The camera lens of horrific trauma widens in Judges 19–21 as the reader becomes entangled in a web of rape, oath-taking, dialogue, retribution, murder, and a mass kidnapping.

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[1]The final three chapters of Judges are gruesome and make the reader want to shut the book. Tolkien captures this sense well in a difficult scene, where Frodo is imagining their moment within the context of a story. "We're going on a bit too fast. You and I, Sam, are still stuck in the worst places of the story, and it is all too likely that some will say at this point: 'Shut the book now, dad; we don't want to read any more'" (Frodo Baggins in J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* [New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1982], 697).

A reframing of David Clines's insightful inquiry is pertinent to this narrative: What does Judges 19–21 do to you if you read it?[2] The silence of the mute and mutilated (פילגש) leaves the reader appalled and unable to read the text, so the phrase, "*if* you read it," becomes especially pertinent. What occurs in Judges 19 will echo through Judges 20 and Judges 21.

After the פילגש is cut into twelve parts, she haunts all the dialogue that follows.[3] The hauntings are her silence, her abuse, the cold reception from the Levite on the threshold, and her mutilation. Her mutilated body traumatizes the story as an eidolon of memory. She may be mute, but her silence speaks, with an aura of authority.[4] She foreshadows, in a gruesome way, what is lost by the women of Jabesh-Gilead, and subsequently the women of Shiloh by the end of this narrative.

In this chapter, the question is asked on how one might speak about this horrendous addendum, this abusive text.[5] Bakhtin's statement bears repeating, in that it reveals the provoking nature of this text as he writes, "Every literary work *faces outward away from itself*,

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[2] David J. A. Clines has asked this question with the texts of Job and Song of Songs. See **"**Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible" (*JSOT* Sup, 205; Gender, Culture, Theory, 1; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995). Christopher B. Hays poses this challenge with the voiceless wives in the text of Ezra in "The Silence of the Wives," 59–80.

[3] פילגש has been translated as "second wife" and "concubine." In examples within the Hebrew Bible, it is clear that a פילגש is distinguished from an אשה (see Genesis 25:6; 35:22; 2 Samuel 21:11).

[4] The authoritative silence noted by David Janzen in reference to trauma is the language about Adolf Hitler's concentration camps, as evidenced in Elie Wiesel's writings. Janzen shows that reading a text such as Judges 19–21, through the lens of trauma, "helps us make better sense of the writing's structure, gaps, imagery, and presentations of particular stories" (*The Violent Gift: Trauma's Subversion of The Deuteronomistic History's Narrative* [London, England: Bloomsbury, 2013], 35). The trauma would have impacted the survivors and their literature. The aim of this study is to take a closer look at the imagery with intertextual connections.

[5] For discussions on anti-Saulite rhetoric, see Robert H. O'Connell, The *Rhetoric of the Book of Judges* (VTSup, 63; Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1996*);* Marc Z. Brettler, *"*The Book of Judges: Literature as Politics," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108 (1989): 395–418. Gale Yee argues for an early date from the "preexilic Deuteronomist" (seventh century) of Judges 19–21 and proposes that the epilogue is an intensification of the literary viewpoint that has been witnessed since the prologue. John Van Seters recognized that Judges 17–21 were "later editions" that "stood outside the Dtr's work." See Yee, *Judges & Method: New Approaches in Biblical Studies*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2007), 144; Van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1983), 345. The irony of post-monarchic Israel would indeed be heightened in this epilogue with Judges 19–21 as an exilic or postexilic addition, although this discussion goes beyond the scope of this study.

toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself."[6] Also under scrutiny will be how this atrocious passage faces outwards towards its futures, its reception, or (more accurately) the profound provocation and repulsion that it elicits.

This is a text that is open to its futures. It is—as its imagery of doorways makes so clear—a *threshold* text, a text about a break in life and a break in time. As Exodus functions as a theological and political doorway from a past in slavery to a new future, so this threshold text functions as a darker and more sinister doorway. It is a darker version of Israel's theological and political chronotope of threshold.

The book of Judges is a book in which Israel struggles for identity, for *becoming,* for futures, but this story provokes notions of a future founded on rape and dismemberment. What kind of future can be propped up by this past? What can come from this cut-up foundation (and all the violence that follows)? This is as far from a secure foundation myth as can be imagined. The dismembered body of the abused woman is a provocative and toxic image of the dismembered body of the nation. The text asks explicitly, "What kind of nation will this be, born out of murder, kidnapping, and rape?"

"Something old, something new, something borrowed . . . " goes the old Lancashire superstition. Genre is something old and borrowed, but it can also birth new ideas, new connections, and new interpretations. משל is an underutilized dialogical genre in the Hebrew canon that embodies this elastic rhetorical function which is rooted intrinsically in the text.

Bakhtin has provided a way forward in previous scholarship within biblical studies, most significantly in the analysis of dialogical voices of literary genres, speech genres, and the individual utterance (speech, reported speech, etc.). Notable studies include the following:

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6 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 257.

Newsom and Hyun on the text of Job, Green on the language of Saul in 1 Samuel, and Mandolfo on finding the voice of Zion.[7] While these studies have intersected important dialogical and methodological concerns, the polyphonic nature of the canonical voice of answerability has yet to be fully explored.[8] This study asserts a new way forward in the futures of biblical studies by proposing the canonical literary identification of Judges 19–21 as a משל.[9]

In this chapter, the suggestion is made on how one can move beyond the initial trauma to consider Judges 19–21 as a profoundly intertextual example of the genre, משל: a very pregnant Hebrew term.[10] As משל, this story marks an integral chapter in Israel's theologico-political story of becoming, its threshold of transition. By employing an intertextual analysis of these final chapters with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on genre, alongside the Hebrew Bible's widespread use of משל ("proverb/parable"), there may be a way forward to bring an alternative perspective to these final, grim chapters. This is not the final word, but a potential voice in the future dialogue that a haunted text, such as Judges 19–21, elicits. Through genre, this משל ("proverb, parable") of Judges 19–21 may find a place to call home.

Judges 19–21 has been described as "depicting the horror of male power, brutality and triumphalism, of female helplessness, abuse and annihilation."[11] Baker describes it as a "grisly

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[7] Newsom, *Job*; Hyun, *Job the Unfinalizable*; Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion*. See also M. Vines "The Apocalyptic Chronotope," in Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory*, 109–117.

[8] Hays, in "The Silence of the Wives," notes the polyphonic nature of canon but leaves it undeveloped.

[9] Carol A. Newsom uses cognitive theory to illustrate a "protoype" theory of genre. To illustrate, Newsom quotes Bakhtin, "[A] genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously." Newsom also refers to Derrida's approach with how a "text's rhetorical orientation" can participate (invoking, gesturing, playing) without belonging to genres. See Newsom, "Spying out the Land" in Boer (ed.), *Bakhtin and Genre Theory*, 21, 28.

[10] I will be arguing for the dialogical use of משל. This chapter will further investigate the widespread employment of this term ("parable," "taunt," "riddle," "byword," "memorialization," etc.) to determine its potential function in Judges 19–21.

[11] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1984), 65.

metaphor."[12] Buber coins it a "political declaration."[13] Stone declares it a "scandalous narrative."[14] There is no "organic" connection to the previous chapters. It has been described as a homeless piece of literature in Judges. Judges 19–21 has also been labeled a "fictional account" and a "comic resolution."[15] In a more neutral vein, Judges 19–21is described as "fragmentary" and basically an "appendix" or "appendage."[16]

    Scholars' images of these chapters as comic, fragmentary, and abusive seem to minimize what the artisans[17] of the text may have wanted to communicate. It is my contention that the toxicity of these chapters is intentional—and in Bakhtin's term, dialogic.[18] Scholars have attempted to pin down the genre of the text as "classical foundation myth;"[19] a "heroic genre,"

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[12] Robin Baker, *Hollow Men Strange Women: Riddles, Codes and Otherness in the Book of Judges* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 2016), 6. John J. Collins calls it a "grisly climax" in his *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*, 2nd edition (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014).

[13] Martin Buber, *Kingship of God* (New York, NY: Humanity, 1967), 77–78. Buber also highlights a misinterpretation (which originated with Julius Wellhausen) that in "the act of unity at the beginning of the twentieth chapter in no way justifies the conception that what is involved here is a 'churchly' unity which was projected back from the post-exilic situation in the early period" (82).

[14] Lawson G. Stone, "Book of Judges," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 2005), 595, 602.

[15] Robert G. Boling, "In Those Days There Was No King in Israel," in Howard M. Bream, et al. (eds.), *A Light unto My Path: Old Testament Studies in Honor of Jacob M. Myers* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University, 1974), 43.

[16] Judges 17–18 is part of the epilogue of Judges but the intentional anonymity and mute silence of the key figures in the narrative in Judges 19–21 reveal that this second epilogue is a unique genre, in its own right. See Baker, *Hollow Men Strange Women*, 2-3.

[17] Van Der Toorn, *Scribal Culture*, 5. Van Der Toorn employs the designation "text artisans" and points out that the work of the scribes is likened to the work of "artisans" rather than "artists." Creating original documents was not the aim of these scribes. These "co-productions" focused on "skill" and "technical mastery," and the focus of the message of the texts is the communal disposition. Modern quests for the author prove dissatisfying until we realize that there was a scribal community behind these documents.

[18] Niditch characterizes three voices in Judges. She attributes the beginning chapter (Judges 1) and final chapters (Judges 17–21) to an early composition (pre-monarchic confederacy) and a voice of "the humanist," because it is devoid of a "heroic individual," "centralized government" and basically a voice where "human beings are on their own." See Susan Niditch, *Judges*, 9; see also Trent C. Butler, *Judges* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 416.

[19] Niditch writes, "The ideology of expediency . . . operates as one is made to see the workings of realpolitik in the ancient world" Niditch, *Judges*, 180.

full of gallows humour;[20] or a "short story" falling within the "category of authentic historiography."[21]

As Daniel Block attempts to recuperate historicity, Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III highlight the artistic and didactic value of the text—"The testimony about the past can comfortably combine compositional technique, didactic intent, and historical information . . . [the] book of Judges presents a *portrait* of an age."[22] But what kind of portrait is being painted? Not a secure foundation myth, but an unhinged foundation, a provocative and toxic narrative of the dismembered body of the nation. Within the reading of this text, intrinsic signifiers enable us to dialogue with some of the bold contours of this violent portrait that include parallel texts, the figure of the door and the threshold, and two keywords—(1) סף ("threshold"), and (2) המאכלת ("the knife").

Lawson Stone notes, "The peculiar relationship between literature and the community that treasure it is captured in the notion of genre. More than a literary pattern with a tag, genre gets at *performative* function that a tradition exercises for its audiences."[23] Along with this idea of Stone's performative function of genre, Bakhtin's theory of dialogical contact and a syntagmatic analysis of משל, one can discover a fresh perspective of Judges 19–21. [24]

3.1 Bakhtin's Voice in the Dialogue of Genre

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[20] Webb, *Judges*, 61.

[21] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 53. For a thorough survey of the composition of the book of Judges, see Noth, *The Deuteronomic History*.

[22] Iain Provan, V. Philips Long, and Tremper Longman III, *A Biblical History of Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2015), 161.

[23] Stone, "Book of Judges," 596.

[24] Green illuminates the importance of genre. "Reading which attends critically to genre choice, the *double-voiced* language of so much of what the characters speak, to the nuances of the particular—all of this effort to listen creatively distances biblical interpretation from the flatly literalistic and abstractly universalistic in all its guises" (*How Are the Mighty Fallen,* 23).

Mikhail Bakhtin's expansive work with dialogue in literature will be a helpful voice in uncovering a possible new genre designation for Judges 19–21, particularly in relation to dialogism and its nature of unfinalizability within literature. The dialogical contact of the characters' speech is often left without moral assessment or judgment by the text artisan. Readers can clearly hear the Deuteronomic influence, which is not simply monologic and preachy, but dialogic. The moral assessment in the refrain—"Israel had no king" (Judges 19:1) and "Israel had no king; in those days everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 21:25)—gives an important clue to the text artisan's intention and invitation to active reading or hearing, inviting response. For Bakhtin, the dialogical is grounded in the event of being. It is grounded in the lifework of becoming which is never finalized. In a similar way, the Hebrew משל is an example of this dialogical reading strategy.

This genre designation can assist the reader in asking different questions, even bolder questions, of these three chapters in Judges. I hope to demonstrate that this משל genre designation opens up new possibilities for the reader, because as a משל, these chapters are designed to be interrogated, discussed, and assessed within its overarching canonical framework. The didactic intention of this genre also leaves room for answerability — not only intertextually, but from the reader within their religious communities.

In order to move forward with this possibility, it will be helpful to highlight similar dialogical genres in the ancient Near East, and specifically, with its interest in irony and reversal of social roles. My desire is to begin to lay the groundwork of irony within this משל genre designation. I hope to show how this designation is an invitation to the canon and the reader to become voices of answerability, especially in a story without detailed assessment of an extreme amount of gendered violence.

Terje Stordalen illustrates the dialogical modes that did, in fact, exist in classical Hebrew literature and in the ancient Near East with examples of social role reversal through dialogue. Stordalen provides an illustration of this with the *Akkadian Dialogue of Pessimism.* This document is thought to reflect a servant's satire of his master, and perhaps even an annual reversal of social roles."[25] This mode of dialogue had been well exampled in Job.[26]

In dialogue with the work of Theodore A. Perry and Galit Hasan–Rokem, Stordalen writes:

> The proverb that Perry and Hasan–Rokem have in mind, however, is one that was collected in order to be applied in a new setting "like a quotation." Such a proverb could hardly be heard as eternal truth: it is a piece of learning from another situation to be considered for its usefulness to the situation in which the writer or reader find himself (*sic*). It represents a second voice. The very procedure of sampling proverbs into continuous collections forces potentially monological utterances to meet and wrestle as "words of others." Bakhtin himself considered precisely this feature of half–hidden quotation in Hellenistic literature, comparing it to the genre of cento in the Middle Ages and taking it to indicate the appropriation of another's language, style, and words (Bakhtin 1981:68f).[27]

This next section will investigate the dialogic nature captured in the Hebrew term, משל. Although often associated with wisdom literature, the verb, משל, a*s* the internal key to Judges, means "to rule" (Judges 8:22, 23; 9:2; 14:4; 15:11); in each of these cases, the word is in the *qal* stem. The question being asked throughout Judges is, "Who will rule over us?" and it is central to Judges 8.

Gideon refuses to rule because he asserts that YHWH alone will rule over Israel. In Judges 9, Abimelech designates his right to rule over Gideon's other sons. Ironically, Abimelech,

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[25] Terje Stordalen, "Dialogism, Monologism, and Cultural Literacy," 2–20 (6–7). Other examples noted by Stordalen include "the Egyptian text, A Dispute over Suicide (Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Bible 405–407); The Protest of the Eloquent Peasant (ANET 407–410; Context of Scripture 1: 90–104); The Report of Wenamun (CoS 1: 89–93); the Sumerian Man and his God (ANET 598–592); the Akkadian Fable between the Date Palm and the Tamarisk (ANET 410f, 592f); Dialogue of Pessimism (ANET 600f; CoS 1: 495f), The Babylonian Theodicy (ANET 601–604; CoS 1: 492–495); Dialogue between a Man and His God (CoS 1: 385)" (7 n. 4).

[26] For examples, see Newsom, *Job*; and Hyun, *Job the Unfinalizable.*

[27] Stordalen, "Dialogism, Monologism, and Cultural Literacy," 7.

the son of a פילגש, designates himself king. This rulership was viewed in a negative light by the text artisan. In the later chapters, when משל appears, the Philistines are the ones in power.

Another meaning attributed to this verb משל in the *qal* form is "to use a proverb" and in the *piel*, "to speak a parable." The ironic devices in Judges make the question of rule and the order associated with rule into a parable and a proverb. When looking at the widespread Hebrew employment of this term, the complexity becomes obvious with the breadth of translation words used to signify its meaning: "oracle," "prophecy," "discourse," "parable," "taunt," "riddle,"[28] and even how one is memorialized.[29]

The proverbial "kernel of truth" comes up short when one looks at the Hebrew use of משל. משל can refer to more than a saying; it can reflect a person in judgment (Isaiah 14:4; Micah 2:4), the answerability of a person's life (1 Samuel 10:12; Job 17:6), and even the entire community (Psalm 44:15).[30] Barbara Green captures the complexity of the nature of parable when she writes, "[A] parable is a narrative metaphor—a metaphor in motion—that by the peculiar working of its juxtaposed elements startles the mind into fresh awareness. Allegory is easier, more certain; parable is more dynamic and evanescent."[31] The Hebrew term, משל indeed captures the complexity and nuances that invite a fresh perspective. When one thinks of Judges 19–21, it is not too difficult to sense the "startling" nature of this genre.

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[28] Baker's analysis of Judges focuses in part on the literary device of parable, especially the חידה in the text of Judges. Baker writes, "The prominence and positioning of this riddle and parable in relation to it, as well as indicating that Judges is to be understood overall as a *hîdāh*, a story in parabolic reflection of the religious, moral, and political environment in which the writer created the work, emphasize the hermeneutical function of riddles and parables for the composition" (*Hollow Men, Strange Women*, 27).

[29] Gerald Wilson, "משל," in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 2, Willem A. Van Gemeren ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1134–1136.

[30] See R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 1* (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2003), 533–35; William McKane, *Proverbs: A New Approach* (London, England: Westminster John Knox, 1970), 22–23.

[31] Barbara Green, *Like a Tree Planted: An Exploration of Psalms and Proverbs through Metaphor* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1997), 1.

3.2 משל **of Dialogue**

In order to build a case for Judges 19–21 to be described as a משל of dialogue, the first

area of importance will be to understand how the breadth of משל is used in the Hebrew Bible.

Judges 19–21 does not employ this term in the text, so in order to import this designation of משל,

the genre identification of Judges 19–21 will be supported with two examples both from 2

Samuel 12 and 14, respectively that are well known parables without the intrinsic designation of

משל. These "stories" in 2 Samuel reveal the didactic and dialogic intention of such a tale and the

art of toad discovery—"Parables create imaginary gardens with real toads in them."[32]

3.2.1 *Breadth of Meaning*

משל as parable and proverb has an extensive form of literary identification. It is quite

difficult to nail down a simple definition.[33] The root signifies "likeness."[34] Often, the use of

parable and proverb is equated with a "short, pithy saying,"[35] but it also can take on the

contextual nuances of "saying, maxim, parable, prediction, prophecy, didactic or moral verse, or

theme, discourse."[36]

In the Hebrew Bible, there is evidence for the nominal form of משל being attributed to

land ("What is this משל of yours concerning the land of Israel?" [Ezekiel 12:22]); to an

individual person ("Therefore it became a משל: is Saul too among the prophets?" [1 Samuel

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[32] Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1985), 15. Crossan is using Marianne Moore's description of a poem.

[33] Klyne R. Snodgrass notes, "In fact, possibly no definition of parables will do, for any definition that is broad enough to cover all forms is so imprecise that it is almost useless." *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of* Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 7.

[34] David J. A. Clines (ed.), *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew Vol 5* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011), 539.

[35] Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 533–35.

[36] Clines, *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew, Vol 5*, 537.

10:12]);[37] to a group of people ("You have made us a משל among the nations" [Ps. 44:15]); and to ancient sayings that have been digested as part of the cultural identity of a people ("I will utter משל . . . sayings of old" [Psalm 78:2]).[38] With Balaam's oracles (Numbers 23-24), warning is given to *not* become a משל (1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chronicles 7:20; Job 3:12). This warning highlights the thin veil between a mere saying and the ethical repercussions of a community's response and appropriation of a given משל.

This process of *becoming* in speech, ethical activity, and responsibility is encapsulated in this term, משל. משל is also attributed to an "extended didactic discourse,"[39] as evidenced in Proverbs 1:8–19 and Job 27–31. משל is equated with the idea of discourse in the Hebrew text in passages such as Numbers 23:7; Job 27:1; and Job 29:1. משל can also be translated as "speech," "dialogue," or "discourse" (Numbers 23:7, 18; Numbers 24:3, 15, 20, 21, 23). In this sense, it can be argued that the Hebrew Bible's use of משל [40] begins to overlap with Bakhtin's understanding of dialogue as metaphysical answerability. Judges 19–21 is not only a story but also an invitation, which includes ethical repercussions of the משל in the chronotope (time-space) of one's being and becoming.

3.2.2 *Two Examples from 2 Samuel and One Example from Judges*

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[37] Isaac B. Gottlieb shows an extensive use of midrashic techniques with inner biblical exegesis to show how "The Book of Writings have made of Solomon a *mashal*, a byword for wisdom, wealth, and the love of women" ("*Mashal Le Melekh*: The Search for Solomon," *HS* 51 (2010): 107–127 [127]).

[38] The apocalyptic form is discussed in length in David Winston Suter, "*Masal* in the Similitudes of Enoch," *JBL* 100, no. 2 (1981): 193–212.

[39] Harris, Archer, and Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, 533–35.

[40] The sense of the word as inviting response and ethical activity can be seen in the meaning of משל and parable is witnessed in how the LXX often translates משל as παραβολη. In lexicons, there are multiple roots listed, such as "to be like"; "to use a proverb, to speak a parable"; and "to rule, have dominion, reign." See, for example, Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 605–606.

Identifying the final story of Judges as a משל of dialogue rests in part with one of the most well-known parables in the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps there is root-play with the verb "to rule" as part of the ironic devices in Judges. The text of Judges is ripe with irony and blatant judgment to cue the readers on how to appropriate and dialogue with this text in the present and future communities of faith. In the book of Judges, the only one actually given the title of Judge (*šōpēt)* is YHWH.[41] Key individuals are raised up by YHWH to deliver Israel and their authority and power originates in YHWH (Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Deborah, Samson). There is answerability to YHWH alone among the nations. Israel is not exempt from this, even within her own borders.

The final story has *become* a משל for Israel to take into account. There are two significant stories understood as a משל that do not intrinsically use the term, משל. The first parable to build our case is a story found in 2 Samuel 12: the didactic parable told by Nathan the prophet to illuminate David's grievous sins. The examples will reveal that משל in not intrinsic to every story considered a "proverb" or "parable." The answerability revealed in David's response to Nathan is quintessentially the dialogical contact in which Bakhtin highlights in the idea of resistance and acceptance.

This parable has become part of David's dialogue and results in repentance and ethical response in his becoming. David could have chosen to resist but as Nathan famously reveals the true intention and states, "You are the man!" and continues to recount all God has done, David acknowledges his part and replies, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan is the representative of the God that David acknowledges as his own. The dialogic nature of the intention of the text artisan is well illustrated by the anticipation of the reactions of the readers and hearers.[42]

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[41] Block, *Judges, Ruth,* 22–25. This title was given only to YHWH by Jephthah in 11:27. YHWH is judge over all nations in this chapter.

[42] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 257.

This thesis will now turn to a second example of a מָשָׁל without intrinsic parable markers: the wise woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14. This story embodies the qualities implicit in the parable genre (didactic, dialogical nature, and anonymity of characters). Again, the characters are anonymous but the one delivering the message is a woman known for her wisdom. In the first example, David was indicted because of his unethical *action* (2 Samuel 12). In this second scene, David's *passivity* is the issue at hand (2 Samuel 14).

After the story is told, it is clear that without a husband or son left, this "widow" will become destitute. David is moved by the fictitious plight of this woman and issues a decree on her behalf to pardon the guilty son. The wise woman of Tekoa, through this disguised *מָשָׁל,* reveals the true nature of her story. Through the power of story, she is able to convince David to spare her guilty fictional son in order to return David's true son from exile. This story was always aimed at David. This story embodies the dialogical didactic value of a מָשָׁל of dialogue.

The final example of a מָשָׁל of dialogue is evidenced within the Judges text and is one that expounds kingship at the height of the irony of illegitimate leadership. The overarching question threaded throughout the story is a question of legitimacy: Who is fit to rule? Jotham's מָשָׁל is found in Judges 9:7–15. It is commonly known as Jotham's Parable and Jotham's Fable.[43] Walton describes a fable as "a short narrative in poetry or prose that teaches a moral lesson and involves creatures, plants, and/or inanimate objects speaking or behaving like human characters."[44]

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[43] This particular "fable" is said to be "one of the only very few fables which have been preserved in the Old Testament. Von Rad describes it as a 'masterpiece of the most concise reasoning and linguistic style'." See *Wisdom in Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of J.A. Emerton*, ed. John Day, Robert P. Gordon, High Godfrey (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 1995), 215.

[44] John Walton, *Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 170.

Klyne R. Snodgrass comments on these as "two political fables about trees and plants, Judges 9:7–15 and 2 Kings 14:9–10" that do not have a NT parallel.[45] These fables fit within the parameters of the משל genre in the Hebrew Bible. Snodgrass reiterates the crucial point of this genre in writing, "We have to conclude that a *mashal* is any saying meant to stimulate thought and provide insight."[46] This fable is another example to build the case of a משל that is not given an intrinsic signifier of משל. A unique attribute of this משל is that the individuals are named and do not carry the normative signifiers of the anonymity of characters as in many משל's ('parables', 'proverbs').

This particular story does involve some anonymous characters but their nature as trees makes this an obvious משל. Jotham has joined the dialogue of answerability in this משל. He knows that his life will be in danger for uttering a parable with such didactic and judicial intent. He will flee for his life once this invitation for response is uttered. He is seeking a response that will challenge the monologic and violent voice and ethics of Abimelech.

The context for Jotham's משל is the self-designated rulership of Abimelech after the death of Gideon. Israel was in another season of apostasy (Judges 8:33). Abimelech is able to gain support from his maternal side of the family, and later slays almost every potential successor to the throne on his father's side. The text recalls that he kills "seventy men" on one stone (Judges 9:5). The text also informs the readers that the youngest son, Jotham, escapes by hiding. Abimelech is crowned king by the citizens of Shechem.

The text does not indicate a proper anointing of this new king. Abimelech has anointed *himself* as priest and king with the blood of his brothers. By murdering the brothers, "on one

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[45] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent,* 38.
[46] Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 39.

stone" (Judges 9:5), there is an allusion to a possible sacrificial aspect to these killings. This idea is supported by Boling,[47] but Block[48] maintains its uncertainty.

The idea of sacrifice appears to be probable given the idea of Abimelech taking on the role of priest and king in the sense that king would normally be designated king by the anointing of a priest. Conversely, the inversion of roles is highlighted even further in Jotham's משל. As Jotham's משל is uttered, it describes a metaphor of rulership utilizing the natural environment. The trees want to anoint a king to rule over them. First, they ask the olive tree, then the fig tree, and eventually the vine. Each refuses the request. Finally, the trees inquire of the thorn bush to be their king.

The question of anointing, and thus designated kingship, is asked throughout this story. In the Abimelech narrative, rather than a priestly anointing, there is a horrific sacrifice of sixty-nine brothers (since Jotham escaped) upon the "one stone." The theological and political strands that weave through this story are highlighted in the words of מָשַׁח ("anoint"), מֶלֶךְ ("king"), and the one אֶבֶן ("stone").

Interesting parallels emerge with the Judges 9 story of Abimelech and the final chapters of Judges 19–21.[49] Both stories note a פילגש. Each story involves an item of theological significance with murder. In Judges 9, the brothers are sacrificed on "one stone." In Judges 19, the פילגש is cut up with המכלת ("the knife"), the same knife noted in the Aqedah (Genesis 22). Both stories involve the murder of a significant group of people (the sixty-nine brothers, the town of Shechem in Judges 9, and the tribe of Benjamin; Judges 9, 19–21).

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[47] Boling, *Judges: The Anchor Yale Bible Commentary* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2005), 171.
[48] Block, *Judges, Ruth,* 312. Block shows that this reveals a perverse use of "Yahwist sacrificial cultus" and a "calculated brutal act of murder." I would maintain that this perverse use of a "sacrificial cultus" does indeed support Boling's assertion. The irony woven throughout Judges 9 of illegitimate kingship could indeed encompass such an illegitimate sacrificial act. This will be highlighted later with the parallels with Judges 19–21.

In both stories, a civil war ensues that involves ambush strategy (Judges 9:34–35; Judges

20:29-38). Abimelech refers to the upper class in his appeal as the "lords/owners of Shechem"

(Judg. 9:2). In a twist of irony, the Levite refers to the wicked Benjamites who abused the פילגש

as the "lords/owners of Gibeah" (Judges 20:5). Both chapters evoke a call to kinship as well,

with the familial connection that "he is our brother" (9:3; 18; 20:28; 21:6)

Another point of intertextual connection is the decision in the Abimelech story to

slaughter the entire town and to curse it with salt (Judges 9:45). Thus, the land will become

infertile. This curse upon the people and the land is interesting when juxtaposed to Judges 21.

After the slaughter of the Benjamite men, women, and children, they begin to mourn and regret

the full curse of progeny. They take an oath, preventing the intermarriage of their daughters;

breaking this oath results in infertility.

Abimelech reigned for three years, the shortest reign of any ruler in Judges. The length of

Abimelech's reign is cited in the beginning of his story, offering an interesting shift from the

normative reign length usually inserted at the end of the text. Butler captures this important

aspect of the change within the literature, noting, "Abimelech's reign as oppression and

Abimelech as Israel's oppressor."[50] This story is another example of a משל uttered within the

Judges story that does not have an intrinsic signifier to alert the reader that this is a "parable"

type story. Given the three examples of the form and function of the משל, there is ample evidence

to suggest that Judges 19–21 is to be allocated to this genre designation.

One of the governing qualities of a משל is anonymity. Adele Reinhartz notes that the

anonymity quality is "paradigmatic" or "legendary."[51] In a detailed investigation of the unnamed

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[50] Butler, *Judges*, 243. This is an interesting point when one compares the long narrative at the end of
Judges with the inclusion, "There was no king in Israel," to prove a similar point.

[51] Adele Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name? Anonymity and Identity in Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY:
Oxford University, 1998), 125.

men in Judges 19 (the Levite, the father, and the host), Reinhartz ponders, "If the narrator were a postmodern writer, we might suggest that this was done deliberately, and perhaps, indeed, this possibility should not be ruled out."[52] One wonders if the artisans of this final narrative were indeed intentional in writing this story.

In the longest narrative of Judges, only one person, Phinehas, is named in 20:27. Don Michael Hudson points out the irony of naming and passivity as he writes that Phinehas, "ironically is more a name than an actant."[53] Reinhartz keenly observes that the "general anonymity suggests that the individual entities of these figures are not as important as the fact that the event in which they participate occurred in a kingless nation."[54] This would be in line with Hudson's assertion of the naming of Phinehas: "Here, the narrator employed naming to establish a chronology that in turn deconstructs and inverts the coherence of Judges. The narrative tells us that the dehumanization of anonymity was one generation away from a leader and a nation who was faithful to YHWH."[55] Anonymity is a common quality in the genre of a משל. As a משל of dialogue, the intention of this final narrative could be seen even more clearly through Israel's theological and political chronotope of threshold in their nation's sacred literature.

Similar to the breadth of meaning with משל, Bakhtin's discussion on genre is far more expansive than biblical scholars' usual understanding of the term. As Barbara Green explains, for Bakhtin,

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[52] Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name*, 145.
[53] Don Michael Hudson notes that Phinehas is identified in the text as the "son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron" in Judges 20:27 ("Living in Land of Epithets: Anonymity in Judges 19–21," *JSOT* 19 (1994): 49–66 [58]).
[54] Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name*, 126.
[55] Hudson observes that anonymity indicts not just "one Levite, one city, or one host," but "the entire structure of that godless society" ("Living in Land of Epithets," 65). According to Hudson, "Anonymity *disintegrates* individuality to depict universal dismemberment. Epithet *assumes* community and universality but in reality eliminates individuality" ("Living in Land of Epithets," 61).

[Genres] carry the social experience of an era, some particular insight on what it is to be human. Genres provide for the weaving together or layering in of some of the other aspects of an utterance we may notice: its individual style, the speaker's/writer's plan, the syntax required or chosen for expression, the thematic interest. Genres also refract or help produce an era as well as reflecting it.[56]

The attempt to produce an era fits well with the dialogic ending of Judges. Bakhtin defines a monologic text as proceeding "as though there was one dominant voice."[57] In contrast, a "dialogic narrative has at least two."[58] Although there appears to be one voice in this final story of Judges, there are actually multiple voices in conversation. These conversations are intertextual, being based on word choice and the resonance of word choice, silence, and the actions of the main characters. These multiple voices are *polyphonic*.

As Bakhtin puts it:

We acutely sense two levels at each moment in the story; one, the level of the narrator, a belief system filled with objects, meanings and emotional expressions, and the other, the level of the author who speaks (albeit in a refracted way) by means of this story and through this story . . . if one fails to sense this second level, the intentions and accents of the author . . . then one has failed to understand the work.[59]

This final story resists finalization. An assessment is brought forth through refrain but the community, which has received this story, is still in the process of becoming in their particular

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[56] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 58. Green continues, "Morson maintains that genres are Bakhtin's response to simplistic, reductive, pre-packaged formalist thinking." Green actually argues for 1 Samuel 1–3 to be considered a משל, a "*hugged*." The "*hugged*" she takes from the Hebrew root נגד with the "verbal possibilities of telling, making known" coupled with the Hebrew noun נגד , which she notes is usually translated, "one designated for leadership" (*How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 54).

[57] The apologetic for kingship in regard to being pro-Davidic and anti-Saulide house is seen in O'Connell, *Rhetoric in the Book of Judges*, 342.

[58] Boer, *Bakhtin and Genre Theory*, 2. Hays argues for a seemingly monologic tone of Ezra 7–10 in "The Silence of the Wives." I would argue that the dialogic nature is evident with Jonathan, son of Asahel, and Jahzeiah, son of Tikvah (Ezra 10:15). The utterance as conceived by Bakhtin could be another potential voice within the text in its canonical shape.

[59] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 314.

chronotope. The discordant ending is an invitation for Israel's response, an invitation to answer.[60] This process of becoming, for Bakhtin, resists finalization.

Bakhtin differentiates discourse in poetry with discourse in the novel by showing how in poetry, a "poetic image narrowly conceived" can achieve depth and meaning with "artistic closure" while the novelistic discourse in prose illustrates,

> the object reveals first of all precisely the socially heteroglot multiplicity of its names, definitions and value judgments. Instead of the virginal fullness and inexhaustibility of the object itself, the prose writer confronts a multitude of routes, roads and paths that have been laid down inside the object by social consciousness.[61]

The value of this dialogic discourse is revealed in myriad dialogic interactions that remain open.

For Judges 19–21, this משל will continue to be wrestled with long into Israel's history of kingdoms and exiles, roads and paths, places of renewal and return. Bakhtin's metaphorical dichotomy of a narrow image as "virginal fullness" in contradistinction with a broad image as "multiple roads" resonates with the story of Judges and the overarching narratives of the Hebrew Bible in modes both graphic and ironic. The tribes separate; the body is dismembered, the limbs sent in different directions; the nation is exiled, dispersed. Bakhtin's casual allusion to virgins takes on a far darker resonance in the tragic story of Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:1–40), Deborah's song (Judges 5:30), the virgin daughter of the old man (Judges 19:24), and the virgins kidnapped at the end (Judges 21:1-25). The virgins in Judges are kidnapped, raped, and slaughtered—in reality, and in song.

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[60] Hudson notes the tension: "The conclusion is far from any type of resolution for it resists conflation. Ironically, the conclusion is non-resolution or dissolution which begs for resolution" ("Living in the Land of Epithets," 53 n. 11).

[61] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 278–279.

Carol Newsom highlights the importance of the "implicit assumptions" that the community would expect from an understood genre.[62] If there is divergence or deviation from a known genre, this elicits attention and response. A significant shift of genre occurs in the final chapters of Judges.[63] The shift from Judges to Samuel in the Hebrew Bible is a major shift, politically and theologically. The transitional shift in genre at the end of Judges performatively calls for a response.

3.3 To "I.D." a Body of Literature: An Unfinalized Threshold

Thresholds are critical junctures in a story. In *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin describes the threshold as the "motif of encounter" and "the chronotope *of crisis* and *break* in a life." As he explains,

> The word, "threshold," itself already has a metaphorical meaning in everyday usage (together with its literal meaning), and is connected with the breaking point of life, the moment of crisis, the decision that changes a life (or the indecisiveness that fails to change a life, the fear to step over the threshold). In literature, the chronotope of the threshold is always metaphorical and symbolic, sometimes openly but more often implicitly.[64]

Threshold encompasses the Janus of change. A response of activity or passivity is still a decision. Some decisions are violently thrust upon an *other*.

Other decisions invite response. As a משל of dialogue*,* Judges 19–21 comprises a Janus threshold within the text and an address to the community who are invited to respond. It is no accident that doorways form a key motif. Judges 19–21 contains the longest narrative in Judges.

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[62] Newsom, *Job*, 4.
[63] Butler notes this genre shift in *Judges,* 410–416.
[64] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 248.

A Levite travels from the hill country of Ephraim. He has angered his פילגש and she is out

the door on her own initiative.[65] To retrieve his possession,[66] he travels to her father's house in

Bethlehem after he has waited four months. In a phrase thick with irony, his intentions are to

"speak to her heart" (Judges 19:3). This woman is not only nameless but also voiceless in the

entire story. The identity of this woman alters in the text as she enters and exits through

doorways with nameless men.

When she is present with this Levite, she is described as a פילגש (Judges 19:1, 2, 9, 10,

24, 25, 27, 29; 20:4, 5, 6). Upon crossing the threshold of her father's home, she is described as a

נערה: "a young girl," in relationship to her father (Judges 19:3, 5, 6, 8). When the woman is not

in the presence of the Levite, her identity is that of אשה, "a woman or wife" (Judges 19:1, 26,

27). The Levite journeys to Bethlehem to find this woman and, once they leave her home, her

identity is once again a פילגש. They leave through a doorway and she is once again his

possession.

The Levite insists upon lodging that evening in familial territory, against the prompting

of the servant with him. The narrative darkens as the Levite replies that they will not lodge in

Jebus because it is a city of נכרי ("foreigners").[67] The demarcation of who is acceptable is

heightened and the humming of irony begins. The group (the פילגש, Levite, and boy) head to

Gibeah. Upon entering, they are rather surprised that no hospitality is extended.

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[65] Translation of words with the root זנה has vacillated between "played the harlot" or "became angry." I
will align with the latter. Josephus's elaborate interpretation aligns with the idea of the woman becoming angry
when he comments on this passage: "There was a Levite, a man of a vulgar family, that belonged to the tribe of
Ephraim, and dwelt therein; this man married a wife from Bethlehem, which is a place belonging to the tribe of
Judah. Now he was very fond of his wife and overcome with her beauty; but he was unhappy in this, that he did not
meet with the like return of affection from her, for she was averse to him, which did more inflame his passion for
her, so that they quarreled with one another perpetually, and at last the woman was so disgusted at these quarrels.
That she left her husband and went to her parents in the fourth month" (*The Complete Works of Flavius Josephus*
(trans. William Whiston; Philadelphia, PA: John E. Potter and Company, 1890), 136–137.
[66] Possession is used here to signify her status and limited rights in public as a פילגש.
[67] The irony is heightened as the Levite equates Jebus as *foreign* and therefore unsafe.

Ironically, after a time, an old man, a sojourner, finds them after his day of work and invites them to lodge at his house. He adamantly tells them to "not lodge in the city, in the open place" (Judges 19:20). This familial city is not safe. The sojourner becomes a place of haven.

3.4 The Instrument of Dismemberment: המכלת

> Then he went out to his house and he took *the knife* and he seized at his פילגש,
> then he cut her in pieces *to the bone* (limb by limb), in twelve pieces and sent her
> among every border in Israel (Judges 19:29).

To the Hebrew reader, this story may have awakened cultural memory in the object used, המאכלת ("the knife"). *The knife* with the definite article is in only one other narrative in the Hebrew Bible and it is a significant one.[68] המאכלת is the ceremonial instrument gripped in the hand of their forefather Abraham in the *aqedah*—the binding of Isaac. The story from Judges most commonly associated with this critical foundation story of the *aqedah* (Genesis 22) is the story of Jephthah's sacrifice of his only child, his daughter (Judges 11).

It can be argued that another story is associated with the binding of Isaac, and it is this final epilogue of Judges. This national story in Genesis 22 is evoked in this "homeless" and "inorganic" narrative of Judges. Intense political and theological messages scream off the altar where the dismembered woman lies. No voice intercedes in her case. Perhaps, the voice *is* the parable. Just as the Abraham and Isaac story of crisis is rooted deeply in the identity memory of Israel, perhaps this Levite and פילגש represent a story of national and theological crisis and transition, failed leadership, and a dismembered Israel.

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[68] Trible (*Texts of Terror*, 80) shows the similarity in language of these two texts: "He took (לקח) the knife" (Genesis 22:10; Judges 19:29a). I want to emphasize that the definite article used with "knife" provides a unique link between these two stories. For a helpful discussion of the definite article, see Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Hebrew Biblical Syntax* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2003), 28–32.

The text evokes interesting relationship dynamics between the Levite and the פילגש that resist finalization in ways similar to Israel. The identity of Israel is at times depicted as a prostitute (Isaiah 1:21; Jeremiah 3:8) and, at other times, Israel is regarded as a bride (Jeremiah 3:14). The identity of the פילגש continues to shift through Judges 20 and 21. The Levite refers to her verbally as *his* פילגש in Judges 20:4b and 20:6. The text artisan refers to her as the "woman, the one slain" (Judges 20:4a).

The Hebrew word, רצח ("slain, murder"), is found in forty-two verses within the Hebrew Bible, fourteen of which are found in Numbers. It is a violent word, first found in the *ten words* in Exodus 20:13 "You shall not *murder*." It always refers to a human murdering another human, except for one reference in Proverbs 22:13, which describes an animal killing a person. An interesting use of this as a term of immorality also shows up in Hosea: "And as raiders wait for a person, so a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem. Surely, they have committed wickedness" (6:9). The ambiguity of the פילגש's time of death is interesting with this intentional choice of רצח ("murder").[69]

Graphic depictions present powerful mediums of persuasion, deterrence, and control. To illustrate, an "Easter egg" in film or literature is a popular reference intentionally placed as a clue for close viewers and readers. The hunt for these "clues" is likened to an Easter egg hunt. In an example from the film *The Departed* (2006), director Martin Scorsese places an "X" somewhere in each scene to foreshadow murder. This "X" motif is reminiscent of the earlier 1932 film, *Scarface*, which places a hidden "X" in each scene where a murder is close at hand.

One could almost imagine the פילגש's dismemberment as directed by Martin Scorsese with the Easter egg "X" of *The Departed.* The "Easter egg" in Judges 19 is *the knife.* The

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[69] LXX leaves out this ambiguity. The MT lets it stand.

message sent through limb removal reminds the reader of Saul in 1 Samuel 11. Vengeance will shift from individuals to entire families.

In the middle of the evening, the Levite, host, and women are interrupted by the Benjamite men of the city ("sons of worthlessness," Judges 19:22; 20:13), who have come ידע ("to know") the guest. Their intention is rape. They seek the Levite, but he thrusts his פילגש upon them.[70]

After they abused her all through the night, she somehow makes her way back to the doorway.[71] While fallen on the doorway, her hand was upon the סף ("threshold"; Judges 19:27). Alone in this scene, her identity in the text is that of אשה ("wife"). Once the Levite opens the door to be on his way, he barely notices her and when he does, commands her to "rise."[72] She is identified in this scene as "his פילגש." There is no answer and he places her on his ass and continues his journey. The time of her death is ambiguous in this text.[73]

One cannot help but ask through the narrative, *who is this woman*? Why are there shifts in her identity? Perhaps being a פילגש, a wife, and a young maiden all contribute to the theological intentions of this story. The Levite will go on to cut her up into twelve pieces to be sent as a message for the tribes to gather for civil war against the Benjamites for what they have done.

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[70] "Seize" is in the *hiphil* form here and indicates force.

[71] It is necessary to make a note here of the literary importance of doorways throughout the Hebrew Bible. The interpenetration of images is heightened with this scene of doorways as one recalls the imagery of battles and doorway with Jael's tent (Judges 4:20), Abimelech (Judges 9:44), Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:31), among others.

[72] It is interesting that "his journey" is in the singular form.

[73] Again, the LXX attempts to make this clear and indicates that she was already dead, but the ambiguity is apparent in the MT.

There are interesting gaps in his recounting of the crime and the text artisan is aware that the community will also take notice of these intentional gaps.[74] The description, "Sons of worthlessness" (Judges 19:22), will extend from the band of men at the door to later describe every Benjamite in Israel (Judges 20:13). The tribes respond to the Levite and the result is the almost complete annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin.

3.5 Thresholds: סף and מפתן

The word, סף ("threshold"), is most often used with temple and palaces. As Israel comes to this political evolution, the use of סף encompasses this place of political transition for Israel. This word is found in twenty-nine verses within the Hebrew Bible, and some of the uses designate a palace (1 Kings 14:11) as well as the threshold of the temple (2 Chronicles 3:7) and God's place of judgment (Amos 9:1; Zephaniah 2:14). It is also used in Exodus as the basin (סף) that holds the ceremonial blood of the lamb to be placed on the doorposts of the house.

The ordinary, sacred, and symbolic are all encompassed in this term סף. The more common word פתח ("doorway") is used immediately in our episode (Judges 19:26, 27) before the פילגש's hand lays upon the סף or "threshold" (Judges 19:27), indicating an intentional and significant use of סף. The Hebrew word, סף, is only found in this one place in the entire text of Judges.

The word, מפתן ("threshold"), is used almost solely for temple (1 Samuel 5:4, 5; Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18; 46:2; 47:1; Zephaniah 1:9). It is well worth noting that סף ("threshold") is used for both the threshold of a temple and a palace. The literary threshold the community of Israel has

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[74] Gaps are an intentional literary technique of Hebrew narrative and noted by several scholars, including Meir Sternberg and Adele Berlin.

been walking through in Judges will be left behind as they move from that once familiar territory into a land of new orientation within the Samuel narrative.

This final parabolic appendage looks through a theological lens at how the polity and morality of Israel was to be understood. This threshold not only looks at the interpretive history, but also looks forward to the possibilities for a people seeking to understand themselves. This משל of dialogue resists becoming finalized.

Although Israel is without excuse at times (1 Samuel 12:17), responsibility is often placed on those in places of political power. Where does this leave us with the longest narrative in Judges (chapters 19–21)? Buber reads the refrain, "and there was no king in Israel," as illustrating "that which you pass off as theocracy has become anarchy."[75] The epilogue of Judges requires a response. Although the "riddle" on one level could signify the rhetorical resolution of the Davidic monarchy, this משל of dialogue is an invitation for reflection on multiple layers. To illustrate the ethical, political, and theological climate of this evaluative refrain, one should turn next to the scene of horror depicted in the story.[76] What is the point of this graphic depiction?

The idea of severed appendages being used as a political means to call for assemblage is found in two Hebrew Bible passages and one comparative source in a Mari Document. Two involve human victims: one a man (Mari document) and the other a woman (Judges 19:29); the second Hebrew text involves oxen (1 Samuel 11:7). Two questions surface that beg for clarification. Do these examples depict normative practice, to dismember persons and animals? Also, what was communicated culturally and politically in such a graphic depiction?

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[75] Buber, *The Kingship of God*, 78.
[76] Baker notes, "Superficially, it is a statement of social observation, devoid of value judgment. However, underneath the surface meaning, the writer is saying something else, and on this the commentators concur. Where they disagree is in what the underlying message is, generating a continuing debate whether it reveals him as pro or anti-monarchy. The reality seems to me, however, not to be political, but principally theological" (*Hollow Men, Strange Women,* 25).

3.6 Parallel Texts of Violence: Judges 19, 1 Samuel 11 and a Mari Royal Document

The Hebrew Bible text that parallels Judges 19:29–30 is 1 Samuel 11:7. The actions of the Levite and Saul mirror each other: *he took, he cut up, he sent*. The objective is achieved in both cases. After the limbs of the פילגש have been "sent among every border in Israel," the people gather "as one man" (Judges 20:1). After Saul has cut up the oxen and sent out deliverers with the pieces, the people came out together as one (1 Samuel 11:7).

The prophet Samuel had just anointed Saul as king. Saul was not supported by everyone; in fact, he was despised by men of worthlessness (1 Samuel 10:27). This is the same descriptor given of the Benjamites in Judges (Judges 19:22; 20:13). In the scene with Saul, Jabesh-Gilead is threatened by King Nahash of Ammon. The town is given seven days to send messengers to call for aid. Joyce Baldwin notes that King Ammon must have been extremely confident to permit this time line (1 Samuel 11:3).[77] Saul hears the cry of the people while plowing in the field. The spirit of the Lord "seizes" Saul, and he cuts up his oxen and sends the pieces by messengers to all the borders of Israel.

An earlier Babylonian story parallels what we have in both Judges 19 and 1 Samuel 11. It is found in a Mari document; this Old Babylonian document is a letter from Bahdi-Lim to his king, Zimri-Lim. Bahdi-Lim writes:

> To my lord, speak. Bahdi-Lim your servant [speaks] as follows: For five full days I have waited for the Hanaeans but the people do not gather. The Hanaeans have arrived from the steppe and established themselves among the settlements. Once, twice, I have sent [word] to the settlements and the appeal has been made. But they have not gathered together, and for the third day they have not gathered. Now, if I had my way, a prisoner in jail should be killed, his body dismembered, and transported to the area between the villages as far as Hudnim and Appan in order that the people would fear and gather quickly, and I could make an attempt

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[77] Joyce Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 103–105.

in accordance with the command which my lord has given, to carry out the campaign quickly.[78]

This Mari document from the early eighteenth century BCE attests to an example of a king's servant desiring a quick assembly of the people for battle.[79] These examples attest to its occurrence. Those receiving the message would know exactly what it meant. But was this a normative practice for Israel? Arguably, no. This was not normative for Israel, as evidenced in Israel's response to the Levite's action. In the episode in Judges, everyone who saw the פילגש replied that nothing has ever been done or seen like this since the day they left Egypt (Judges 19:30). The Exodus is invoked as a signifier of identity and transition in a theological and political doorway from Israel's past.

The action was not normative in Israel's history, but the intended response was understood in all three examples. The motive of the dismemberment of the oxen or the person was to create fear that moved to activity.[80] In 1 Samuel 11:7, the "terror of the LORD fell on the people" and then they assembled as one. The document from Badhi-Lim states that the people will "fear and gather quickly." In the passage in Judges, the bodily invitation of the dismembered פילגש was answered with the gathering of the tribes for war.

The Mari document shows that the king was the person with the executive power to advance that directive. In all three cases, body parts were sent out to strike fear in order to unify and mobilize a group for the political purpose of war. The action results in the intended response in all three cases: to unify and mobilize for action. In the 1 Samuel 11 passage (and the Mari

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[78] Cited in Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 546. See also *Archives royales de Mari (ARM)*, 2.48. G. Wallis advances this connection to Judges 19:29-30 and 1 Samuel 11:7 in "Eine Parallele zu Richter 19.29ff und 1 Samuel 11.5ff aus den Briefarchiv von Mari," *ZAW* 64 (1952): 57–61.

[79] There are also parallel stories of lost asses being sought; Abraham Malamat humorously addresses the biblical account in 1 Samuel: "Saul sought asses and 'found' kingship." See Malamat, *Mari and the Bible,* 103; 151–56.

[80] The covenantal treaty idea of cutting up an animal signifies that an unfulfilled oath will result in a similar fate for the negligent party.

document), they were to gather for war against foreign nations. In the Judges passage, they assembled for war against their own people. In 1 Samuel 11 (and the Mari document), the authority of the king empowered and executed the order of the dismembering message.

It is interesting to note that an unnamed Levite held political sway over the nation of Israel in a similar directive manner in the Judges account. The political power of the Levite and the civil war looming signify the dark irony that this story entails. In fact, after the Levite gives his account of the crime in Judges 20:4–7b, he mysteriously disappears from the dialogue, the decisions, and decrees that ensue through Judges 21. The readers are reminded at the beginning and at the close of this משל of dialogue that, indeed, "There was no king in Israel."

3.7 Conclusion

This study began with the hope of offering another voice in the efforts to understand this homeless piece of literature at the close of the Judges story. This final appendage reveals a profoundly intertextual addition to the story of Judges that invites dialogue with the Hebrew canon. More than a strange limb requiring removal, the evidence discovered within these final chapters involving the theologically significant use of the terms, סף ("threshold") and המאכלת ("the knife"), invites such a dialogue.

The sacred and sadistic interpenetration of images in this story deconstructs any monologic attempt of a flat reading. The deeply intertextual nature of Judges invites a layered and thought-provoking account of a nation's identity on the crux of political transition. The dismembered body of the פילגש is the משל that will refuse to be silenced.

As a משל of dialogue, the intertextual didactic value of Judges 19–21 becomes more evident. Although one may resist this doorway of literature because of the horrific nature of the

story, the traumatic depiction is intentional in this violent and violating text. The ironic nature of the Judges story in its entirety (Judges 19–21), along with this provocative מֹשֵׁל, is at once rooted and rootless as a threshold in the literature, rhetoric, theology, and history of an Israelite nation in its process of becoming. This investigation builds on the foundation of an expected response within the canon, a voice of answerability, through the intentional use of סַף ("threshold") and הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת ("the knife"). The intentional use of these terms reveals a polyphonic rendering, inviting a careful intertextual investigation. Building on the atypical amount of violence so far, chapter 4 will expose conflicting ideologies, including double-voiced discourse, through dialogue and activities of key participants in Judges 19–21. Moreover, the ironical discrepancies in the key passages in *Ruth* and Judges offer readers a solicitation of anticipated intertextual response, which will be expanded more fully in the chapters to follow.

CHAPTER 4: HAUNTED DIALOGUE

The goal of this chapter is to focus closely upon the reported speech and reported actions

in Judges 20–21 in order to investigate the discrepancies of the irony of authority (kingly

activities), unity, anonymity, and activity (oaths and weeping). Through a survey of reported

speech and double-voiced discourse, this section seeks to unveil diverse ideologies through

intertextual utterances. Double-voiced discourse is inherent in all dialogue, some double-voicing

apparent to the writer and reader, while other types of double–voicing is accessible to the

characters. I propose that there is double–voicing evident in Judges 19–21, much of which is not

obvious to the characters but when these chapters are read intertextually within a canonical

framework, there is an anticipated response of the reader. An example, although not relegated to

speech, are the specific terms used (such as חרם, נתח, המאכלת**,** רצח**)** within the narrative

framework which are "orientated toward a future–answer word."[1] The extravagant use of חרם

("the ban") on a familial tribe will add to the atypical use of violence within Judges 19–21,

especially in purview of the use of נתח ("to cut") and המאכלת ("the knife") in Judges 19:29.

The previous chapters have laid a foundation for an expected ethical response, a *future–*

answer word of answerability through a close intertextual reading and proposal for a genre

designation, as a משל ("proverb/parable"). This chapter continues to build the foundation for the

atypical violent nature of these three chapters, Judges 19–21. To emphasize the unusual violence,

a close investigation of speech and action, along with detailed look at רצח ("slain, murder"), will

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[1] Bakhtin, *Discourse in the Novel*, 280.

bring critical transparency to this discussion. I will contend that the incongruities are intentional and double–voiced discourse is evident within the text.

Along with a detailed look at רצח ("slain, murder") there is a unique use of specificity with the insertion of the Ark of the Covenant, the person Phinehas, and the place of Mizpah in these three chapters characterized by namelessness and ambiguity. What I hope to demonstrate is that these specific details, along with discrepancies in the Levite's speech, will support the invitation for an anticipated intertextual response of answerability within the canon.

4.0 Utterances of the Mute and Mutilated (Judges 20 and 21)

The last two chapters of Judges contain some of the most graphic and horrific stories within the Hebrew Bible. Judges 19 is gruesome enough and what follows adds trauma upon trauma as the reader is tangled in a web of retribution, oath taking, dialogue, murder, a mass kidnapping, and rape. All the dialogue to follow is haunted. It is haunted by the פילגש. The hauntings are her silence, her abuse, the cold reception from the Levite on the threshold, and her mutilation.

Although we are moving on in this משל, readers will continue to be haunted by her silence. Her mutilated body moves throughout the story as an eidolon of memory. She may be mute, but the utterance speaks, as an authoritative aura.[2] The gap in language or explanation is the haunted *utterance.* She foreshadows, in a gruesome way, what is lost by the women of Jabesh-Gilead and later the women of Shiloh by the end of this משל.

At the close of the story, readers want to shut the book and be finished reading. What is the purpose of these final two chapters of this משל? The aim of this next section is to dive into

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[2] The authoritative silence is noted by Janzen in reference to trauma—i.e., the concentration camp language he notes in Elie Wiesel's writings.

the dialogue and take a fresh look at the intentional words of the text artisan. By employing a

close intertextual reading, the goal will be to discover the double-voicedness of what is

presented. Robin Baker notes that in the composition of the text, "Its writer took pains (and, I

suspect, delight) in creating a work that employs distortion or, better, 'refracted reality' to

present the episodes it contains."[3] This "refracted reality" represents the double-voiced discourse

that the text employs in the final chapters and indeed, throughout the entire text of Judges. The

last two chapters appear monologic in their presentation, but there are many loopholes and

double-voiced utterances to be discovered, which reveal the dialogic nature of these final

chapters. Bakhtin explains the idea of loophole:

> A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning for one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. This potential other meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow.[4]

This shadow grows throughout Judges 20 as the Levite gives an account of what has happened.

We will begin to see this tragically unravel and the text artisan will reveal a double-

voiced utterance within the text. One of the interesting aspects about the double-voiced utterance

is that it is elastic in definition.

> Someone else's words introduced into our own speech inevitably assume a new (our own) interpretation and become subject to our evaluation of them; that is, they become double-voiced . . . Our practical everyday speech is full of other people's words: with some of them we completely merge our own voice, forgetting whose they are; others, we take as authoritative, we use to reinforce our own words; still others, finally, we populate with our aspirations, alien or hostile to them.[5]

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[3] Baker, *Hollow Men, Strange Women*, 11.
[4] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* 233.
[5] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 195.

With Bakhtin's dialogical contact, there may be a way forward to discover potential canonical voices of answerability. There are particular words and phrases that the text artisan employs that invite dialogue within the Hebrew canon.[6]

Proverbs 31, a well-known passage in the Hebrew Bible, illustrates the ideal king, of those in authority, who are privileged with power. The occasion for such instruction is given in the first verse: "Words for King Lemuel, the *utterance* which his mother instructed him."[7] A mother's voice has authored the words of her son. This utterance has passed the boundaries of Lemuel's becoming, and through this writing, this proverb will speak.

This utterance for a king is indeed a burden. He is to speak for the mute. The king is to defend the rights of the poor and needy. These words of political wisdom guidance reveal one of the opportunities a leader is given in the position of power. Warnings and admonitions are abundant. King David gives his successor, his son Solomon, guidance of how to rule as a king in Israel:

> Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn,[4] so that the Lord may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'[8]

These words of guidance are meant to be internalized and as Bakhtin would say, dialogized into one's becoming*,* and impacts their "eventness of being."[9] This event is not one of isolation in relationship but always in dialogue with the "other."

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[6] In chapter 9, the dialogic nature of the text of Ruth and Judges 19–21 investigates the key idioms:דבר על- לב (Judges 19:3; Ruth 2:13); נשא אשה (Judges 21:23; Ruth 1:4); the terms, הלך and שוב (to list a few).

[7] Proverbs 31:1–9. Another translation option for משא ("utterance") is the more common "oracle." See Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 672.

[8] 1 Kings 2:3–4 NAS.

[9] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*.

The interplay of dialogization, what Bakhtin describes as the *I-for-myself* and *I-for-the-other*, is well illustrated by Caryl Emerson, one of Bakhtin's biographers:

> *I-for-myself* is constantly in flux and thus is unreliable as a source of stories that would explain myself to myself; for this reason, Bakhtin writes, every self must put itself together out of bits of "finished surface" that others provide and project onto it. Bakhtin insists that in matters of identity and self-worth, we always work with other's views of us. Looking in the mirror is a fiction. The only way to see myself "as I am" is to see myself as others see me, preferably in the process of responding to them accurately in a mirror, but only as mirrored through the pupils of *your* eyes.[10]

This dialogical vision is a critical aspect for Israel and their leadership. It is my contention that the stories in the Hebrew canon provide the necessary dialogue of becoming, that take into account what the texts speak, what the text artisans may say, and what the reader may contribute. Although a text may be reproduced, each interaction with it creates a new space, a new reading.[11] As a reader, and as a woman, I am given the opportunity to speak, to judge, and to provide one voice of answerability to these texts with an atypical amount of gendered violence.

The last three chapters in Judges come as a dark reminder of a nation's demise without the type of leadership in which David outlines in detail to his son, Solomon. The contrast is haunting as one compares the proverbial matriarchal voice from the proverb, instructing one with power to *speak* for the mute, for the needy, and for the poor. The end of Judges illustrates the opposite. Those in power have contributed to injustice and have treated the women and men as closed entities, as things, and not as living personalities.

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[10] Caryl Emerson, "Bakhtin After the Boom-pro and Contra," *European Studies*, xxxii (2002): 003–026 (England), 11.
[11] Emerson writes, "A text, too, can be mechanically reproduced (for example, reprinted), but a 'reproduction of the text by the subject (a return to him, a repeat reading, a new performance, quotation) is a new, unrepeatable event in the life of the text, a new link in the historical chain of speech communion.'" Further along in the essay Bakhtin is even more explicit: "Within one and the same utterance, a sentence may be repeated (a repetition, a self-quotation, or even accidentally), but each time this is a new part of the utterance, since its place and function in the utterance as a whole has changed." See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, [fn 21], xli.

This final scene in Judges is one of oppression and injustice, a scene which rips children and wives from their families. The Levite incites a war that will *create* orphans and widows. The story is in direct contrast to the Deuteronomic passages, which value the protection and provision of the triad (foreigners, orphan, widows).[12] At the end of Judges, there is a haunted silence. Every woman is silent. The text cries out to be argued against, to resist closure which would "finalize and deaden" the victims.[13] Intertextual utterances become important in the canon to offer voices of protest.

The פילגש and the kidnapped women utter no verbal word in the entire משל of Judges 19–21. There is a refrain reminder that there "was no king in Israel" (Judges 21:25). The proverbial words of instruction from a mother in Proverbs 31, and from King David in 1 Kings, are foreign to the type of leadership we discover in Judges 20 and 21. Although the mute do not speak through the presented dialogue in Judges 20 and 21, there is evidence through canonical answerability of the existence of a potential double-voicedness through significant word-choice. These words unveil utterances in the silence.

In order to discover potential voices in the final two chapters, one should look at the nature of the "evil deed" and the reported speech in chapter 20. Through a close reading, one discovers the canonical voice of answerability. Within the genre of משל, one can observe unmerged voices for the silent.

The mute and mutilated woman of Judges 19 speaks through her trauma. Although she may be a representation of an idea, she is still a woman and a body. The trauma within this political and religious counter-ideology moves the reader through violence. She is not *only* a

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[12] These three groups are witnessed throughout Deuteronomy, with specific instructions given to care for these vulnerable groups—i.e., Deuteronomy 10:18–19; 14:28–29; 16: 9–17; 24:19–22; 26:12–15; 27:19.

[13] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 59.

metaphor. She is still presented as a woman without a voice. She foreshadows, in a gruesome

way, what is lost by the women of Jabesh-Gilead, and later the women of Shiloh, by the end of

this משל. Their voices appear silenced by becoming possessions of war.

Much of these final two chapters at first glance appear monologic, but within the broader

canonical dialogue, this משל is indeed polyphonic and dialogic.[14] The refrain alone provides a

departing place of counter-ideology, which invites the reader to listen to the gaps, to lean in

closer to the represented trauma. "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit"

(21:25). Leadership is absent and depravity is at an all-time apex. The tension is all too obvious

at first reading.

Within this dark story is a meeting with God, an oath, weeping and praying. Who is

speaking? Who is leading? Who are the actors in this narrative of darkness? This was not a story

to be celebrated in the festive calendar year for the Jews as we find in Esther and *Ruth*. This story

repels the reader, but where is one repelled? Readers desire to resist what Bakhtin calls a

sympathetic co-experience.[15] The narrative is difficult to process and, as a reader, many resist

engaging, but again, this is an important aspect of the משל. Here, we will discover its powerful

invitation.

Through a close rendering of the movements of dialogue (through *reported speech* and

double-voiced discourse), this next section will seek to uncover the voices of the silent. Because

of the nature of the intertextuality of the biblical texts, there are other voices to be unearthed, in a

very midrashic sense, which become part of the dialogue and force other ideologies into the

conversation. Green points out Bakhtin's usefulness with Hebrew narrative:

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[14] The polyphonic nature of canon has been noted by Christopher B. Hays though he does not pursue this point in full. See Hays in "The Silence of the Wives," 59–80.

[15] For "Sympathetic co-experience," Barbara Green, chooses to use the term, "empathetic." See Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 34, n.15.

What distinguishes Bakhtin . . . is his attention to the language of narration. It is the vast system of language options that makes texts signify: where the language has been used before, how it is shared among various participants, how readers may choose to exploit it. He presumes, prescribes, great attention to how phraseological representation is managed, by narrators and characters. But far from limiting us, those factors liberate us as readers into the vast maze of connections, as everyone dialogues with everyone else.[16]

The irony of these final chapters of Judges 20 and 21 is on one level, a dark irony.[17]

Along with dialogue, this next section will look at how dialogue authors the character in their character zones. How is this authoring resisted and accepted by the movements in the text and what are the intertextual invitations with language that has been *reused*?[18] Through a close reading of the dialogue in Judges 20 and 21, this next section will attempt to reveal that the resistance to finalization remains open throughout these two chapters. This resistance to closure is a key component in the dialogic nature of the genre of משל. So, who are the authoritative voices in the next chapter?

4.1 If There Was "No King in Israel," Who is in Charge?

The absence of kingship piques the reader's interest. Questions of authority and even leading authorial voices begin to create a dynamic dialogue of wonder in Judges 20. One begins to claim the Levite as the authoritative source, but before the narrative progresses too far, he completely disappears. It is similar to Hitchcock's *Psycho*[19]—another narrative of violence against a woman—where the lead that we have been following, Mary Crane, is abruptly and violently taken from the story. Not only is the Levite's absence odd, he disappears just as the

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[16] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 69–70.
[17] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 269.
[18] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen,* 270.
[19] Alfred Hitchcock (dir.), *Psycho* (Hollywood, CA: Paramount Pictures, 1960).

tribes begin a civil war. He has called for the assembly and then he is absent—right in the heat of battle.

In the previous chapter, there is a strong sense that the nameless Levite is the one calling the shots. After all, he has the most dialogue and power in that chapter. He is the one who initially offers to speak to the heart (דבר על-לב) of the פילגש and readers realize throughout chapter 19 that he speaks, but there is no dialogue on her part that is obvious within the text. His voice and activity pull the narrative forward, but readers want to hang onto his narrative rope, dig in their heals, and resist him, as in a game of tug-of-war.

Some may want to ask him a few questions such as, "Did you forget about the פילגש, did you forget to speak to her heart?" "Why are you so non-emotive?" And onward, he pulls as if there is no resistance. A cacophony of questions arise and readers are left without a firm grip on the rope. This is where a canonical answerability will begin to help us secure a handle and answer the narrative pull.

In this section, the canon provides dialogue for the silent. Before one begins to unpack the voice of canon, he or she will need to understand who is in a leadership role and then assess who these lead voices are, and what they are saying in chapter 20 in order to identify who is in authority and how this shifts in the story.

Once readers get a sense for the first layer of narrated dialogue, they will then investigate what the "evil" was that propelled the next set of events forward. With a careful examination of the Hebrew text, one can then discover potential loopholes and counter dialogue that is not so obvious in a surface reading.

4.2 Not a King but Acting Like One

The first key authoritative person in chapter 20 is the Levite. He has sent the message through the limbs of the, פילגש which have called the assembly together (19:29–30). Once assembled, it is noted, "The leaders of all the people of the tribes of Israel took their places at the assembly of the people of God" (20:2). After the Levite recounts the "evil," all the people "rose as one man" (20:8).

Next, men are sent from the tribes of Israel to the tribe of Benjamin to surrender the "wicked men" (20:13), in order to put them to death, to "purge the evil," from Israel. The Benjamites resist. War will ensue. The next main authoritative voice will be "The Lord." The Israelites seek the council of the Lord and go to Bethel. One might assume that the Levite would be interceding at this point, but the text states that "the Israelites" went before the Lord. Next, the Lord will answer them. This exchange will happen a second time in 20:23. There will be a third exchange between "the Israelites" and "the Lord" in 20:28.

It is important to point out the digression of authority from one, a Levite, to leaders of the tribes, and then to community, "the Israelites," who speak directly with the Lord in the narrative. One would expect the Levite to continue in that role, but after he has sent the pieces of the פילגש as a message to assemble, he strangely disappears from the משל.

4.3 The Account of *this* Evil[20]

> Now the sons of Benjamin heard that the sons of Israel went up to Mizpah and the
> sons of Israel said, "Speak! How could this evil be done?" Judges 20:3

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[20] The idea of revenge as a unhelpful ethical response is illustrated well when Frodo Baggins remarks, "It is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing" J.R.R. Tolkien, *Return of the King: Being the Third Part of The Lord of the Rings* (New York, NY: Ballantine, 1994), 325.

It is crucial to take a moment to recount what exactly is the cause of this civil war and how the Levite has presented the horror that had come upon him and his פילגש. It is necessary to keep in mind that this final appendage, this homeless piece of literature, is a well-crafted and artistically designed משל of dialogue.[21] It has been placed intentionally by the text artisan to reveal profoundly intertextual layers in the politico-theological story of the people of Israel. With a careful recounting of the speech of the Levite, one can begin to unearth a counter dialogue within the canon. Trible notes that the "narrator continues to protect his protagonist through ambiguity" through "the crime of silence" where the Levite "absolves himself." "His carefully phrased admission, 'she is dead,' rather than 'they killed her,' reinforces the suspicion that he is murderer as well as betrayer." [22]

It can be argued that there is a loophole in the silence and a counter-voice through the text artisan. The gaps are so distinct that it would be odd for the first hearers not to notice. Rather than the narrator protecting his protagonist, the obvious gaps invite dialogue and potential voice through the gaps. The silence invites a dialogue with the community that demand a different verdict than the one presented in the text.

I will attempt to demonstrate intertextual canonical voices in this next section with a detailed investigation of the term, רעה ("evil"). This Hebrew term, רעה, has been translated as "awful thing,"[23] but I hope to demonstrate that evil seems to be a more appropriate descriptor of what has happened to this woman.[24] Through a close investigation of the speech of the Levite, discrepancies within his account of the crime will become more apparent. The Levite describes the scene of the horror of the rape (with several omitted details). As stated in 19:30, upon

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[21] See chapter 3 for the full discussion of the משל genre for Judges 19–21.
[22] Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 82, 91, n.57.
[23] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 552.
[24] Butler translates it as an "evil thing" in *Judges*, 430.

receiving the dismembered message (her body cut up in twelve pieces), the Israelites recount that "such a thing has never been seen or done, not since the day the Israelites came out of Egypt" (19:30).

Surely, rape has been seen before, as horrible as that is. The Levite admits to dismembering the body, but his recounting of the evil invites dialogue within the canon. When looking at the options for translation, the other words fall short of the horror that this woman has endured. "Misery" and "injury" (among others) do not come close to her brutal experience before and after the Levite dismembers her body. What will be detailed next will be the details in the narrative, the reported speech of the Levite, and the canonical voice invited into this dialogue.[25] The chart in the following section will also detail the gaps of the recounting in the narrative to reveal a canonical voice for the פילגש.

4.4 The Reported Speech of the Levite

The great gathering has assembled. The leaders of every tribe are there, along with four hundred thousand men bearing swords. They are ready to listen to the recounting of the horrific event that led to the dismembered concubine. The Israelites ask, "Speak! How could *this* evil happen?" The Levite begins his recounting of the incident.

A close reading might produce confusion, possibly even sadness, at the discrepancies that have become evident in the Levite's recounting of the what had happened to the פילגש. Emotion and even grief pulls the reader into this strange story. Grieving is what Barbara Green calls "a

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[25] Block comments that God is "strangely silent." I view this silence as intentional, an invitation for the canon to reveal a more polyphonic dialogue. See Block in *Judges*, 519.

potential empathetic relationship."[26] Readers have been disappointed throughout the narrative that the Levite has not spoken to her heart (Judges 19:3). They look back at the initial response of her father and wonder if his extreme hospitality was indeed forceful because he did not trust the Levite with his daughter.[27]

This next section examines the direct speech of the Levite. Bakhtin notes one of the important aspects of direct speech of characters:

> Such speech has direct referential meaning, but it does not lie in the same plane with the author's speech; it observes, as it were, a certain distance and perspective. Such speech is meant to be understood not only from the point of view of its own referential object, but is itself, as characteristic, typical, colorful discourse, a referential object toward which something is directed. [28]

The gaps in his story, when compared to the narrator's account in chapter 19, are interesting. The Levite stated the men of Gibeah's purpose that horrific night was *to kill* him. Without hesitation, he proceeds to share that they raped his פילגש, and she died. He then says that he then took her and cut her up and sent each piece to each region.

This next section will investigate the difference between what was reported and the event described in chapter 19. The gaps are characteristic of a משל, inviting participation from the reader or hearer. The reader responds in a manner similar to King David when presented with stories of injustice; the wise woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14 provokes an emotional and ethical response in David. The story in Judges 19–20 invites a similar response from the reader.[29]

The discrepancies are alarming and disproportionate. The Levite's entire account of the horrific event are contained in a few sentences. His role in the story, on one level, ends here.

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[26] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 40.
[27] This is not the usual reading of Judges 19:4–10 but a student of mine pointed out this possibility. I thought this indeed could be an interesting take on the visit, especially in light of how frustrated the Levite became through the course of the narrative.
[28] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 186–187.
[29] The course of David's previous decision is altered in this משל and at the end of the chapter, David tells Joab to bring Absalom back (2 Samuel 14: 21).

Ironically, his recounting of the events will author the becoming of all that follows. Dismissed from the rest of the story, he haunts subsequent actions and words.

The following section uses Bakhtin's category of reported speech with attention to a close reading of the dialogue paying special attention to polyvalent words that arise in the text. Green is helpful here:

> What distinguishes Bakhtin—as well as relating him to a number of other cotemporary theorists—is his attention to the language of narration. It is the vast system of language that makes texts signify: where the language has been used before, how it is shared among various participants, how readers may choose to exploit it. He presumes, prescribes, great attention to how phraseological representation is managed, by narrators' and characters. But far from limiting us, those factors liberate us as readers into the vast maze of connections, as everyone dialogues with everyone else. [30]

The Levite reported to Israel that the Benjamite men wanted to "kill" him. But in chapter 19, readers see that as the "men of worthlessness" surround the house, their stated purpose is to have sex with him. The Levite leaves out this detail. Other gaps in his account are shown below, with events reported but not mentioned in chapter 19 underlined. The Levite gives his account of the horrific incident:

> 20:4 Then the Levite, the husband of the woman, the one slain, answered, "I and my פילגש came in to Gibeah, which belongs to Benjamin, in order to lodge."

> 20:5 But the lords of Gibeah rose up against me, then surrounded the house, with intention to kill me. Rather, they humbled my פילגש, then she died.

> 20:6 Then I grasped my concubine and I cut her in pieces and I sent her away among all the land of inheritance[31] of Israel because they did wickedness and *this* senselessness in Israel.[32]

> 20:7 Behold, all you descendants of Israel, give your word and counsel here![33]

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[30] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 69–70.
[31] The land is the נחלה ("inheritance, possession, property") in Judges: 2:6, 2:9; 18:1; 20:6; 21:23; 21:24 of Israel. See also Ruth 4:5; 4:6; 4:10.
[32] נבלה ("senseless") is described as "disregard to moral and religious claims." See Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 615. Irony is heightened with the strangeness of the Levite's activity and non–activity.
[33] Translation is mine unless otherwise noted

The *italicized* lines indicate an interesting change of description of persons. The gaps of silence and ambiguity in chapter 19 are noted with the descriptor of "gap":

Horrific Event Described by Text Artisan: Judges 19:22-30	Levite's Description of Event as Reported Speech: Judges 20:4-7	Voice of Canonical Answerability The Silent Utterance
The men of worthlessness surround the house and shout to the old men to bring out the old man so they can have sex with him.	The Men of Gibeah surrounded the house intending to kill me. Gap: Their intent was to rape him Gap: No witnesses	The Deuteronomic Code demands that elders should investigate a reported crime (Deut. 13:14) Two or three Witnesses are required in the case of a murder (Deuteronomy 19:15) Whoever strikes the premeditated murderous blow should be put to death (Exodus 21:12-14) In 20:1, Mizpah is mentioned as the place everyone assembled. Theological and political intertextuality connect Judges 20:1 with the Jephthah story in Judges 10 and 11, and Hosea 5.
The old man offers his virgin daughter and the Levite's פילגש to protect the Levite house-guest.	Gap: There is no mention of this by the Levite	Intertextual connections with the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19.
The sons of worthlessness refused to listen to the old man. The Levite seized his concubine and sent her outside.	They raped my concubine and she died. Gap: The MT is ambiguous with the time of death of the פילגש and leaves room for the possibility of the Levite as the murderer.	In Judges 20:4 the text artisan employs the word רצח. It states, "the women, the one slain." רצח is in the niphal and is the only use in the entire text of Judges and reminiscent of Hosea 6:9 which is a poetic response from God concerning disloyalty on the part of Ephraim and Judah, Israel's defilement. The word רצח is used to describe priests who murder on the road. It is used a second time in a similar poetic context in Hosea 4:2 and reveals all creatures, even the birds and the fish, as well the land, is in mourning and one of the reasons given is רצח (murder).
After being abused all night, she went back to the house and fell at the doorway and lay there until daylight, with her hand upon the סף ("threshold").	Gap: There is no mention of this by the Levite, nor mention of him commanding her to "get up" as he almost trips over her in the morning at the start of his journey	Theologically and politically significant words: Mizpah; Ark; Phinehas; Jabesh-Gilead; The Knife; Oath, סף .

Figure 4. Chart of Gaps and Silent Utterances

As indicated above, there is a notable lack of transparency in the reported speech of the Levite. He is untruthful and leaves intentional gaps, voice-ideas, in order to elicit a particular response from the community. The Levite is creating for himself a loophole as his speech exposes possible intentions as he is "laying bare his own final words" as they "interact[s] intensely with other consciousnesses."[34] The above example is an indicator that this epilogue is indeed a משל of dialogue. The intentional non-verbal utterances create response from the reader or hearer of this story. I suggest that the emotions invoked are intentional.

The symbolic use of the woman and her body is abused once again in the text as she is described as a "possession" and "inheritance." As the woman, the פילגש, becomes a "possession" in this story, her characterization is reduced to a "thing" and ceases to be a fully rounded character and "personality." This is what Bakhtin describes as the death of dialogue.[35] Unfortunately, this story will continue to spiral down and revisit this notion of women as possessions. Although there will be a descent into strangeness and silence, the loopholes in dialogue become more evident by the end of Judges 21.

4.5 The Woman, the One Slain

When the Israelites respond, "Speak! Tell us how this evil could be done?" the Levite is described as "the husband of the woman, the one slain" (Judges 20:4). The term chosen to describe this woman invites dialogue into her identity. She is described as "the one slain." The Hebrew word, רצח ("slain, murder"), is a violent word, first found in the Decalogue in Exodus 20:13 "You shall not murder." It always refers to a human murdering another human except for one reference in Proverbs (22:13).

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[34] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 54.
[35] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 86.

This particular reference in Proverbs deals with an animal killing a person. There is an interesting use of רצח ("slain, murder") as a term of immorality. "And as raiders wait for a person, so a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem. Surely, they have committed wickedness" (Hosea 6:9). As noted in chapter 3, the time of the death of the woman, the פילגש, is ambiguous in the text. This ambiguity disturbed later translators of the text and in the Greek Bible (LXX), and the artisans attempted to smooth over what I would argue was intentional ambiguity left in the MT. This is the only place that the word, רצח ("murder"), is used in the entire text of Judges. This is very interesting to note because Judges is filled with battles, killings, and violence.

In fact, one of the stories most often associated with the violence enacted upon the פילגש is the horrific story of Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11. The verb, הרג ("to kill"), is used sixteen times in the Judges story (Judges 725; 8:17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 9:5,18, 24, 45, 54, 56; 16:2; 20:5) and five of these uses are in Chapter 8 with the story of Gideon killing Zeba and Zalmunna, the kings of Midian. The text artisan is inviting dialogue with the readers in this ambiguous place. The silent gaps invite a canonical dialogue, and the readers offer another voice. There is an ethical impulse in the choice of this word, an example of canonical answerability. With the aversive force evidenced in the Decalogue for the forbidden activity to murder, to רצח (Exodus 20:13), there is a case to be made that the canonical community is speaking for the פילגש. She was murdered.[36]

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[36] See chapter 3, Mute and Mutilated, for a fuller treatment of רצח. Schneider highlights the double-voicedness in commenting "the irony is that the Levite man demanded that the Israelites go to war on account of the woman whom he had done nothing to help and whose situation he had caused in the first place." See Schneider in *Berit Olam,* 260.

4.6 Unity at Mizpah[37]

     Upon hearing the horrific account, full of self-serving intentional gaps, the people of

Israel (minus Benjamin and Jabesh-Gilead) rise in unity.

     The Levite continues with his request,

     20:7 "Behold, all you descendants of Israel, give your word and counsel here!"

     20:8-9 Then all the people rose as one person, saying, "Not one of us will go to his tent, nor turn aside to his house. But now this is the thing that we will do to Gibeah; go up against her by lot."

     20:10 Throughout the tribes of Israel, we will take 10 men out of 100, and 100 out of 1,000, and 1,000 out of 10,000, to take provision to the people, so that when they come to Gibeah of Benjamin, they will execute according to all the senselessness they have done in Israel.

     20:11 Then all the people of Israel gathered against the city, as one person united.

     Interestingly, the ironic devices in Judges reach an apex in this scene. Israel has not been

able to be unified throughout the entire Judges text but here, in this משל of dialogue, they come

together as one—against their own tribe. "As one man" is found in three places in this chapter

(20:1, 8, 11). Not only do they rise "as one," Block notes that the geographical merism presented

"from Dan to Beersheba" as first witnessed in this text.[38] In this unity, division remains.

     This ideological unity[39] will be undermined as the story unfolds. This division is one of

the most intense scenes of civil war witnessed in the Hebrew Bible, "pre-monarchy." Similar to

the story of Achan, חרם will be enacted on their own people.[40]

     Block also notes this irony,

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[37] This is also the site of Saul's coronation. Carolyn Pressler notes this as another "anti-Saulite twist." See Pressler's, *Joshua, Judges, and Ruth* (London, England: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 249.

[38] Also 1 Samuel 3:20; 2 Samuel 3:10; 17:11; 24:2,15; 1 Kings 5:5; 1 Chronicles 21:2. See Block, *Judges*, 549.

[39] It is noted in the idea of ideological unity that this unity "is a unity of effects pursued by an artist, an artist whose artistry is defined as a skill with architechtonics." See Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics,* xviii.

[40] חרם will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

It is truly remarkable that this nameless Levite from an obscure place in Ephraim was able to accomplish what none of the divinely called and empowered deliverers had been able to do. Not even Deborah and Barak had been able to galvanize support and mobilize military resources of the nation to this extent.[41]

The irony is heightened even more when one considers that the previous deliverers could not rally this type of support against *foreign* powers, how much more ironic that the Israelites have been able to rally this type of support against their own people? The story ensuing will only add more support to the refrain and the need for internal political organization and change. "There was no king in Israel; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25).

Mizpah will be the gathering place of the tribes,[42] a significant location because Mizpah only occurs ten times in the Judges text and in only two narratives. It is located in this final משל (20:1,3; 21:1, 5, 8) and the Jephthah narrative (10:17; 11:11; 11:29). It has been argued that these two Mizpahs are different places (the former in Gilead and the one here just north of Jerusalem).[43] Other uses of Mizpah in the Hebrew Bible include the Mizpah in Gilead (Genesis 31; Judges 10:17; 11:1, 29, 34); Mizpah in Harmon (Joshua 11); Mizpeh in Shephelah (Joshua 15:38); Mizpah in Moab (1 Samuel 22:3).

The root of this theologically significant yet ambiguous place name signifies "to watch"[44] and has often been considered a high place at which to assemble. Although it has been argued

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[41] Block, *Judges*, 550.

[42] This site is not to be confused with the Transjordanian site where Jephthah sealed his pact with the Gileadites in 11:11. The present site is generally identified with modern Tell en-Nasbeh, seven miles north of Jerusalem, about 3 miles northwest of Gibeah, on the boundary between Benjamin and Ephraim. See Walton, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background*, 217.

[43] The location of Mizpah north of Jerusalem has been identified as Tell en-Nasbeh because it contains Iron Age 1 material (ca. 1175–950 BCE). The site originally identified as Mizpah, Nebi Samwil, was discovered to contain Iron Age II material (ca. 950–586 BCE) and so it was determined that Tell en-Nasbeh was the more likely candidate. 702 I. Magon and M. Dadon, "Nebi Samwil" [Hebrew] Qadmoniot 118 (1999), Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2005), 701–702.

[44] Mizpah is from the verb *sapah*, "to watch." (TWOT 1950b). It is interesting to note that in Genesis 31:49 to become a "Mispah Benediction, 'the Lord watch between me and thee,' but in original context it 'was a kind of boundary between Jacob and his father-in-law.'" (TWOT 1950b J.E.H.). "As for me, I will dwell at Mispah: the Tell en-Nasbeh Excavations after 85 years," Jeffery R. Zorn and Aaron J. Brody, 2015.

that the Mizpah of Judges 10 and 11 is a different geographic location from the Mizpah of Judges 20, there is an interesting similarity between the two places. As others have attempted to define location historically, there could possibly be a theological and political intertextual connection, which supersedes geographical inquiries.

It is theologically significant that Jephthah and the nameless Levite have interesting features in common. Both are seen as leaders without a divine call. Every other deliverer in Judges is "raised up by YHWH" except Jephthah. The "legitimate" deliverers, if you will, are stated in the text. But this issue of legitimacy is very ambiguous. Jephthah had no legal recourse. He is connected with his brothers from the paternal side, but his mother was a זנה. This disqualified him in one sense from legal rights to his father's inheritance.[45] Both Jephthah and the Levite slaughter an innocent woman. There are also literary connections between Jephthah and this nameless Levite.[46]

The Mizpah listed in Hosea 5:1 is of particular interest in connection to the Mizpah that readers find in Judges 20. The aim of the gathering in the Hosea account is condemnation of the priests and rulers of Judah and of Israel. This account of Mizpah in Hosea could be another example of intertextual canonical dialogue with the Judges 20 account.

What could seem a straightforward reading becomes more complicated when one listens to the voice of canonical answerability. A surface reading might lead one to assert that Jephthah's illegitimacy is due to his mother's identification as a זנה ("prostitute") but one need only recall Joshua 6 where a זנה is the one who rescues the spies, saves her family and indeed,

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[45] This illegitimate leadership is also witnessed in the case of Abimelech and the reason given is because his mother was a פילגש.

[46] Thus, both have the literary location of Mizpah (even if different sites); both have an oath; both involve the death of a young woman.

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becomes part of the Davidic lineage. This is anything but straightforward. When compared to the Levite in Judges 19–20, the silence of the women across the canon grows.

This is where the canonical voice/s and the community of readers can provide answerability and draw out the double-voicedness to the text. Prostitutes can actually be saviors and the murder of the פילגש has not gone unnoticed. In fact, the Levite, who now has a literary lineage including Jephthah[47] and Abimelech, proves a foil for legitimate leadership. His leadership style could potentially be rendered illegitimate, incompetent, and violent. The possibility remains that he was also a murderer.

4.7 Sons of Worthlessness— My Brother?

Bakhtin notes that when a person becomes a "thing" and not a "personality," that individual becomes defined by the other. The dialogical relationship ceases. Emerson observes this shift when she comments, "One of Bakhtin's major premises might be called the vitality of non-equivalence . . . [m]ultilingual environments, he argued, liberate man [sic.] by opening up a gap between things and their labels."[48] Although not a clinical death, the cessation of dialogue means that the hope of becoming together in the dialogic relationship has departed. For Bakhtin, to be in a true dialogic relationship does not require agreement—quite the opposite. The dialogic relationship can hold multiple views, and the goal is not moving toward *one* truth, one overarching theme.

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[47] The biblical portrait of Jephthah is indeed complicated. Hebrews 11 praises both Rahab for her faith and Jephthah for his military prowess. What is interesting to note is the silence in this passage that is in regard to Jephthah's daughter. She is not mentioned, but she is remembered.

[48] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, footnote 9. See "from the prehistory of novelistic discourse," in The Dialogic Imagination," xxxii, n.9.

In Bakhtin's work, *The Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin shows that Dostoevsky resists closure in dialogic relationships in literature. Bakhtin remarks that even in agreement or disagreement, the dialogic character is maintained. In describing Dostoevsky's ability to "try out new orientations" in his works, Bakhtin maintains that it must be emphasized that in Dostoevsky's world, even agreement retains dialogic character, it never leads to a merging of voices and truths in a single impersonal truth, as occurs in the monologic world."[49]

Bakhtin describes Dosteoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* as the truly polyphonic novel, and Dostoevsky as the "creator of the polyphonic novel."[50] The relationship of brothers is indeed complex in literature, in art and in life. Jon Surgal expounds on the complicated relationship with the brothers Karamazov and their father**:**

> Old Karamazov, father of four eponymous brothers, is a depraved and licentious buffoon who is most at ease, most himself, in the company of the rats which have overrun his house. Each of his sons have individual reasons to despise him—to each of them—in other words, he is "my rat"—and at last one of them bludgeons him to death. We are challenged to identify the "dirty brother." This turns out to be a more complicated matter than it would seem. The novel's plot revolves around the questions of identifying the actual killer, but the larger question (a deservedly famous one) addresses collective guilt: "What man does not desire his father's death?" All the brothers are shown to be tainted by the will to parricide and "spirit of the Karamazov's" (*karamazovschina* or "Karamazovism"), defined in the novel as "that thirst for life regardless of everything."[51]

In this sequence of events that will follow, one can find a similar difficulty in identifying the guilty party in Judges. Which *brother* is at fault? Is all of Benjamin to blame for all that will occur? The Levite? Israel? What type of fratricide is this? One cannot help but recall the

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[49] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 95.
[50] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 7.
[51] Jon Surgal in "Introduction" to Fyodor Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, 1995), v.

complicated nature of brother relationships on the individual level: Moses and (perhaps Ramses); Jacob and Esau; Joseph and his brothers, especially Judah.

In the Genesis narrative, one wants to define Judah as a traitor, but the artisans of Genesis keep his "personality" undefined. As Genesis 38 closes, Judah is still in the process of becoming and confesses his position before the family when Tamar voices that he is the father of her baby. Judah responds, "She is more righteous than I" (Genesis 37:26). Yet, this brother, who has by all accounts deceived and been deceived, resists a monologic utterance. Judah, in all his questionable choices, will go on to be a tribal head with his "prostitute" daughter in law, mother of his sons. Story drives the narratives, these complex, muti-layered life events.

When one defines the other, the act of *becoming* together stops. The Hebrew narrative resists a monologic rendering, simple definitions and dichotomizations. Are prostitutes bad or good? Are the Israelites alone chosen? Why are all these "random" others, some under חרם ("the ban"), grafted in to the people of Israel (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth)? These stories elude a simple definition and resist finalization throughout the entire canon.

Benjamin's identity moves from a monologic voice to a dialogic one throughout Judges 20 and 21. The violent word uttered will begin to back out of the corner that it has worked itself into and begin to desire a shared experience, a sympathetic co–experience, once again. As one traces the dialogue through chapter 20, it becomes clear that Israel's initial response shifts, and the declarations become questions before YHWH:

> 20:12-13 Then the tribes of Israel sent men to all the tribes in Benjamin saying, "what is *this* evil which was caused to be done by you? Now give the men, the sons of worthlessness, who are in Gibeah so we may kill them and consume the evil from Israel." But the descendants of Benjamin were not willing to listen to the voice of their brothers, the descendants of Israel.

> 20:18 Then they rose and went up to Bethel, and the descendants of Israel said, "who should go up first to wage war against the sons of Benjamin?" Then YHWH said, "Judah is first."

The previous statements have the utterance of decision within them. They do not inquire

about the men of worthlessness. As noted earlier, the Levite states his case, but there are no

witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). The tribe of Benjamin resists the authoritative command. They

refuse to surrender their men. The purpose of the initial confrontation was to demand that the

men of Gibeah would give up the accused. Once these men were handed over, they wanted to

"put them to death and purge the evil from Israel."[52]

> After the first battle, Israel asks, for the first time, if they should go into battle.

> The sons of Israel went up and wept before the Lord until evening, and inquired
> of the Lord, saying, "Shall we again draw near for battle against the sons of my
> brother Benjamin?" And the Lord said, "Go up against him" (20:23).

What is interesting about this last inquiry of the Lord, is that their final question should have

been their first.

> 20:27-28 Then the descendants of Israel asked YHWH –and there the Ark of the Covenant of
> God was there in those days–and Phinehas son of Eleazer, son of Aaron, was standing before it in
> those days saying, "Shall I again go out to wage war with the descendants of Benjamin, my
> brother, or shall I cease?" And YHWH said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will give them into your
> hand."

Polzin notes the tension in this passage in the actions of Israel and the identity shift with

Benjamin:

> Changes toward more detail in the reported speech of the inquiries themselves
> correspond to the changes in the narrator's reporting speech. In 20:18, the
> Israelites already assume that they should attack Benjamin; in 20:23, they simply
> question whether they should continue to approach for battle with Benjamin; but
> in 20:28, they inquire whether they should again enter into battle or desist. There
> is also a notable shift in naming between 20:18 and the following instances: in the
> first instance the Israelites refer to "Benjamin," but in the following two they refer
> to "Benjamin my brother."[53]

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[52] "The formula "to purge[exterminate] evil from" appears in 13:6[5]; 17:7,12; 19:13,19; 21:9, 21; 22:21, 22, 24; 24:7. Cf. Judges 20:13; 2 Samuel 4:11; 1 Kings 4:10. Except for Deuteronomy 19:19, in Deuteronomy, all instances involve the death penalty" in Daniel Block's "How Can We Bless YHWH? Wrestling with Divine Violence in Deuteronomy," in *Wrestling with the Violence of God: Soundings in the Old Testament*, M. Daniel Carroll R. and J. Blair Wilgus, eds. (Winona Lake, IN; Eisenbrauns, 2015), 37, n. 1.

[53] Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 203.

Block highlights the hesitation: "On the surface the nature of the inquiry itself seems to differ little from v.23. But the redundant construction (lit.) 'Shall I do yet again to go up?' and the addition of (lit.) 'or shall I desist?' at the end reflect Israel's growing doubts."[54]

The shift in terms of identity and the approach to dialogue with YHWH indicates the change leading up to the weeping. Similarly, with *The Brothers Karamazov,* the finger–pointing and blame will continue to shift. Perhaps the one to blame will end up being attached to the hand from which it extends.

What exactly does בליעל ("worthlessness") in Judges 20:13 entail? This term, בליעל, is found in the book of Judges in 19:22 and 20:13. Most occurrences in the Hebrew Bible are attributed to opponents of David in the Samuel narrative. בליעל is located in only three psalms and it is interesting that the Psalms have the inscription as being לדוד (attributed to David; Psalm 18:5; 41:9; 101:3). בליעל usually refers to "the wicked/worthless" in general or indicate a wicked individual man such as Nabal (1 Samuel 25:17, 25). Eli's sons are described as "worthless" (1 Samuel 2:12). Hannah defends her reputation before the priest Eli as she exclaims, "Do not take your handmaid as a daughter of worthlessness"[55] (1 Samuel 1:16). Eli has gravely misunderstood her, assuming she was intoxicated while she was instead in concentrated prayer.

One of the suggested meanings of בליעל is that it is a "euphemism for Sheol," meaning a "place from which none arises."[56] Context can be an identifying tool to locate the breadth of meaning attributed to this term. With contextual clues, this term is extremely negative here

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[54] Block, *Judges*, 560–561.
[55] Translation: so J. Matheny, 2018.
[56] "Cross and Freedman think *beliyya ʿal,* worthlessness, derives from *bal (i)ya ʿl (ê), meaning* "a place from which none arises," and is thus a euphemism for Sheol [fn 224] (JBL 72, 1953, 22, n.6) in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, #1162.

compared to its previous context in chapter 19. There, it was ascribed to the ones from Gibeah who asked for the guest, the Levite, to be their victim (19:22).

If the term, בליעל ("worthlessness"), does connote "a place from which none arise," this could present an interesting voice in the canonical answerability with the Benjamite, Saul.[57] He begins to rise as Israel's first king, but not quite. Green, following Polzin's lead, prefers "to think of Saul not so much as the first historical king but rather as an epitome of Israel's experience with kings and sees him as a 'type'."[58] Long looks at the throne more historically and aims at one level of understanding through the succession stories.[59] Whether Saul is a finite figure or representative does not particularly assist the interests of this study; the one thing both would agree on is that there is a strong influence of the Saul and David discussion present in Judges 19–21. Saul was the first of many unsuccessful leaders on the throne.

Along with the identity marker of בליעל ("worthless"), the group will also be identified as "brother." Even though the sons of "worthlessness" could arguably apply only to the accused men, the group under חרם will come to encompass the entire tribe of Benjamin for their failure to produce the initial perpetrators. The Levite's account of the crime produces a potential double-voicedness, which the tribe of Benjamin might have ascertained with their refusal to hand over the men.

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[57] D.W Thomas believes that it comes from *bl' "to swallow"* and should be understood as "the swallower" in the Old Testament (*Biblical Patristic Studies in Memory of Robert Pierce Casey,* ed. J.N. Birdsall and R.W. Thomson, 1963, 11–19.) See Willem A. Van Gemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 661–662.

[58] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 9.

[59] Long, T*he Reign and Rejection of King Saul: A Case for Literary and Theological Coherence* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1989).

Possibly, they agreed that the men were guilty, but the method of assembly initiated by the sending of the woman's body parts tipped them off that something was amiss. Readers probe these gaps, inquire, wrestle, and speculate. Perhaps they refused to respond to this dismembered message in such a "body of writing" because meeting an accusation of trauma with a message of trauma does not often deliver justice.[60] How are the tribes to respond to an invitation sent out in the form of body parts? In particular, how does the accused tribe enter into a dialogue within an assembly that is initiated through these horrific modes of delivery? The message sent is intentionally violent. The possibilities for peaceful negotiations after such a disembodied message is difficult (if not impossible) to imagine.

4.8 Name-dropping as Theological-Political Symbols: The Ark of the Covenant of God and Phinehas (or Phineas)

> "Then the descendants of Israel asked YHWH –and there the Ark of the Covenant of God was there in those days–and Phinehas son of Eleazer, son of Aaron, was standing before it." (Judges 20:27)

Why this strange insertion of such a theologically significant item and theologically significant person? The Ark of the Covenant of God is first seen in Exodus with an interesting travel log in and out of the nation of Israel. Eventually, it completely and mysteriously disappears from existence. The Ark possesses a powerful presence that even modern movies reference as a symbolic object of other-worldly powers and significance. Most notably, Steven Spielberg's film, *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), has contributed to the awareness of this unique object and its potential to mediate the divine presence in fantastic and frightening displays of power, if it is opened.

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[60] Mieke Bal, "A Body of Writing: Judges 19," in *A Feminist Companion to Judges,* Athayla Brenner, ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 208.

Similar to המאכלת ("the knife"), the Ark of the Covenant is an interesting narrative insertion by the text artisan. The presence of this theological element, coupled with the only person named in the entire section of 19–21—Phinehas, son of Eleazar—a canonical voice intersects this narrative. Newsom notes these as "privileged words," lacking "sharp boundaries" but their "metalinguistic profile overlaps and bleeds into those of other discourses but remains distinctive enough to be recognized."[61] Newsom's insights (in reference to the speculative wisdom poem in Job 28), coupled with her attention to the authorial distinctives within this poem, easily translate to a similar convention being employed in Judges 20. Comparable to Job 28, Judges 20 is "dialogically related" to other voices within the Hebrew canon.[62]

Although Newson keeps her work within the book of Job, Judges 20 necessitates a wider dialogical viewing, especially with an eye to the ark, which has not been witnessed in the entire Judges text until Judges 20:27. Readers will turn to the significance of the ark within the canon along with the person of Phinehas in order to speculate the purpose and function of his unexpected entrance in the narrative. The ark and Phinehas are placed in the narrative as a way of stating the chronotope of the narrative. A chronotope signifier "in those days" represents a connective phrase for the reader. One of the purposes for this is where the "writer presents two blocks of chronologically unrelated material as though they were synchronous, for the purpose of explicit comparison."[63] Again, this study does not argue for a *finalized* conclusion but aims to discover potential voices merging from within the canonical text.

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[61] Newsom, *Job*, 171.
[62] Newsom, *Job,* 174.
[63] Another point of comparison is the Akkadian term, *inūmīšu.* 'in those days,' in its several contracted and dialectal forms. It came to be employed by neo-Assyrian scribes in the editing of royal annals. As that literary genre developed, the phrase came to be used when the editor inserted sections our of strict chronological sequence in order to juxtapose materials for thematic purposes (Grayson 1980; 1981). Seen in the framework of ancient editorial practice, Judges 17–21 functions as an analysis of that period. Finally, the synchronic chronological notice 'in those days' contrasts with the rigorously diachronic chronology of the central section, suggesting an end position or negative climax," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Historical Books*, 603.

The character Phinehas is known for his zeal. He is commended for it (Numbers 25:10–15).[64] He is a rightful priest from the line of Aaron. The text expresses that he was "ministering" before the Ark. In the Hebrew, he is literally "standing" before it. This narrative intrusion, I argue, is a symbol inserted for theological and didactic significance. Phinehas is silent in this entire narrative and his actions of ministering are what seem to be of consequence. The Ark is described to be "an ark of God/god."

Other significant places in the Hebrew Bible where the phrase, the "ark of the covenant of God/gods," is located are found in 1 Samuel 4:4 (the Ark was here with Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas) and 2 Samuel 15:24 (Zadok was the priest in charge). The literary purpose of naming Phinehas as an instrument to "date" the story of Judges 19–21 would have placed chapters 19–21 "within a century of the death of Joshua."[65] Perhaps the function of the naming of Phinehas is a symbol. He does not add anything of consequence in the flow of the narrative but his name, along with the insertion of the "ark of the covenant of god," carries potential theological meaning and cultural memory.

Similar to the scholarly discussion surrounding the purposeful insertion and location of Genesis 38 in the Joseph cycle, the sudden appearance of a name in a narrative cycle characterized by anonymity creates a thought-provoking intersection of canonical dialogue. Reinhartz makes a noteworthy case for the "name-dropping" so late in the story. Reinhartz demonstrates that Phinehas represents more than just a name; Phinehas participates in the story as a theological symbol.[66]

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[64] This zeal was commended by the later scribes. John Collins notes that the zeal of Matthias in 1 Maccabees was another example of zealousness and violence together (among other more current examples). See "The Zeal of Phinehas: The Bible and the Legitimization of Violence," *JBL* 122, no. 1 (2003): 3–21, 10.
[65] Block, *Judges,* 562.
[66] Reinhartz, *Why Ask My Name?*, 125.

One of the assertions of how Phinehas functions in the story is demonstrated by Hudson, who asserts that in naming Phinehas, the story is attempting to focus is on how quickly dehumanization can occur in such a short period of time for the people of Israel.[67] With an eye to the symbolic use of the ark and the name of Phinehas, one potential function of this משל of dialogue is a reminder of the moral deterioration of Israel and the rapid decline of demoralization without effective leadership.

Butler denounces Guillaume's theory that the presence of the Ark in this scene was a "secondary edition to the narrative" and its use is one of harmonization with the other historical texts. One of Guillaume's faults cited by Butler is his lack of attention to literary artistry.[68] Instead, Butler sides with Hague's theory, which views the use of the Ark in this narrative in correlation with its use during periods of war. He traces its wanderings from the time of Exodus, into Joshua during the battle at Jericho, with a brief insertion in Judges (20:27). During its time "off-duty," the Ark remains in Shiloh (Joshua 18:1; 1 Samuel 1:3; 3:3) and after a retirement of about twenty years (1 Samuel 5:1–7:2), David brings it into Jerusalem.

An interesting feature of the function and appropriation of the Ark is that it has been used in several war time scenarios, and even sanctioned by YHWH to be a part of them. The Ark, as a symbol of divine presence, is witnessed when it is captured by the Philistines as an "instrument of war" (1 Samuel 4), but will be returned shortly after when it does not continue to produce intended results (1 Samuel 6).

The characterization of the Ark as a tool for war alone, as evidenced with the Philistines, begins to deconstruct. David is denied the request by YHWH when he seeks to build the temple

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[67] Hudson, *Living in Land of Epithets*, 10
[68] Butler, *Judges*, 447; Philippe Guillaume, *Waiting for Josiah: The Judges* (London, England: T & T Clark International, 2004), 207.

to house the Ark. David is denied this request precisely because he was a man of war (1

Chronicles 28:3; 1 Kings 5:3; 1 Chronicles 22:8; 2 Samuel 7).

> The use of the ark in Judges generates more questions than answers. One of the important areas of dialogical contact is the theological and political significance of this symbol. The ark represents an image of power within the Hebrew narrative. This small box embodies the characterization of the power and presence of YHWH yet refuses to be reduced to merely an "instrument of war." [69]

The insertion of the Ark and Phinehas within this story are additions that evoke

more questions than answers, strange moments of name–dropping within three chapters

of intentional ambiguity (unnamed Levite, slain woman). The specific use of the Ark and

Phinehas contribute an invitation of canonical response. One suggestion is that

there is an ethical and moral deterioration happening within this story on multiple levels.

These perplexing names are intentional. Alongside these two examples, the geographical

location of Mizpah is first named (20:1) and invites further intertextual analysis.

4.9 Mizpah: Oaths and Weeping

The epilogue of Judges continues to confound the reader with the introduction of the first

oath in the entire book. When did this oath at Mizpah occur? Perhaps the oath was sworn during

their first decision to go up against Benjamin (Judges 20:8–10), immediately following the

Levite's account of the crime. In 20:18, the Israelites gather at Bethel and inquire of YHWH.

The oath could have been sworn during 20:23, during another gathering where Israel weeps

before YHWH, again seeking divine guidance. In 20:26, the gathered community of Israel weeps

again at Bethel; this time, they fast and present burnt offerings. With the sense of doubt[70] and

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[69] What is interesting about use of the ark here, is that its function as an instrument of magic, a way to obtain favor /favorable outcomes in war. See Janzen, *Violent Gift*, p. 161 and Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 138–139. See also Block in *Judges, Ruth*, who argues for its use in a similar manner as a "good luck charm," 561.
[70] See section "Sons of Worthlessness, Benjamin our Brother" for a fuller detailed account of this doubt.

regret that seems to grow within the Israelites' actions, it is possible that the oath may have been sworn during their first gathering with their minds set on the destruction of the "sons of worthlessness" (20:8–11).

In the narrative of Judges 19–21, Mizpah is first mentioned in 20:1, and this is where the group gathers for the first time to hear the account from the Levite. It was an extremely extravagant oath, enacting חרם on an entire tribe. It would be plausible that they declared the initial oath during the first gathering, especially in recognition that in 21:5, they state that they took a solemn oath to enact חרם on anyone who failed to assemble. חרם will be enacted at their convenience for the second time in an attempt to solve the shortage of women for Benjamin in Chapter 21.

The regrettable oath reminds the readers of a regrettable vow made a few chapters earlier by the deliverer Jephthah. Weeping and oaths interweave in these alarming accounts. Weeping appears in four scenes in Judges. The first weeping occurs in Judges 2:4-5. The angel of YHWH reminds Israel that YHWH has brought them out of Egypt, reminds them of the covenant with them and that are not to make a covenant with the inhabitants of this new land nor worship their gods. Because they had failed to keep this promise, YHWH reminds them that the inhabitants will not be driven out of the land but will be like thorns in their sides. At this, "the people lifted their voices and wept. So, they named that place בכים." (Judges 2:4–5)

The Israelites are so distraught that they name the place בכים ("weepers"). בכים is a place of deep mourning where they offered sacrifices to YHWH. The angel of YHWH recounts all God has done by bringing Israel up out of Egypt and providing for them. However, in all these things the Israelites are charged with disobedience. Because of their disobedience, the nations will not be driven out before them. So, they weep.

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In each occurrence in Judges, weeping directly relates to death. In Judges 2:4, Israel is indicted because it has not executed the foreign nations under חרם. Jephthah's daughter weeps the loss of not only her life but a future family. The young woman asks her father Jephthah for time to weep with her friends "…because I will never marry" (Judges 11:37). What this young woman has uttered will become part of the speech of others' becoming. Later in that chapter, it is stated that "…she became a tradition in Israel."[71] Because of a rash vow, her life was cut short. [72] Her life would not embrace marriage and children. She may not have *known* a man but everyone *knew* of her. Her story and her weeping became a story Israel embraces. The weeping that she experiences with her friends becomes integrated into the speech of others.

Samson's Philistine wife will weep because death threats have been issued against her family. The thirty companions of Samson threaten her by saying, "Coax your husband into explaining the riddle for us, or we will burn you and your father's household to death. Did you invite us here to rob us?" (14:15). She is solely responsible for finding the answer to the riddle.

At the end of Judges, Israel weeps for the loss of their brother. However, this *brother* is not solely allocated to men alone. The tribe includes women and children who have been destroyed in the battles. The weeping in Judges is associated with death. The mourning is comforted by more oath-death with חרם on Jabesh-Gilead. The dark irony interlaces throughout these final three chapters. Is death sought as a comforter, an answerability for Benjamin? This short *answer* of חרם upon a village, will not only leave the tribe still in want of women, but they will end the final scene by committing a similar transgression to the one that started it all. The

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[71] Judges 11:39.

[72] Neef, Heinz-Dieter. "Jephta und seine Tochter (Jdc XI 29–40)." *Vetus Testamentum* 49, no. 2 (April 1999): 206–217. *ATLASerials, Religion Collection*, EBSCO*host* (accessed February 19, 2018). In this article, Neef surveys the nature of the vow and the interpretations of the result of what happened to Jephthah's daughter: disbelief, non-sacrifice, hasty vow, vow as burden, narrative as non-sense.

scene will end with multiple victims . . . the kidnapped and raped women, and their families who have lost them. The silence in the story is authoritative. Weeping provides a potential response for all the victims without a voice. In a text such as Judges, weeping is welcome amidst the violence. One must grieve the loss.

Similar to the weeping of the community of women for Jephthah's daughter (including the victim herself) found in Judges 11, violence accompanies the response of grief. Violence becomes one answering voice, but not the only voice. The stories in the Hebrew Bible integrate violence and weeping. Perhaps the voices within canonical responses to violence can provide another voice in the dialogue for the פילגש and the other silent women murdered (Judges 20, 21).

The weeping of Samson's wife may be grief co-experienced with all those who have had their families threatened. If an individual can ever serve as a type, this could potentially connect at a deeper level and provide a model for others.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has investigated the examples of double–voicing in Judges 20–21, in particular, with the reported speech of the Levite, whose words are infused with irony and loopholes. Reading these chapters intertextually reveals the diverse ideologies and inconsistencies of Judges 20–21 within the broader canonical scope. Significant areas discussed were areas of authority, unity, oaths and weeping, the report of the slain woman, and the enigmatic one–time insertion of the Ark of the Covenant, not previously witnessed in the entire Judges account except here, in Judges 20:27. Specificity (Ark, Phinehas, Mizpah) within a story characterized by ambiguity is a juxtapositional invitation of response from within the broader canon. What begins to become more apparent through these investigations is that these final

three chapters are anticipating a response of answerability. *Ruth* will eventually provide one

voice of response, due to intertextual analyses, along with canonical positioning.

Chapter 5 continues the investigation of the enigmatic use of חרם ("the ban") in Judges.

The purpose of the atypical use of חרם ("the ban") reveals that one of its functions is to cast a

regenerating vision of Israel's theological and political situation through the use of irony.

Building on this research will lay the groundwork for the final case study in chapter 10 where

Ruth will provide a voice of canonical answerability to gendered violence in Judges 19–21.

CHAPTER 5: חרם in Canonical Dialogue

This chapter will continue the exploration into the unusual use of חרם ("the ban") within the Judges 19–21 משל ("proverb/parable"). Scholars have described it as comical and grotesque, having difficulty pinning down the purpose and function of its use here at the end of Judges. Bakhtin's literary theory of grotesque realism will be a useful lens to examine the purpose of חרם ("the ban") within these final chapters. The absurd nature of the violence, when read through the lens of grotesque realism, begins to reveal that an utterance of answerability within the canon is part of the function of this unusual and atypical use of חרם ("the ban") executed on the familial tribe.

The previous chapter provides a close investigation of the reported speech and reported actions in Judges 20–21 in order to investigate the discrepancies of the irony of authority (kingly activities), unity, anonymity, and activity (oaths and weeping). What became evident through this chapter was the need to examine more closely the intertextual use of חרם ("the ban"). This chapter concludes with a voice of answerability within the canon to the tragedies ensued by the use of חרם ("the ban"). The gendered violence will refuse to be buried in silence.

An examination of the use of חטף ("to seize") in Judges and Psalms will reveal an intertextual utterance of answerability within the canon. These investigations begin the groundwork for how *Ruth* will ultimately provide a case study of answerability for the gendered violence and muted women of Judges 19–21.

5.0 Thresholds of No Return: חרם

Certain threshold crossings are permanent. There is no return for the deceased. Bakhtin comments on the threshold concept from Dostoevsky's writings, "For in fact, Dostoevsky always represents a person on the threshold of a final decision, at a moment of crisis, at an unfinalizable—and unpredeterminable—turning point for the soul."[1] Threshold crossings may be physical (and also spiritual), and often very emotional. There are several thresholds of no return in the closing chapter of Judges. Many of these thresholds are directly linked to the declaration and activity of placing a חרם ("ban") on a familial tribe.

The irony is dark as the Judges 19–21 story unfolds, and a later execution of the ban on a familial tribe is performed in part to fill in the gaps of the deceased women who have been slaughtered in the first execution of the ban. This next section will investigate the unusual and extravagant use of חרם in Judges, along with a closer investigation of the dialogic loopholes of חרם in Joshua, with a comparative survey of Achan and Rahab. This survey will reveal the intricacies of Israel's employment of חרם ("ban") and its absurd and extravagant use at the end of Judges.

The reiterated refrain in Judges reveals a negative assessment: "There was no king in Israel; everyone did as they saw fit" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). This refrain offers a partial suggestion of what the ancient communities longed for. The vision throughout Joshua of "possessing" the land never takes hold although there is a time of relative peace under David and into Solomon's reign. The monarchic vision will end in exile and will beg new questions and inquiries. It is important to remember that the exilic voice is one that has a background of

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[1] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 61.

trauma. Bakhtin constantly reminds us that what readers hear merges with voices from the past

while these voices are still in the process of becoming. In this move forward into something new,

and within this vocalic dance, is "dialogic communion."[2] David Janzen highlights the ambiguous

tensions that we, as readers, experience in Judges 19–21:

> Trauma in Judges 19–21 does not definitively reject the narrative's portrayals of
> God, justice and so on, nor does it provide its own explanatory logic—but it
> suggests and subverts, throwing the narrative's totalizing explanation into a trial
> with no resolution. By the end of Judges, that is to say, trauma has subverted the
> narrative's logic in history to such a degree that the trauma itself can be seen as
> the essence of history. Like Elie Wiesel's camp language, it negates the language
> of untrammeled narrative explanation and takes its place, putting ambiguity in the
> place of certainty. From the reading of Judges, all of history might open to a
> continual repetition of trauma without explanation.[3]

What the speech of the Levite sparks in chapters 19 and 20 will continue to consume

death and destruction in the wake of chapter 21. Here, one must consider the canonical shape of

these final chapters. Are there indeed intertextual clues that provide another voice in the dialogue

of what is presented on the surface?

Revell argues for a "logical and cohesive account of the battle with Benjamin" but the

aim of this study is to consider the shadow areas in the dialogue of the text.[4] If one takes

seriously the proposal that Judges 19–21 is indeed a משל of Dialogue, there is a way forward to

discover potential counter-ideologies that resists a surface reading and reveal a dialogic

intertextuality of canon consciousness.[5] It can be suggested that similar to Childs, canon

consciousness was not a late development as Barr has asserted but was an early and influential

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[2] Bakhtin shows that the polyphony of voice-ideas live in community and become together, he shows that an "idea lives not in one persons isolated consciousness . . . if so . . . degenerates and dies . . . it begins to live with the ideas of others…realm of existence is the "dialogic communion between consciousnesses" *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 88.

[3] David Janzen, *The Violent Gift*.

[4] J.J. Revell, "A Battle With Benjamin (Judges XX 29–48) and Hebrew Narrative Techniques," *Vêtus Testamentum* XXXV, 4 (1985): 1.

[5] For a helpful discussion on the nature of canon consciousness, see Provan, "Canons to the Left of Him."

factor in the rhetoric of these texts in their final form.[6] This next section maintains that there is a counter-ideology present through intertextual voices. Perhaps the silence and the gaps in the story offer a place of invitation that summons the reader into a sense of bewilderment in order to remember the other stories connected through and silenced by allusions and similar plot lines. The cavernous gaps in the story become invitations for answerability in this משל of dialogue.

Intertextuality is evident in Judges 20 and 21 and is dialogic. Barbara Green comments on the permeable borders in dialogue. She writes, "To author in such a dialogical way is to both recognize the border between myself and another and to sense that it is permeable, porous, repeatedly crossed in more ways than I can take in." The literary and theological "border crossings" are what Bakhtin terms, *dialogic.*[7]

With these border crossings in dialogue, what is accepted and resisted becomes part of the authoring of self and other. As a metaphysical dialogism, it has the possibility to invite another way to perceive how the present form of the Hebrew texts have come into being, as part of the national and theological dialogue of a people in process of narrating their story. This dialogue contains attention to their historical settings along with an eye to explain and wrestle with how their story has unfolded, not only with places of conquest and victory but also in valleys of loss and trauma. Canon consciousness is evident in the intertextuality of these final chapters of Judges.

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[6] Provan, in critique of Barr, remarks that there is a high level of intertextuality within Old Testament texts. For Provan, with whom I agree, the level of intertextuality is a "central matter" and an "intrinsic feature of the nature of Old Testament narrative texts that have come into their present form in relationship with each other and with Torah and with Prophetic texts, the very form in which they are written inviting reference time and time again to these other scriptural texts." See Provan, *Against the Grain*, 116.

[7] Green, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Biblical Scholarship*, 35.

Again, the aim of this study is not to uncover a hidden meaning, authorial intention, or even one overarching truth. The aim is to add another voice to the dialogue by juxtaposing *Ruth* and Judges 19–21, placing them in intentional dialogical contact, in order to offer a fresh perspective. This next section will turn to the intrusive introduction of crucial figures and key places during the council for war. One key theological figure will be introduced for the first time in the final epilogue of Judges 19–21: YHWH.

5.1 חרם as a function of Grotesque Realism

Biblical texts powerfully shape and influence society. The Judges texts are to be considered in a serious vein because of their status as sacred story in various contexts. Identifying the form and function of Judges 19–21 will enable the reader to pass through the dark tunnels of this particular reading "adventure" in order to appreciate the intricate contours of the reading journey.

Although very dark with irony, these stories are not funny. Stories of trauma create readings that are difficult for the modern reader. One could idealize these texts as remnants of an ancient society in which people struggle to comprehend and identify. Unfortunately, horror stories such as these still exist in modern society.[8]

To detail traumatic portrayals in literature is a difficult task. Often, the ironic is brought forth to highlight particular contours, certain political ideologies, or theological claims. There is a dark irony that undergirds Judges 19–21, and is touched upon by Boling, Polzin, and Block. Block, Polzin, and Boling use descriptors of *grotesque, comical,* and *comedy.* I have italicized

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[8] Alich Bach compares the silence of the women at Shiloh with the "documented atrocities" from the "gynocidal actions in Bosnia." See Bach, "Rereading the Body Politic: Women and Violence in Judges 21 in *A Feminist Companion to Judges,* Athayla Brenner ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 158.

their descriptors to demonstrate that both the grotesque and comic are evident within the narrative. Boling describes the situation as a "comedy of correctness."[9]

Block writes in his commentary on Judges:

The last chapter of the book of Judges is the strangest of all. Chapter 20 closes with the tribe of Benjamin wiped out—except for a frightened group of six hundred fugitives huddled in Pomegranite Rock. The account of the Israelites response to what had transpired is somewhere between *comical and grotesque*, as the victors scramble to find a solution to the problem they have created by amputating one member of the twelve-tribe confederacy."[10]

Polzin continues:

But in the last chapter of Judges, Israel asks one final question, the narrator tells us, of "God": They said, "O LORD God of Israel, why has it happened in Israel that one tribe should this day be lost to Israel?" (21:3) Israel's use of herem* against Benjamin, and their vow to refuse their daughters to Benjamin, threaten his extinction. The rest of the chapter recounts in an almost *grotesquely comic* fashion how Israel, in the absence of any direct response from Yahweh, proceeds to insure that Benjamin not be lost to Israel.[11]

What becomes apparent as one reads the literature on these final chapters is that there is indeed a dark irony pervading the narrative. One way to unpack this ironic device is to invite a dialogue partner from the Middle Ages: *grotesque realism*. Grotesque realism is one of the aspects of carnival which Bakhtin coined for us in *Rabelais and His World*. Grotesque realism will shed light on the dark irony of Judges 19–21.

A cautionary note as we move forward reading through this lens: the elasticity of reading the biblical text through this dialogue partner, grotesque realism, provides only a partial viewing because of the nature of the time period that it highlights. Even so, it will provide a helpful way into the nature of dark and grotesque irony in literature. The carnival spirit of the Middle Ages

[9] Robert G. Boling, "Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary," *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 294.

[10] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 569.

[11] Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 203.

and Renaissance is equated with folk humor, festivities, and subverting the hierarchical structures into a level "playing" field.

With the Hebrew text, there is dark irony and one can sense that the laughter and gaiety represented in carnival is not what is represented in the Hebrew narrative. That being considered, some of the aspects of grotesque realism may assist in comprehending the artisans' absurd representations within the text, offering a possible way to read the nuances of the grotesque in their employment of strange and violent representations.

What are some of the aspects of grotesque realism? Bakhtin offers an answer in *Rabelais and His World:*

> The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of the earth and body in their indissoluble unity.[12]

This essential principle is evidenced in the lowering of the ideal throughout the Judges 19–21 narrative. From the Levite character to the function of חרם, there is an intentional lowering of the spiritual and ideal. Stern comments that, "Judges 21:5's use of חרם is isolated, peculiar and is to be understood as a function of the drama."[13] Bakhtin continues to expound on the features of grotesque realism with an example of Cyprian's supper in the Latin parodies.[14]

From this example of degradation, Bakhtin elucidates that one of the functions of grotesque realism is degradation. Degradation, in grotesque realism*,* "is the peculiar trait of this genre which differentiates it from all the forms medieval high art and literature."[15] חרם may function as part of the משל of dialogue for purposes of genre and literary artistry.

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[12] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, Hélène Iswolsky, tr. (Bloomington, IL: Indiana University, 1984), 19–20.

[13] Philip D. Stern, *The Biblical Herem: A Window on Israel's Religious Experience* (Atlanta, GA: Scholar's Press, 1991), 163.

[14] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 20.

[15] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 20.

Bakhtin continues in explaining what the function of degradation in grotesque realism:

> Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grace for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and womb. It is always conceiving.[16]

Rather than a dichotomization of images, Judges 19–21 could be understood as a *regenerating vision*. Boling explicates that the use of the phrase, "towards the ground," creates a place of intertextual dialogue.[17] In Judges 20:21, the Benjamites struck the Israelites "towards the ground." This is not a common phrase and is also utilized in a similar manner when Onan dispatches his seed on the ground to prevent pregnancies with Tamar in Genesis 38:9.[18] Death and life are interwoven with this phrase. One can contend that the exorbitant brutality coupled with the refrain, "There was no king in Israel," is a violent birth story. The extravagant function of חרם is darkly ironic. Is חרם, as Lurya views it, a literary straight jacket in which readers applaud a miraculous escape?[19] "In the final analysis, however, the חרם in this story is merely an adjunct to the plot device of an author who has written himself into a corner and needs a *deux ex machina* to extricate himself."[20]

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[16] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.
[17] Robert G. Boling, "Judges: Introduction, Translation and Commentary," *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 294.
[18] Butler, Judges, 445.
[19] See B.Z. Lurya, "The Incident of the Concubine at Giba" (Heb) in *Studies in the Book of Judges: Discussions of the Workshop at David Ben-Gurion House* (Jerusalem, Israel: 1966): 463–494.
[20] Lurya "The Incident of the Concubine," 463–494.

There may be more to this plot device than Lurya suggests. חרם is an interesting

theological and political term that was employed by the Israelites and their ancient Near Eastern

neighbors. Stern positions his view that Judges 19–21 is considered a "drama" akin to a

"novella" and notes the difficulty in understanding if this section is "true or fiction" (or a

combination thereof)?[21] Stern, in dialogue with Boling and Wright, notes the difficulty with the

use of חרם in 19-21. He articulates the complexity in assessing whether Benjamin's offense was

enough to incite חרם. Boling views this as typical חרם language witnessed elsewhere. Stern

argues that destruction in Judges is not enough to "qualify as חרם;"[22] it must be the work of a

redactor.

To find a way forward in grasping the strange use of חרם at the end of Judges, a

comparative study with Joshua 6 and 7 will shed light on Judges employment of it. To get a

better grasp on the function of חרם for Israel, it will be important to understand how it was

employed in the Hebrew Bible. This analysis (with Joshua 6 and 7) will reveal that there is an

interesting loophole in the use of חרם. With this closer investigative look at Joshua 6 and 7, the

function of חרם as a key literary device in Judges will become evident.

5.2 Achan and Rahab: Who is Truly *חרם*?

Joshua 6 and 7 form a unique and perplexing pericope within the entire Joshua account.

These chapters form one complete unit, including a warning, violation, and punishment enacted

for the command violation. Mina Glick points out that each chapter is an individual literary unit.

She notes that chapter 6 "is a diptych, beginning with a command from God . . . and closing with

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[21] In chapter 3, I argue for Judges 19–21 to be understood as a משל of Dialogue.
[22] Stern, *The Biblical Herem*, 163, n. 85.

a devotion of the city as חרם and ends with the community's resolution of that violation."[23] The end of chapter 7 fulfills this warning.[24] This concept of חרם is important to these two chapters. In Joshua, חרם is allocated to those persons, animals and other non-living entities.[25]Jericho, as a whole city, becomes חרם. The Canaanite people are included as חרם. Why is Rahab, a Canaanite (and a prostitute), exempted?

By nationality and vocation, it would seem a natural consequence that she would be placed under חרם. Another interesting facet to this situation is her gender. David Janzen highlights the tension:

> The command of genocide in Deut. 7 is absolute, Moses repeats it in the law of Deut. 20:16-18, and neither the narrator nor God ever indicate that the command of חרם should be set aside in Rahab's case. This is clearly not a minor issue of the narrative; Moses twice insists that leaving Canaanites alive in the land will lead to apostasy and punishment.[26]

At a time of cultural patriarchy, why would a woman—and *this* woman—be redeemed? One begins to sense an *utterance* of a loophole within the seemingly monologic commands. In order to come to a reasonable conclusion, this study will seek to engage these texts from within the biblical understanding of חרם to discover its function in the pericope of Joshua 6 and 7.

Joshua 7 is an intriguing chapter in the conquest narrative. Drama begins to unfold in a disparaging fashion as the people of Israel come up against their first major failure in the promised land. This chapter is not taught as frequently in the Sunday school setting as chapter 6, with the city wall coming down and the victorious cries and trumpet blasts of the priests and people (Joshua 6: 20), but there is an important message to be sought in chapter 7.

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[23] Mina Glick, *Herem in Biblical Law and Narrative* (Dissertation) (Philadelphia: PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), 141.
[24] Glick, *Herem*, 141.
[25] Joshua 6:17–20.
[26] Janzen, *The Violent Gift,* 93–94.

Joshua 6 shouts triumphant victory against Jericho. An entire city has become חרם with the exception of a prostitute and her family, but something has changed in the flow of the narrative in Joshua 7 and the anticipation of what the reader expects is altered. [27] For Rahab, the encounter with the spies over her threshold has created an opportunity for her to negotiate life for herself and her family. Ironically, life will be negotiated under חרם ("the ban"). Israel needed a bit of help in the spying department because immediately in the verse following their secret deployment, "The king of Jericho was told, 'We've just learned that men arrived tonight to spy out the land. They're from the People of Israel'" (Joshua 2:2).

Apparently, their attempts to be secret were not that secret, but here is where Rahab takes a risk against her king and culture to rescue her family from the coming onslaught. Rahab assists the spies. She is aware that the inevitable will happen when they are attacked. There is tension in the text with her choice. Does siding with the spies to save her family make her a heroine, or is she actually a traitor to her Canaanite people?

Another interesting aspect to this story is that they are under a religio-political ban. In Joshua, the entire community in Rahab's town of Jericho is under חרם ("the ban"). An ironic twist comes into the Rahab story when juxtaposed with Chapter 7 with this ban ideology. חרם denotes the meaning "devoted thing, ban." In dialogism, Rahab does not remain a "thing," but a personality through the biblical text. "Thingness," as described by Bakhtin, limits and closes the potential in relationship.[28] Here, we see the exchange remaining open and an interesting loophole is created. In the Joshua text, two functions of חרם are evident. The first is "sacred *herem.*" A

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[27] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1981), 62.
[28] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 86.

second function of the notion of חרם is "sin *herem."*[29] This sin חרם requires punishment to the fullest extent of the law: death.

The narrative will be examined first as narrative history. Historical critical and literary narrative questions will be addressed with particular attention to the word, חרם, with a focus on the wordplay of *Achan's* name, which was the horrific consequence to the disturbing burning of Achan and his family as חרם. In order to accomplish this task, the first objective will be to look at chapter 7 in its historical setting*,* noting the literary-historical context within the genre.[30]

Following will be an inductive look into Achan and the lexical grammatical issues involving his name and its divergence in the Hebrew Bible, including the LXX. Last, Achan will be contrasted with Rahab whose story comparatively draws in the reader to catch a glimpse of the heart of God in the midst of a tragic course of events for Achan and the community of Israel.

Meir Sternberg discusses the importance of considering the Hebrew story in three distinct spheres in order to arrive at a proper interpretation: the ideological, historiographical, and aesthetic.[31] The interplay between these three principles is abruptly interrupted when something unexpected happens in the narrative.

5.3 Historical Setting

The *Sitz im Leben*[32] for the Israelites in this time was a conclusion of a miraculous victory against Jericho. In Joshua 6:18, God instructed them, "Now restrict of yourselves from the חרם

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[29] Glick, *Herem*, vii.

[30] Joshua 9–12 resembles ancient Near Eastern Conquest accounts. This literary impulse is important to understand with the convergence of historical, figurative, and ideological emphases. See K, Lawson Younger, "Ancient Conquest Accounts, A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing," *JSOT* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1990): 265.

[31] Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University, 1987), 41.

[32] Hermann Gunkel, the notable Old Testament German scholar, popularized this term, meaning "setting in life."

lest you *cause yourselves* חרם [33] and you take from the חרם and place the camp of Israel *to* חרם

and you cause עכר ('trouble') with it." [34]

Up to this point, Israel had been victorious in the Joshua narrative, and the tide begins to

change with the onset of chapter 7.[35] The reader is invited into the narrative with God's divine

encounter of instruction, and questions cannot help but be raised. Will these Israelites listen?

Will they be faithful to the instructions their God has given them? Readers and hearers are

beckoned into the story as it unfolds before them.

Joshua was the leader, appointed by YHWH (Joshua 1:2) after the death of Moses (1:1).

Since Jericho had been defeated, the warring Israelites, commanded by Joshua, now set their

sights on Ai. Chapter 8 will involve another victory (1–29) and a covenant renewal (30–35), but

sandwiched between the victory at Jericho in chapter 6 and the victory against Ai in chapter 8 is

the lament in chapter 7. The Israelites experience loss of momentum, the loss of thirty-six

Israelites. Their courage dissolves as their "hearts melt" and become like "water."[36] The hearts of

the Israelites parallel the hearts of the Amorite kings in chapter 5 and the hearts of the Canaanites

in chapter 2.[37] Defeat and fear have the power to melt the courage of kings and warriors, as well

as God's chosen people.

This narrative has been termed a "conquest narrative," which is distinguished in the

overall genre of Joshua and in particular with the "dispatch of the spies" (Joshua 7: 2).[38] There is

second millennium evidence that spies often hid and met in the houses of prostitutes, as

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[33] The verbal form here of חרם is in the *hiphil* form second masculine plural.

[34] Here, we see in the Hebrew the word, עכר, which will come up again in the narrative in the wordplay on the name of Achan.

[35] For a good survey of the major infiltration models, see Provan, Long, and Longman III in *A Biblical History of Israel*, 139–147.

[36] Joshua 7:4–5.

[37] Joshua 2:11; 5:1.

[38] Trent C. Butler, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 34.

evidenced in the "Code of Hammurabi."[39] This "spy narrative" ironically ends up as a narrative

of "how the people of God become the defeated enemies of God,"[40] which is the reverse of what

the reader engages with in the second chapter of Joshua. Chapter 6 ends with a "concluding

formula,"[41] summing up the recent events. Chapter 7 begins anew with a main clause and a

change of events. The structure of this chapter begins with a theological crisis.

5.4 חרם: Why All the Fuss?

The major theological crisis at hand is stated in 7:1—the "Lord was angry." The rationale

for this is given by the narrator who writes, "But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to

the things under the חרם, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from

the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the חרם, therefore the anger of the LORD

burned against the sons of Israel."

Verse 1 describes the cause of the Lord's anger. The verb מעל in the *qal* stem with its

absolute and it means, "unfaithfully treacherous . . . in the matter of the devoted thing"[42] as well

as "to violate one's legal obligations; to seize what has been banned."[43] This is not the most

common use of the verb. It usually applies to royalty rather than an individual as evidenced with

the character, Achan.[44]

To discover why the stolen items were considered חרם necessitates a word study with

חרם. חרם denotes the meaning "devoted thing, ban." It is used thirteen times as a noun. Seven

times in Joshua it is the verbal form in the perfect and it is used 31 times in the biblical text.[45]

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[39] Adolf Harstad, *Joshua* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 2004), 107.
[40] Butler, *Judges,* 79.
[41] Butler, *Judges,* 79.
[42] Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 356.
[43] HALOT, *#3235*
[44] Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook.*
[45] Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook.*

חרם and *city* are used only once together (Joshua 6).[46] "The Spoil of Jericho" was the Lord's.[47] "Metals went into the Lord's treasury (6:19, 24); all living things were killed; everything else was burned."[48]

This חרם on the enemy would potentially involve the Israelites themselves (7:12). Glick points out an important similarity in the dedication of the חרם of Jericho and the sacred חרם found in the text of Leviticus 27. The significance of the "the complete transfer of ownership of the item—in our case the city—to God."[49] This transfer of ownership indicates that the sacred חרם becomes irrevocably God's alone once dedicated by the priest in Leviticus (Leviticus 27:9, 14, 16, 22) or the city of Jericho in Joshua 6. What is not burned is placed in the sanctuary (6:19), and Glick points out the two different functions of חרם in the legal texts.

In Leviticus, the voluntary nature of the חרם as a gift to YHWH in the sanctuary is that of "sacred חרם*"* and it is irreversible in its designation of YHWH's alone.[50] As Glick points out, Leviticus 27:28 "makes clear that the donor can receive no benefit from it."[51] Relationship with YHWH and Israel is an interwoven aspect of this notion of biblical חרם.[52] A second function of the notion of חרם is sin חרם.[53] This sin חרם has requires punishment to the fullest extent of the law.

The function of חרם was tied to worship in Israel's understanding of YHWH. For Israel, YHWH is God alone. Life and worship were bound together. Deuteronomy 20:17–18 makes it clear that the חרם is to be executed among the Hittites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, "in order

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[46] Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook*.
[47] *Baker Theological Dictionary*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1996), 174.
[48] *Baker Theological Dictionary,* 174.
[49] Glick, *Herem,* 168.
[50] Glick, *Herem,* vii.
[51] Glick, *Herem,* vii.
[52] Norbert, Lohfink, "*Bedeutung und Funktion von Herem in biblisch-hebraischen Texten,"* 275.
[53] Glick, "*Herem* in Biblical Law and Narrative," vii.

that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the Lord."[54] The theme of monotheism for the Israelite people is woven throughout the entire biblical narrative.[55]

Achan had stolen that which was under the חרם. The items under חרם were instructed to be dedicated to God alone, that which was חרם for the Lord, irrevocably belonging to YHWH. Walter Brueggemann seems to gloss over this point in his *Theology of the Old Testament*, noting that Achan's indictment occurred because he "withheld for private purposes the goods of the community."[56]

As stated earlier in this study, Brueggemann's commitment to social justice may have impeded a close reading of the text. In this narrative, the "goods" were a חרם to the Lord, not for the community. Achan will learn this grave truth through taking what had been dedicated to the Lord.[57]

This concept of sin חרם was not unique to the Israelites. Other groups in the ancient Near East practiced חרם on their enemies. This concept of devoting a conquered people to destruction is indicated on the Moabite Stone. Mesha is instructed by his god Chemosh to slay "seven thousand men, boys, women, girls, and maid-servants, for I have devoted them to destruction for (the god) Ashtar Chemosh."[58] This concept of חרם was not unique to Israel.

Susan Niditch seems to overstate the concept of חרם, also known as the banning texts, in *War in the Hebrew Bible:*

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[54] NAS
[55] This is made clear throughout the book of Judges as the narrator clues in the reader as to a key component of Judgment was tied to worship.
[56] Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament,* 423.
[57] The parts of חרם that are not to be destroyed to the Lord are to be placed into the treasury of the Lord (Joshua 6:19*).
[58] James B. Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, Third Edition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1974), 320–321, 209.

The banning texts cited all have to do with non-Israelite enemies. As noted above, such complete ways of annihilating an enemy in various cultures are reserved for those considered outside the group. The dichotomy between Israel and non-Israel is very clear in the ban as sacrifice . . . the ban as sacrifice ideology contrasts "inside the group" with "outside the group," and war, largely understood to be the taking of others' territory, involves distinguishing was belongs to "our" group from was belongs to "theirs." [59]

The dichotomization in Niditch's statement initially appears neat and tidy; yet, when one engages the narrative more closely, it is not so neat and very untidy. Why is Rahab, the one who should be termed the "enemy of God,"[60] or חרם, saved and the one who is an insider within Israel allowed to be placed under חרם?

Understanding the historiographical, ideological, and literary impulses of the text will enable the reader to recognize why the narrator has surprised us with this loophole of who is to be identified as under חרם.[61] When convention is broken, the "norm" shifts, and the reader is invited into the dialogical nature of the narrative to ask questions of the text. Why is the Canaanite saved and the Judahite considered חרם?

Alter shows that "character is revealed primarily through speech, action, gesture… motive is frequently . . . left in penumbra of doubt."[62] The spies dispatched in 7:2, and also in 2:1 are unnamed. This leads the reader to focus on the characters of consequence, namely Achan and Rahab. Unnamed messengers were also sent to Achan's tent to "recover stolen goods."[63]

Three thousand warriors were sent out and defeated (7:4). It is difficult to know what the main catalyst was as the warriors were dispatched. The text simply states that the spies Joshua

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[59] Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York, NY: Oxford University, 1993), 51.

[60] Term referenced to play off what Susan Niditch has written.

[61] Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 55–-57. Here, Berlin describes different points of view within poetics. In the situation with Achan, we clearly see the ideological level of poetics with the disparaging evaluation of Achan's action.

[62] Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, 158.

[63] For more insight into the unnamed biblical characters, see Reinhartz *"Why Ask My Name?"*, 48.

had sent earlier to spy out the land were not concerned with what they found. The spies did not

think it was necessary to dispatch all the warriors because "they are few" and must not have

seemed to pose a threat to them. Shaeffer highlights two possible options of extremity, that the

motivation could have been stimulated by either "pride or faith."[64] The end result was defeat,

sending paralyzing fear into the camp (7:5) (literally, their hearts melted and became like water)

and a response of grief for Joshua (7:6).

Swartley observes that in the warfare in the Hebrew Bible, a "nation's disobedience"

resulted in God "fighting against Israel."[65] The response of anguish was immediate. Joshua and

the elders threw dust on their heads, a common reaction of grief found in other Near Eastern

cultures.[66] This is the first appearance of the elders of Israel in Joshua and reveals communal and

national lament. Joshua prays to the Lord in response.

Samuel Balentine addresses three common features to this type of prayer. First, there is

"crisis," which in 7:7-8 is "born out of confusion concerning God's intentions."[67] Second, there

is the "response of prayer" which "invokes God's name."[68] Joshua 7:7 refers to God as "YHWH,

God." The second aspect of Joshua's prayer includes "questions put to God" and this is followed

by a "response from God."[69] Last, Balentine states that the prayer culminates with a "resolution

or explanation of the crisis" and this is the model of prayer in chapter 7. The prayer culminates

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[64] Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1976), 107.

[65] Willard M. Swartley, *Slavery, Sabbath, War and Women: Case Studies in Biblical Interpretation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983), 115.

[66] Example of grief expressed in a similar way in the Egyptian text, "The Story of Two Brothers." This is not a historical rendering but rather one of entertainment value. The text states, ". . . and his elder brother went off to his house, with his hand laid upon his head, and he was smeared with dust." See *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating To The Old Testament,* ed. James B. Pritchard 3rd ed. (New Jersey, NJ: Princeton University, 1974), 25b.

[67] Samuel Eugene Balentine, *Prayer in the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 120–123.

[68] Balentine, *Prayer,* 120–123.

[69] Balentine, *Prayer,* 120–123.

with a departure of the divine anger of YHWH (7:26).[70] This type of prayer seeks a "concrete and immediate divine response."[71]

Achan is a key figure in this chapter because he is the cause of the Lord's anger and Joshua's grief. God gave the instructions for cleansing (7:13) for the whole of Israel even though one person essentially broke the covenant, the whole community was charged with fault. The Lord said, "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things."[72]

Stern notes the movement from chaos to order in the Achan story with the function of חרם: "As Creation witnessed the eruption of the forces of disorder in the person of the serpent, leading to fatal consequences (the creation of death), so here Achan's fall into temptation brings the rout of the first assault on Ai."[73]

Later in the chapter, Achan is found out and he confesses (7:19–20). He is from the tribe of Judah (7:1, 18), but "with no special significance; the process of elimination used in uncovering Achan had to begin there."[74] The narrator enables Achan to elucidate on the articles he seized. It is noteworthy that the garment he took is explicitly described, as stated previously. Shaeffer adds an interesting dimension to this as he illustrates the significance that the "Shinar is Babylonian," and Babylon is a monumental historical city and the "cultural leader of Mesopotamia."[75] This garment was not an everyday sort but "very stylish" and "marked somebody as being 'in', as really being 'a man of the world.'"[76]

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[70] Balentine, *Prayer,* 120–123.
[71] Balentine, *Prayer*, 19.
[72] Joshua 7:11
[73] Stern, *The Biblical Herem*, 152–153.
[74] Robert G. Boling, *Joshua* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 127.
[75] Schaeffer, *Joshua*, 111.
[76] Schaeffer, *Joshua,* 111.

The narrative drips with irony with the identification of who is "in" opposed to who is "out." An "in" garment makes an insider "out." The person of Rahab, an "outsider" is allowed "in." Seeds of questions began to sprout as the reader cannot help but enter into dialogical contact with the story, "Who is truly חרם?"

5.5 חרם in Judges

חרם functions as a place of dialogical contact in the narrative bookends of the entire text. In Joshua, readers find חרם in twenty-eight verses but in Judges, only in the opening and closing scenes of the deliverer stories, which are brimming with dark irony. The two places readers discover חרם in Judges is in 1:17 and 21:11.

> Then Judah went with Simeon his brother, and they attacked the Canaanites living in Zephath, and utterly חרם ('banned, destroy') the *city*. So the name of the city was called חרמה. Judges 1:17

In Judges 1:17, the men of Judah and the men of Simeon are discovered to be enacting חרם on the Canaanites in Zephath. To celebrate this victory, they dedicate the city by renaming it through a wordplay with חרם and call it, חרמה. The חרם function of destruction and dedication are evident in 1:17. Stern allocates the account more to a "settlement tradition" rather than one of conquest.[77] It parallels Numbers 21:1–3.

What is interesting is that the place they executed חרם was in a location they named, *Hormah*. Stern notes this "biblical love of puns"[78] and would suggest that another example exists with the verb "to weep" with that location being named, *Bokim* ("weepers") in Judges 2:4–5. As stated earlier in the Judges account, there is more weeping than ban, giving the impression of another example of literary irony.

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[77] Stern, *Biblical Herem*, 161.
[78] Stern, *Biblical Herem*, 161.

Judges 21:11 And this is the thing which you will do to every male, and every woman *who has* known the place of lying with a male, they will be חרם ("banned, utterly destroyed").

So, here חרם ("banned") is used in a deeply depraved way, not on the other nations as in 1:17, nor on an Israelite individual who clearly had trespassed and stole חרם, but on an entire familial tribe: Jabesh-Gilead. Unlike the purposes given for חרם in other contexts, Stern notes the strangeness of this use of חרם in Judges: "In complete contrast to the book of Joshua, the book of Judges employs חרם only at the extreme ends of the book (1:17 and 21:11). The reasons for its absence—speculation rather than certainty."[79] חרם is used as a literary framing device. In the initial chapter, the use of חרם is executed on a foreign nation, the Canaanites living in Zephath. At the end of the book of Judges, חרם is executed in a civil war, within their own confederation. The ironic use of חרם uproots more questions than answers, generating a continual trajectory of instability. The spiraling descent into chaos subverts the initial sense of unity in the first chapter into horrific disunity by the conclusion of Judges.

With an eye on grotesque realism and its function of degradation, the function of חרם provides a dialogical contact by the text artisan. Therefore, the function of חרם as part of the epilogue (1:17) and prologue (21:11) of Judges, is more akin to grotesque realism, similar to the dark ironic literary device of Judges. The dialogical nature of this text, as a משל of dialogue, invites the readers into a space of conversation. The gaps of silence, or as Janzen puts it below, the unanswered questions, invite the reader into dialogue. With an ear to the utterance of trauma's subversion of the narrative, Janzen enters the dialogue with questions that erupt from the utterances in such a text:

> The unanswered questions that trauma raises—Does God punish the correct generation in 2:1–5? Is the test of leaving Canaanites in the land one that is possible for Israel to pass? Why does God reject Israel's repentance in 10:6–16? –

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[79] Stern, *Biblical Herem*, 160–161.

can be explained using the narrative's definitions of God, justice, salvation, and so on. The difficulty, however, is that the answers to these questions are not clearly present in any totalizing way, and in these narrative absences that manifest trauma, God does not appear to be bound by the narrative's concept of justice.[80]

חרם functions as a loophole of dialogical contact with Joshua, into Judges and within *Ruth*. The bodies of women are degraded throughout this narrative, as literary objects to kill, abuse, kidnap, and rape. These objects thus become an avenue of provision, a way forward through birth, in order that a tribe may not be *blotted out.*

5.6 Blotted Out: Progenitive Problems answered by Stolen Possessions

Israel states their progenitive problem in 21:17:

Then they said, "There must be a possession/inheritance for those who escaped from Benjamin because we do not want a tribe of Israel to be מחה ('wiped out')."

They have "lost" many possessions when they enacted חרם on their own people. They have almost annihilated a tribe. Ironically, they are left without enough possessions/inheritance. The lack of ירש ("inheritance/possession"), described in 21:17, is the problem at hand. The degradation of grotesque realism has taken us into the bowels of חרם. In order to regenerate Benjamin, the Israelites are going to attempt to find a solution. They go up to Bethel to inquire of God. They ask, "O Lord, the God of Israel . . . why has this happened to Israel? Why should one tribe be missing from Israel today?" Irony is thick in this dialogue.

Even worse, once they have enacted חרם on Jabesh Gilead, they realize they are still two hundred women short for Benjamite men. The satirical underpinnings of the narrative come full circle with the plan to make complete that which has been rendered incomplete by the same hands. The main dilemma is stated in verse 7, which states, "How can we provide wives for

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[80] Janzen, *The Violent Gift*, 145.

those who are left since we have taken an oath by the Lord not to give them any of our daughters in marriage?"

It is interesting that the text artisan does not initially have YHWH enter into the dialogue. The questions they ask—even after building an altar and presenting burnt offerings and fellowship offerings (21:4)—they proceed to answer themselves. The Israelites ask themselves, "Which one of the tribes of Israel failed to assemble before the Lord at Mizpah?" At this point, one realizes that attendance at Mizpah was not only mandatory, but that it would cost everything. The finger now points to Jabesh-Gilead. This tribe had failed to meet at the assembly. The silence is undergirded by many utterances in this given narrative.

5.7 Filling the Breach

Jabesh-Gilead[81] has been "blotted out." Due to the nature of the oath sworn, they cannot give them any of their own daughters, but those of Jabesh-Gilead are suitable to traffic (21:18). They desperately do not want Benjamin to be "blotted out," to be removed from Israel."[82] The verb מחה ("to be blotted out/wiped out") has significant theological connotations. Some of the uses refer to forgiveness in the Hebrew Bible. It is also connected to memory and inheritance.

Its first occurrence is in the flood account of Genesis 6:9 when YHWH threatens to מחה ("wipe/blot out") humanity from the earth. In the Davidic Psalm 51:3[83] (MT), the psalmist pleads for mercy and forgiveness, asking for his sins to be מחה ("blotted out"). Moses begs YHWH for

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[81] This reference of Jabesh-Gilead has been noted to be a direct attack on the Saulide line.

[82] To be blotted out has the idea of removing excess ink but this verb actually means "to scrape off, remove." Ross reveals the medieval use of this word, which is "to scrape." He writes, "Monks . . . would scrape the vellum on which Romans has written distasteful literature and they would write over the top their sacred work." Allen P. Ross, *A Commentary on the Psalms* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 2011), 182.

[83] Psalm 51 is one of the seven Penitential Psalms has been called the "psalm of all psalms" by Anglican liturgist, J.M. Neale. See Bruce Waltke and James Houston, *Psalms as Christian Worship: A Historical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 46.

forgiveness upon Israel's golden calf escapade and proclaims if they cannot be forgiven, Moses himself asks to be "blotted out" of the book the Lord has written (Exodus 32:32). God responds that indeed, those who have sinned will be "blotted out/wiped out" of the book (Exodus 32:33). The prophet Jeremiah asks for the Lord to deal with his accusers and to *not* blot out their sins (Jeremiah 18:23).

The idea of obliteration of something from memory is correlated with this verb, מחה. In the context of Judges 21, the issue is not that of sin being wiped away but a people. One cannot help but wonder if there is irony here in the use of מחה. In order to find an answerability to the progenitive problem, Israel will decide to transgress even further by kidnapping and raping more young women. Will their sins be blotted out even if their memory is sustained?

In the scenes from Judges 21, it is interesting to whom and where blame shifts. Another interesting dialogic aspect of this text of heightened irony is that when commanded at the end, Benjamin responds in the affirmative. Their answerability is to *become* what Gilead had been charged with . . . *sons of worthlessness.* Borders in dialogue and activity become breached and the effects of degradation within the function of grotesque realism becomes even more distinct.

חרם has been acted out on their own tribe, and ironically in the land of Canaan.[84] The use of degradation in death in order to bring life highlights the dark irony of this chapter, with the offering of women who have just witnessed their families murdered. These orphaned women become a bridal offering of peace.

The narrative opens with the rationale for this gap in the tribe. The dilemma is stated by the text artisan in 21:15—"Meanwhile the people relented concerning Benjamin because YHWH made a breach in the tribes of Israel." Did YHWH make this breach? Agency seems to have been

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[84] Shiloh located in the land of Canaan. See Butler, *Judges*, 461.

initiated by the Levite at the preliminary gathering after the body of the woman was distributed as a summons. The duties of fulfilling חרם on the tribe of Benjamin were carried out by the tribes who had congregated in lieu of the summons.

The dialogic nature of these chapters pulls the reader into the gaps of understanding, especially in light of this accusatory statement. Was YHWH responsible for this breach? There is no loss for mystery as readers attempt out tease out the voices of answerability. Is YHWH responsible for the breach?

With a careful investigation, the waters of inquiry become more muddied when one attempts to focus on individual vocalic streams. Where do the voice from YHWH, the voice of the Levite, the voices of Israel, the voices from the leaders merge, and where are they distinct?

The elders of the assembly said, "What can we do for wives for the remaining ones, because the female was destroyed in Benjamin?" They added, "Is there a possession for the survivors of Benjamin so that a tribe from Israel will not be blotted out?" This is the first time the "elders" have entered in these final chapters. Butler notes that they ignore "theological language and divine involvement." [85] This is the utterance of the gaps underlying the dialogic nature of these verses.

YHWH is "blamed" for the breach, but the dialogue moves forward without consulting YHWH. The elders appear on the scene and take over the course of the next steps of answerability. There is a seemingly strong authoritative tone in their instructions of how to fill the breach "caused by YHWH." The desire to control future dialogues is interesting in verse 22. Judges points out the issue of "inheritance" for the survivors of Benjamin. Once the women are kidnapped from the חג ("festival") and their fathers and brothers come to inquire of this deed, the

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[85] Butler, *Judges*, 462.

elders tell the men of Benjamin, the kidnappers, to explain it this way, "show us favor (show us grace!)! Because we did not take wives from waging war" (Judges 21:22b).

This חג ("festival") is unnamed, similar to all of the individuals in Judges 19–21 (with the exception of Phinehas). This anonymity functions as another voice in the משל of dialogue. From the text, readers can gather that it is a yearly feast for YHWH.

Walton notes that because the text artisan did not employ the more common use of "daughters of Israel" for the women at Shiloh, this could indicate that they may be more connected to Canaanite cultic activity, perhaps as professional dancers.[86] With this festival attached to the covenant name of YHWH, combined with the bodily degradation of women throughout these chapters, it would seem more likely that the women are being used as objects of degradation. Throughout chapters 19–21, women have been either used as a human shield (Judges 19), placed under חרם, or as progenitive possessions (Judges 21), in order to keep the memory of Benjamin from becoming "blotted out." This is evidenced with Pressler's remark that "Israel's downward spiral is reflected in the treatment of women."[87] Klein notes that it "dissolves into disorder"[88] and Baker rightly asserts, "in short, it is a nightmare story."[89]

In Judges 21:20, the elders command the sons of Benjamin to kidnap the women while they were dancing. The sons of Benjamin comply without refute. They have allowed the elders' commands to permeate their own dialogue and agency. Reading through the narrative, a fundamental question can be asked on who has more earned the descriptor, "Sons of Worthlessness"?

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[86] Walton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 221.
[87] Pressler, *Judges*, 257.
[88] Lillian R. Klein, *The Triumph of Irony in the Book of Judges* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 190.
[89] Baker, *Hollow Men, Strange Women*, 7.

5.8 Canonical Answerability for the Silent?

The treatment of the פילגש in Judges 19 seems to have come full circle with what will ensue in the final chapter. The emphasis on the individual has moved to the collective throughout this narrative. The rape of the פילגש has moved to the rape of an entire group of women. The punishment sought for the guilty men of Gibeah has transgressed to the enactment of חרם on the entire tribe of Jabesh–Gilead. Death has become an overwhelming stench through the degradation of persons in the narrative. Ironically, what has been searched for at the end of this horror story is a pathway to preserve life.

The refrain frames a negative viewing in the dialogue of Judges 19–21, "There was no king in Israel; everyone did as he saw fit." This negative refrain reveals darker contours with an eye towards the features of grotesque realism. The grotesque representation of the extravagant display of חרם reveals a strange way to bring about a regenerating vision.

In order to maintain a ירש ("inheritance/possession"), Israel has become just like the Levite and similar to the other nations who have been under חרם. Many commentators note the significance of Israel becoming Canaanized at the end of Judges as part of the theological problem. Readers encounter in Joshua the person of Rahab, who is a Canaanite woman and a prostitute. She begins as an outsider under the ban and becomes a central character within the life of Israel. The borders of exclusive language in dialogue blur as we end the account of the *deliverers.* The function of grotesque realism provides an important dialogue partner with what the purpose of such a piece of literature may indeed be pointing towards.

The grotesque image reflects a phenomenon in transformation as yet unfinished metamorphosis, of death and birth, growth and becoming. The relation to time is one

determining trait of the grotesque image. The other indispensable trait is ambivalence. For in this image, readers find both poles of transformation, the old and the new, the dying and the procreating, the beginning and the end of the metamorphosis.[90]

In a משל of dialogue, it can be argued that the image of the idea presented could give another voice of canonical answerability, which is dialogued within the gaps, in the juxtaposition of very different texts, such as *Ruth*. If readers forget that these young women were kidnapped, they will miss another level of dark irony within the canonical text. In the Judges text, the elders command the Benjamites to חטף ("seize") the women of Shiloh.[91]

This verb is found in only three places in the Hebrew Bible. The first is in this Judges text and the other two occurrences are in Psalm 10:9. Brent Strawn describes this verbal use in Psalm 10:9 to "describe the seizing of the poor by the lion-like wicked."[92] This context is befitting of Judges 21:21. The context of this Psalm is a helpful canonical voice to describe the force of this verb and perhaps, an intertextual voice for the silent. The Psalms is questioning where YHWH is perhaps "standing far away?" (Psalm 10:1).

The accusation in the psalm of YHWH is that YHWH is hidden in the midst of trouble. YHWH does not appear to be on the scene when the wicked pursue the weak (Psalm 10:2). The wicked are accused of not seeking YHWH, cursing YHWH, and having no thoughts of YHWH. In fact, the Psalm describes this person as saying, "There is no God" (Psalm 10:4). Ironically, the psalmist is asking where YHWH is standing, where YHWH is hiding, and where is the justice of YHWH?

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[90] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World,* 24.
[91] Brent A. Strawn groups this verb with under the actions of a lion, described as Taking/Grabbing/ Seizing/Dragging Off (Prey)" in *What is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible* (Fribourg, Switzerland: Academic Press Fribourg, 2005). See also Clines's *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. III, 202.
[92] Strawn, *Stronger Than a Lion*, 335.

In a vivid description of the evil actions of the wicked person, the Psalm 10:9-10 described the leonine imagery of the wicked:

> He lies in wait in a hiding place as a lion in his lair;
> He lies in wait to חטף ("seize") the afflicted;
> He חטף ("seize") the afflicted when he draws him into his net.
>
> He crouches, he bows down,
> And the helpless fall by his mighty ones.[93]

This Psalm cries out for justice for the oppressed. The crouching lion imagery is powerfully representative of the Benjamites' pursuit. The lion and the Benjamite men both ארב ("lie wait, wait for ambush") for the helpless (Psalm 10:9; Judges 21:20). This is identical to the kidnapping when looking at the context. Another action of the lion-like wicked is kidnapping. The verb גנב ("to steal") is in the decalogue. Stealing is condemned (Exodus 20:15). A chapter later in the Pentateuch, the crime of kidnapping is punishable by death (Exodus 21:16).[94] The two crimes punishable by death are kidnapping and stealing what has been placed under חרם.[95] The account in Judges of endorsing and executing חרם on their own people, coupled with the advice and execution of kidnapping dancing women in the final scene, generate an "otherness" with this story in the canon.

What is immediately sensed is what Bakhtin describes as the "hidden polemic" in double-voiced discourse. This polemic is discovered when one takes the entire canon into account when reading such abusive texts. These stories are words with a sideward glance. An example from speculative fiction comes to mind. If the main concern was extinction of a tribe, one begins to

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[93] חטף ("to seize") is in reference to "catching the distressed." See Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon,* 310.
[94] Also see Deuteronomy 24:7.
[95] Only in the case of kidnapping (Exodus 21:16) or theft of "devoted things" under חרם (Joshua 7:11, 25) was a thief executed.

think about the kidnapped women in the context as being used as instruments of mass breeding. What kind of tribe born out of murder, kidnapping, and rape will this be?

5.9 Conclusion

Israel struggles for identity, for their *becoming,* throughout the dialogic nature of the stories in Judges. What began in Joshua becomes twisted and vile in several of the subsequent deliverer stories. The question still being asked into the exilic period invites the reader into the dialogic nature of the text. Who is truly חרם*?* "Judges thus provides a complete narrative in structure as shown in the introduction, but the narrative remains open-ended."[96]

The intertextual analysis of חרם, read through Bakhtin's lens of grotesque realism reveals through irony that Judges 19–21 provides a regenerating vision of Israel's theological and political milieu. Along with a close investigation of the use of חרם, an exploration of the use of חטף ("to seize") in Judges and Psalms uncovers an intertextual utterance of answerability within the canon. What has descended into the lower stratums of war and violence will be re–birthed as a pathway forward, through the fresh hope of possibilities within the story and person of Ruth.

 Judges indeed exhibits a strange otherness in its portrayal of death, an ambivalent death story of sorts, that is a feature of grotesque realism. It is precisely in this place of death and dying wherein the hope of new birth lies in wait in the shadows and lies in wait to seize people out of despair. The story of *Ruth* is one of the canonical births of the Judges narrative.

Chapter 6 will consider *Ruth's* prominence in the canons as a potential voice of response to the gendered violence and voiceless victims located in Judges 19–21. In order to establish *Ruth* as a voice of answerability, the next chapter will investigate *Ruth's* chronotope in the

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[96] Butler, *Judges*, 477.

canon, along with questions of genre. In particular, the function of *Ruth* in the canon will be developed. Chapter 6 will build the case that *Ruth* is an unfinalizable story, remaining open within the larger story of Israel, illustrating through one text, an alternative voice of non-violence.

CHAPTER 6: RUTH'S CHRONOTOPE IN THE CANON

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the possibilities that the text of *Ruth* can offer as a response of answerability within the canon. The previous chapters suggested that the gendered violence in Judges 19–21 is seeking a response within the canon through silent utterances, anonymity, irony, the atypical use of חרם ("the ban"). *Ruth* is literary conversation partner for three primary reasons: (1) its placement in the Septuagint and Vulgate immediately after Judges, (2) the literary connection in Ruth 1:1—i.e., in "The days the judges were judging," and (3) the juxtaposition of feminine silence (Judges 19–21) with feminine dialogue (*Ruth*).

Chapter 6 investigates the book of *Ruth* as a *traveling text* with consideration of *Ruth's* chronotope in the canons, along with an inquiry into form and function of *Ruth's* genre. A rationale will be generated that proposes that the genre of *Ruth* functions as a משל. With a brief intertextual study of Ruth and Tamar, this chapter seeks to illuminate the dialogic nature of *Ruth* as an influential voice in the canon. This chapter concludes by revealing that Ruth's chronotope in the canon reveals threshold crossings through dialogue, and even more voices from the margins.

6.0 Ruth as a Traveling Text

The story of *Ruth* is multifaceted in the Hebrew Bible. Analogous to an orchestral piece of music, *Ruth* harmonizes and creates dissonance, subverts moods, crescendos, and repeats. It leads the reader into a grand conversation with the chords of history, the rests and reflections of

wisdom literature, and the celebration of festival worship (as part of the Megilloth).[1] *Ruth* carries

dark tones of the bass, the pounding of drums, and then changes with the light and airy moods of

the woodwinds. *Ruth* moves around the canon in a liturgical dialogue. The places of rest, of

silence, are pregnant with intentionality.

As a reader listens to the diverse parts, it is in retrospect wherein the reader seeks to

understand how this piece (*Ruth*) fits into the canonical whole. Meyers writes, "Rather, a piece of

music must seem *in retrospect* to have fitted together."[2] How does *Ruth* fit in the canon? *Ruth*

has not carried the authoritative weight of texts such as Deuteronomy or Isaiah, but looking back

throughout Jewish tradition, this little story is anything but infantile and voiceless.

In dialogue with the major patriarchal narratives in the canonical tradition, *Ruth*'s voice

becomes an authoritative voice. *Ruth* permeates the tradition, the worship, and life of Israel. *Ruth*

has been accused, along with Esther and Song of Songs of "defiling the hands," yet this

movement and voice permeates Israel's story in the Hebrew canon. *Ruth*, as a story is "strange."[3]

This story is female-centered and highlights the *faithfulness* of a Moabite woman.

Similar to Sherwood's summary of the text of Jonah and its afterlives, *Ruth* is also a

"book at odds with 'reality', with the canon, with genre and tradition."[4] *Ruth* is a voice in the

canon which subverts and counter-argues other canonical voices.[5] This orchestral dialogue in the

canon is connected to what has gone before, after, and continues to speak. Intertextual dialogue

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[1] See Jack M. Sasson on a detailed description of the liturgical use of Ruth. *Ruth: A New Translation with a Philological Commentary and a Formalist-Folkloric Interpretation* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 12–13.

[2] Leonard B. Meyers, *Explaining Music: Essays and Exploration*s (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1973), 20.

[3] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth: A Biblical Heroine and Her Afterlives* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 2012), 14.

[4] Yvonne Sherwood, *A Biblical Text and Its Afterlives: The Survival of Jonah in Western Culture* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 2000), 245.

[5] This description of Ruth comes from "Rabbi Simeon b. Jonai (ca.125–170 CE) in *Megillah 7a*." For his explanation and description see Sasson, *Ruth*, 11.

provides a way forward and invites the reader into this orchestral canonical conversation. *Ruth*, simply put, is symphonic. *Ruth* becomes a conductor in canonical dialogue with the stories of Abraham, Lot's daughters, Zipporah, Rachel, Leah, Tamar, and even the Deuteronomic law.

To capture this symphonic characterization of *Ruth*, this next section will investigate how *Ruth* functions as a threshold text and resists finalizability. In order to uncover the layers of this narrative, it will be necessary to look at the dating of the text, along with the history of the genre of *Ruth* in order to make a case for how this story functions, as a משל. Previous attempts to categorize the genre of *Ruth* as a "*novella,*" "folktale," and an "ancient nursery tale" have left the reader unsatisfied.[6]

Associating *Ruth* as a fairytale assigns it a childlike quality, but *Ruth* would be more akin to Grimm Brothers' fairytales, much darker, violent and oppressive than previous descriptions such as a story handed down to us as a pastoral and idyllic epic and considered "the loveliest little whole."[7] Dialogical intertextual connections in the canon with Tamar (Genesis 38) and Naomi, specifically in terms of the motifs of clothing and seed, will be highlighted.

6.1 Ruth as a Threshold Text

Ruth is a threshold text. In the story, the literary placement of *Ruth* 1:1 situates *Ruth* chronologically in the "In the days when the judges were judging." The question of זרע (offspring/seed) drives the last chapter of judges and the first chapter of *Ruth*. This marks the

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[6] Sasson provides an extensive example of Ruth as a folktale by using the *syntagmatic* approach of literary critics by comparing Ruth to a Russian Fairy tale, according to Russian theoretician, Vladimir Propp. See Sasson, *Ruth,* 199–214.

[7] I have translated it "loveliest" rather than the more common "charming." "Westölicher Diwans. Noten und Abhandlungen: Hebräer" in *Goethes Werke*, ed. by Karl Neinemann, Bb.4, 342.

story as a progenitive threshold. *Ruth* represents the story of a birth in the political landscape of Israel.

Ruth's close association with Judges 19–21 has been noted by Judy Fentress-Williams and Kirsten Nielsen, among others. Fentress-Williams notes that *Ruth*, in relation to Judges and Samuel, is in "dialogue."[8] Nielsen contends that the canonical placement of *Ruth* in the LXX forms "a dialogue with the last chapters of Judges."[9] Tod Linafelt remarks how *Ruth* provides a point of "connection" between Judges and Samuel.[10] Campbell maintains "verbal correspondences" which show a possible relationship between Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.[11] The juxtaposition of *Ruth* with the general chronotope of Judges reveals an intentional dialogical placement of this text.

These texts subvert one another, create dissonance, and bloom into a robust canonical dialogue which resists a flat landscaped reading. *Ruth* is the only story in the Hebrew Bible that ends with a genealogy. The last chapter functions as another threshold in Israel's becoming, a threshold into new spaces and places of dialogue.

Ruth is a progenitive threshold. The closing themes of violence, loss, and death in Judges carry over into *Ruth* as evidenced with the themes of emptiness and fullness. Both stories carry cavernous familial emptiness. The "gap" of an heir carries the story through from the beginning to the end. This embryonic imagery drives the narrative to the final consummation of the genealogy, which ironically, will only answer in part.[12]

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[8] Judy Fentress-Williams, *Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries: Ruth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2012), 14.

[9] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 40.

[10] Linafelt, *Berit Olam,* xx.

[11] This will be developed more fully in Chapter 9: *A Canonical Dialogue with Judges 19–21 and Ruth (Case Study): Ruth as a Response.* See Edward F. Campbell Jr., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 35.

[12] Bakhtin*, Dialogic Imagination,* 346–347.

Ruth, as a political threshold, is an unfinished answer that resists finalizability. Consensus suggests that part of the dialogical nature of *Ruth* is also a political threshold. The genealogical identity of the baby, Obed, in the line of King David, reveals the political impulse of the text. The purpose of this connection to David shifts, depending on how one attempts to date the text. Even without a consensus on the date, there is a clear political thrust to the story of *Ruth* and placement in the canon.

Ruth is a canonical threshold. The text's threshold status in the canon is inherently dialogic because of its different genre identifications, depending on where it is placed. *Ruth*'s genre prompts interesting discussion. *Ruth's* voice in the canon is often characterized by the genre *form* assigned to *Ruth*. One can set forth an argument that *Ruth* functions as a מָשָׁל. *Ruth* and Judges 19–21 represent the polyphonic nature of canon. To further develop this idea, *Ruth* will specifically be viewed through the lens of canonical answerability.[13] The genre of *Ruth* functions as a מָשָׁל, operating as a more elastic genre*,* a category intrinsic to the Hebrew Bible.[14]

Bakhtin illuminates the powerful interaction within the dialogic relations when he writes that "another's discourse, if productive, gives birth to a new word from us in response."[15] *Ruth* is, in part, a response to Judges. Bakhtin articulates the power of "internally persuasive discourse" by showing through birth metaphor how discourse flows into new beginnings, new artistic representations, and "embryonic beginnings."[16] *Ruth* begins with death and ends with

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[13] Danna Nolan Fewell looks intently at the moral agency in the Book of the Ruth, using Bakhtin's "eventness of Being," contributing the metaphysical dialogism which I argue is evident in the broader canonical sense as well. See Fewell's, "Space for Moral Agency in the Book of Ruth," *JSOT* vol. 40, no. 1 (2015): 79–96.

[14] This study will propose a wider sense of the מָשָׁל genre (without the need for narrator pleas), to propose that Ruth's dialogic nature in the canon can be classified as a מָשָׁל. In my purview, the מָשָׁל designation can withhold the tension of historiography and dialogic polemic, which other genre considerations seem to dichotomize. See Block, *Judges, Ruth,* 602. Boer*, Bakhtin and Genre Theory*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion,* 59; Newsom, *Job*, 82. This discussion on מָשָׁל will be taken up more extensively in the section of genre.

[15] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 346.

[16] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 346–347.

life. *Ruth* functions as a literary embryonic threshold "in the days the judges were judging" (Ruth 1:1).

6.2 Dating of Ruth

The text artisan places *Ruth* in the period of Judges (Ruth 1:1). *Ruth* is literarily linked to Judges, but the actual proposed dating of the text ranges from a preexilic to postexilic date. The consensus for most scholars is that after all the discussion, the dating of *Ruth* is basically difficult to nail down. Even so, each proposal is important because it adds an interesting polemic to the purpose of *Ruth* and how this story functions dialogically in the Canon.

Most scholars attribute the composition of *Ruth* to a preexilic date. Murray D. Gow proposes that *Ruth* may have been composed during the reign of David with authorship attributed to Nathan, the prophet.[17] Myers holds a minority view with placing *Ruth* as being composed during the exilic or early postexilic period.[18] Hubbard and Campbell both assert that *Ruth* may have been written down during the reign of Solomon. Sasson asserts a possible date during Josiah's reign.[19] Niditch comments that most assign *Ruth* a preexilic date, but this is where the agreement ends.[20]

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[17] Nielsen, *Ruth,* 28.
[18] Mats Eskhult, "The Literary Style and Linguistic Stage of Ruth as Compared to Esther" in *Discourse, Dialogue and Debate in the Bible: Essays*, ed. Athayla Brenner-Idan (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 69.
[19] Sasson, *Ruth*, 251.
[20] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 29. Also Susan Niditch in "Legends of Wise Heroes and Heroines. II. Ruth" in *The Hebrew Bible and its Modern Interpreters,* ed. Douglas A. Knight, Gene M. Tucker (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 451.

Other supporters of a preexilic date include Niditch and Gerleman. Linafelt notes an interesting argument for the dating of *Ruth* from Bush. Looking at the Hebrew language in the text, Bush notes that the writer may have lived during the "transitional period between the two phases of the language's development."[21] There is a possibility of the range of composition from preexilic to an early postexilic date. Linafelt explains, "This dating, while not conclusive, would place the book late enough that the author could know the written versions of Judges and Samuel, but early enough that *Ruth's* canonical placement between these books would not have to considered secondary."[22]

The postexilic compositional dating of *Ruth* (after 538 BCE) is supported by Christian Frevel and Erich Zenger. Zenger proposes a later date for *Ruth*, second century, as religio-political propaganda for the Hasmonean cause.[23] This proposal by Zenger is prompted by a focus on the "messianic" undergirding of Ruth and the Hasmonean desire in "promoting . . . political and religious ambitions."[24] LaCocque and Campbell support a postexilic date (although Campbell would see the text as written during the reign of Solomon and final composition date during the postexilic period).[25]

Each pursuit of the purpose of *Ruth* contributes dialogically to how it has functioned within the canon. Larkin advocates that the story of *Ruth* "may have ancient roots extending back even behind its written form," and while there are hints of "lateness", it is "hardly credible to

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[21] Frederic Bush, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ruth/Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 17.

[22] Linafelt, *Ruth*, Xx. See also Frederic W. Bush, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ruth, Esther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018), 18–30.

[23] The Hasmonean dynasty (135–63 BC) was instituted by Simon (143–135 BC) who had gained independence from the Syrians and claimed the title "leader" and "high priest." The first generation of this revolt began with Matthias and was subsequently passed on to his sons Judas, Jonathan, and Simon. The Maccabean revolt gave Israel respite from Seleucid control but the struggle for political power and legitimacy continued to be a central focus.

[24] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 29.

[25] Edward Campbell, *Ruth*, 24. LaCocque, "Date et milieu di livre de Ruth," *Revue d'histore et de Philosophie Réligieuse* 59 (1979): 583–593.

suppose that the story has not been touched since the time of Solomon."[26] Interpreters struggle to

define a fixed date to *Ruth's* composition. Fentress-Williams also sees this as an attribute of

Ruth—"Ultimately, one of the strengths of Ruth, its compatible dialogue with a number of texts,

is the very quality that contributes to the difficulty of dating the text based on content."[27] This

pursuit, athough important, does not detract from the dialogical quality of how *Ruth* functions.

If indeed the text has "ancient roots" along with evidence for Aramaisms,[28] the

significance of this rests in the fact that *Ruth* has been speaking into the story of Israel for a very

long time. If the final form was not completed until late in the postexilic period, then the story of

Ruth has contributed a voice from preexilic oral stages (and perhaps written) in the political and

religious story of Israel. *Ruth's* canonical acceptance, along with the proposal of an early canon

consciousness, is a pathway to the dialogical nature of canon and embodied intertextual

connections.

As a text, it is possible that *Ruth* has been a part of the canonical dialogue of

answerability for centuries. Who has authored, if you will, this dialogical threshold text of *Ruth*?

Although not stated implicitly in the text, authorship has been attributed to Samuel.[29]

6.3 Ruth's Chronotope in the Canons

From early periods, *Ruth* has received acceptance in both the Christian and Jewish

canon.[30] Movement in the canon—where this story is placed—is significant. This movement, it

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[26] Katrina J. Larkin, *Ruth and Esther* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 25.
[27] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth,* 29.
[28] Evidence of this later form of biblical Hebrew include the explanations of the sandal ceremony in Ruth 4:7 "Now this was the custom in former times . . . [.]"
[29] "According to T.B. *B. Bat.* 14b-15a, Samuel wrote Judges, Samuel, and Ruth." See Hubbard, *Ruth*, 5, n.2.
[30] Robert L. Hubbard notes with regards to the text of Ruth that In the 1st century. A.D., both Jewish and Christian writers drew upon it without hesitation as a record of sacred history (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* V.9.1-4; Matthew1:5; Luke 3:32)." Hubbard, *The Book of Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4–5.

can be argued, is a voice of canonical answerability. *Ruth's* intentional placement contributes to a dialogical function and influences diverse voices within canon. This next section will reveal the various positions *Ruth* is located within the canons, in order to set up potential positionings of dialogic answerability within *Ruth's* location.

In the MT, *Ruth* is located in the *Ketuvim* (the Writings) section of the TaNaK (*Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim*). Within this section, *Ruth* has been placed in a collection of texts called the *Megilloth* (formed around the 6th–9th century), which are a group of five festival scrolls which include Lamentations, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. In order of the Jewish festivals their placement is the Song of Songs (Passover), *Ruth* (Feast of Weeks/Pentecost), Ecclesiastes (Feast of Tabernacles), Lamentations (ninth of Ab) and Purim (Esther).

In some Hebrew manuscripts, *Ruth* is placed after Psalms and is the first in the list of these festal scrolls. Within this festal scroll list, Hubbard notes that in the BHS *Ruth* is placed in the first position and in lists printed prior to 1937, *Ruth* is positioned second.[31] Another interesting placement noted by Edward Campbell and L. B.Wolfensen is *Ruth's* placement after Proverbs.[32] The connection drawn is from the phrase, אשת חיל ("woman of strength"). Campbell observes, "I submit that we must consider the possibility that *Ruth* follows Proverbs because of a link in their subject matter, specifically that Proverbs concludes with an acrostic poem celebrating אשת חיל ("worthy woman"), and then the text of *Ruth* goes on to describe just such a woman, calling her an אשת חיל in 3:11.[33]

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[31] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 7.
[32] Campbell, *Ruth*, 34; and L.B. Wolfensen, "Implications of the Place of Ruth in Editions, Manuscripts, and the Canon of the Old Testament." *HUCA 1* (1924): 170–172.
[33] Campbell, *Ruth*, 34.

There is a placement of *Ruth* before the Psalms according to T.B. *B. Bat* 14b. Hubbard

notes that this placement before Psalms could be the "earliest one."[34] The fragments discovered

at Qumran in Cave 2 and Cave 4 seem to follow the MT with minor variants.[35]

Ruth is placed in the LXX, the Vulgate, and in the Christian tradition between Judges and

Samuel. The chronotope link in *Ruth* 1:1—"In the days the Judges were judging"—reveals the

literary and chronological attachment that places the story of *Ruth* as a politico-theological

threshold in the story of Israel's shift to the monarchy. The irony continues into *Ruth*, with the

identity questions of otherness, of *who is the foreign?* To attempt to highlight the function of this

irony*,* I argued in chapter 5 for the reading strategy of Judges 19–21 to be to read through the

lens of Bakhtin's grotesque realism, a place of dark irony, "grotesquely comic."[36] The

placement of *Ruth* after Judges can invite the important continuation of this irony of the identity

of foreignness. Many scholars assume Josephus's list places *Ruth* after Judges, and Origen and

Jerome also place *Ruth* after Judges, while Melito places "Ruth after Judges as a separate

book."[37]

The ordering of *Ruth's* placement has been a significant conversation for scholars. Those

who prefer the placement of *Ruth* in the MT order are H. Hertaberg and Rudolph while

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[34] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 7.

[35] See Campbell on variant discussion from the Ruth scroll fragments from Cave 2 (2QRuthᵃ) and Cave 4 from Qumran (4QRuth-a) along with an interesting discussion of two fragments pieced together (4QRuthᵇ); *Ruth*, 40–41.

[36] See chapter 5 for a fuller depiction of Judges 19–21 as grotesque realism. Also "grotesquely comic" is a description by Robert Polzin of these final chapters of Judges. See Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist*, 203.

[37] For a discussion of the possibilities of Ruth's placement from a "Christian" and not a "Jewish canonical structure," see Hubbard's discussion of the proposals by Beckwith and Wolfensen. Beckwith argues that the list of books from Melito and Origen derive from "Christian" sources and Jerome's list derives "follows the Talmudic pattern." This would result, as Hubbard explains, Ruth's placement in the Writings. This chapter will not argue for *a priori* placement of Ruth in the Writings but will seek to understand what the dialogical implications are with her divergence in the canon. Hubbard, *Ruth*, 6–7.

Gerleman prefers the LXX ordering. Hubbard notes that Wolfensen "denies the idea of an original order altogether."[38]

Although the original arrangement may be difficult to pin down, these issues are not critical to this study. What is important is that placement refuses to be obvious. This elevates *Ruth's* function as one of a dialogical nature in the process of the canonization.

The movement of *Ruth* in the canon, in the MT, the LXX and the Vg., reveals the dialogical nature of *Ruth* as a traveling text. The function of this text in diverse places brings up an interesting question regarding her genre. James McKeown highlights issues concerning the discussion on genre that *Ruth* has raised:

> The book of Ruth has been classified as a short story, an idyll, a novella, and a divine comedy. However, it is important to note that many of the themes relate to practical problems and issues similar to those discussed in the other biblical books that are usually classified as wisdom literature. Although the book of Ruth faces different issues than the book of Job, both books discuss problems that people face when God is silent and seems absent. Furthermore, practical issues related to coping with hardship and dealing with those outside the community are highlighted in the book of Ruth. There is a close connection between the way Ruth is presented and the wisdom poem in Proverbs 31. Women in the book of Ruth are influential, industrious and shrewd (wise). Set in the period of judges, when "everyone did what was right in [their] own eyes," the book of Ruth shows true wisdom in operation when people act with loyalty and justice, not only with one another but with someone form a foreign country who is viewed as "the enemy" in the book of Judges.[39]

McKeown's discussion of how *Ruth* interacts with different genres is illustrative of the question that continues to keep popping up: what type of literature is *Ruth*? How does *Ruth* function in the Hebrew Bible? In order to consider the possibilities and potential contribution of *Ruth's* intertextual voice, I will set out in this next section to contribute a new proposal to the

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[38] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 6, n.5.
[39] James McKeown, *Ruth: The Two Horizons Old Testament Commentary* (Cambridge, England: William B. Eerdmans, 2015), 4.

long history of analysis regarding a genre designation for *Ruth*. It will be my contention that *Ruth* functions as a dialogic משל ("proverb/parable).

6.4 Form, Function, and the Dialogic Nature of Genre

While there is no consensus for the genre classification of *Ruth*, it will be necessary to create a path forward.[40] The aim of this study is not to uproot but to seek what is native to the genre habitat of the Hebrew Bible. Mikhail Bakhtin, along with others, will be cultivation partners in this project. Each voice in the dialogue of genre contributes, in part. This study seeks a way forward by contributing another possibility of genre classification—one intrinsic and indigenous to the Hebrew Bible.

Bakhtin provides insights in the discussion on genre, taking the significant contributions from Gunkel a step farther. The Hebrew canon provides an interesting place to discover this discourse, and to find voices of answerability which provide other points of interpretive discourse between texts. *Ruth* functions dialogically in the canon. In order to begin to explore how, it will be necessary to now turn to the intrinsic genre of משל and a discussion of the form and function of genre in order to make a way forward with how *Ruth* functions in the canon.

Critical to understanding the function of genre in *Ruth*, a discussion of the difference between form and function will pave the way for a designation of *Ruth* as a משל. It will be helpful to consider what has been contributed in the discussion within scholarship in respect to the aspects of the function of genre. In order to chart a way through the terrain, this dissertation will explain the משל genre within the Hebrew Bible, how it functions as a pliable genre, much broader than the typical *proverb/parable* classification it is normally assigned. Finally, this

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[40] Sasson comments, "Little unanimity in the choice of terminology exists in establishing the genre of Ruth." *Ruth*, 197.

chapter will argue for the genre of *Ruth* as a potential מָשָׁל,[41] functioning as a more elastic

genre,[42] a category intrinsic to the Hebrew Bible.[43]

Collins argues, with regard to a genre's form and function, that there is not a "simple

correlation."[44] In fact, Collins notes that the issue of function has been a place of controversy.

Although he is addressing the genre of apocalyptic literature, this case in point applies to other

genre distinctions.[45] Shared intention is critical in a genre designation. The idea is set forth that it

is in their "shared set of communicative purposes" that necessitate a genre distinction.[46] It is

critical to remember that genres, similar to the text and person of Ruth, cross borders. Form has

been a critical area in Biblical studies, especially in how literary models have influenced this

descriptive enterprise.

From Gunkel operating within the atomistic model, to Sasson's engagement within the

structuralist schools, a search for the right "box" or form has proved helpful but still

unsatisfactory.[47] Genre categories are useful at times, but what is pertinent to this study is how

Ruth functions. Rather than an attempt to place *Ruth* in a formal and stabilizing form or genre

category, it is more beneficial to detail how *Ruth* functions (although the idea of a stabilizing

genre distinction for *Ruth* has not yet been resolved).

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[41] In chapter 3, I argued for the genre of Judges 19–21 as a מָשָׁל of dialogue. Judges 19–21 would be categorized more within the "atypical" genre category and Ruth walks between the borders of "typical" and "atypical." See Newsom's discussion of "prototype theory" for a more substantive discussion of these categories; see Boer,"Spying Out The Land" in *Bakhtin and Genre Theory in Biblical Studies*, 19–30.

[42] Boer, *Bakhtin and Genre Theory*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion,* 59; Newsom, *Job*, 82.

[43] For further discussion see section on the genre of Ruth.

[44] John J. Collins, *"What is Apocalyptic Literature," in The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2014), 6.

[45] For the broader discussion of the relation between the form and function of genre, in reference to apocalyptic literature, see Adela Yarbo Collins (ed.) in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting. Semeia 36* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1986).

[46] John J. Collins, "What is Apocalyptic Literature," 6. Collins is quoting John Swales. See Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings.* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[47] Sasson provides a helpful description of the importance of literary studies' influence on Biblical studies with a helpful description of the atomistic school, the "archetype school," the "simple forms," and "the structuralist school." See Sasson, *Ruth,* 198–199.

It is worth considering *Ruth* within a communicative dialogic category intrinsic to the Hebrew text, within the function of מָשָׁל. The breadth of *Ruth's* roaming in the canon, along with her well received reception in every literary border crossing is quite remarkable. Perhaps, in some ways, she is a center yet still remains *other*.

Similar to Derrida's remarks on genre, *Ruth* participates without belonging—as a text, as a Moabite, as a woman, and as a mother. Derrida remarks, "I submit for your consideration the following hypothesis: a text cannot belong to no genre. Every text participates in one or several genres, there is no genreless text; there is always a genre and genres, yet such participation never amounts to belonging."[48]

In a chapter on genealogy, Newsom highlights Bakhtin's thoughts on genre that coincide with Derrida's conception of genres, "participating without belonging":

> Bakhtin, however, recognized not only the continuous transformation of genres but also the profound conservatism. In a paradoxical formulation he asserted that "a genre is always the same and yet not the same, always old and new simultaneously" (Bakhtin 1984a:106). This paradox was contained in what he referred to as genre memory, the fact that new iterations of a genre always contained archaic elements. "A genre lives in the present, but always *remembers* the past, its beginning. Genre is a representative of creative memory in the process of literary development." Bakhtin's formula this brings together the synchronic and diachronic elements of genre (Thompson 1984:35).[49]

This idea of creative memory inherent in a genre adds to the artistic and didactic intention of the text. An interesting perspective on the discussion of genre is Newsom's attention to a theory from cognitive sciences called "prototype theory," which has more in relation to "mental categories" and "speech categories." She asserts that even more than intertextuality or family resemblance, prototype theory enables a genre to be a part and yet remain distinct.

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[48] Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Signature* (Jay Williams, ed.; Avita Ronel, tr. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2013), 14.
[49] Newsom, "Spying Out the Land," 28.

Classification can restrict function. "Classification, no matter how nuanced, tends toward binary logic. Does a text belong, or not belong? Does it belong to this genre or that one? Thinking in terms of prototype exemplars and a graded continuum challenges this artificial manner of assigning texts to generic categories."[50]

With an example from birds in relation to central/periphery and typical/atypical categories, Newsom explains that even though these are all considered birds, "People tend to treat robins and sparrows as 'typical' members of the category of birds . . . [and] ostriches and penguins as 'atypical.'"[51] So is *Ruth*, being typical and atypical with regards to genre distinction. *Ruth* belongs yet does not quite belong along the borders of the canons.

6.5 Previous Scholarship on the Genre of Ruth

The initial impulse of early genre designations appeared to assign *Ruth* to a sweet fictional story, similar to a modern-day fairytale. *Ruth's* genre designations create a lens towards how interpreters have viewed her status, not only as a female story but also her association with other texts and stories within the canon. With an eye towards the darker contours of *Ruth* (death, violence, nakedness on the threshing floor), perhaps there are attributes of the *Ruth* story that would not be well suited in the arena of a story for young children.

Gunkel has deemed the genre of *Ruth* as oral folklore, resulting in the *novella*. Gottwald also describes it as folklore.[52] Gunkel argues that an earlier version originated from the fairy tales of an ancient Egyptian genesis. The similarities between *Ruth* and the ancient fairy tales were that of the core motifs. The repurposing of this story would include important values and

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[50] Newsom quoting Sinding in, "Spying Out the Land," 26.
[51] Newsom, "Spying Out the Land," 24.
[52] Norman Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2010), 554–555.

religious customs of Israelite life while foregoing those of Egyptian beliefs. Gunkel saw *Ruth* as a later addition, coming forth following not only the progression of the story of Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), but also after the Naomi story.[53] Although Gunkel disregarded historical elements with the text of *Ruth*, many after him have attempted to use the *novella* designation while at the same time building a case for a "historical dimension."[54]

Other interesting propositions of *Ruth's* early prehistory forms have been that of an "ancient nursery tale,"[55] while others have remarked that there were three successive stages of literary phases (oral, prose, genealogy).[56] Athalya Brenner hypothesizes that *Ruth* originated as two oral tales (one Naomi and one Ruth) that were combined with discernible seams. Although distinct stories initially, they were later placed together and described as "folktale, or novella."[57]

Tracing the scholarship of the approaches to *Ruth's* prehistory stages is helpful in understanding the common attribution of equating *Ruth* as a *novella.* Hubbard notes the difficulty with this genre description as he writes, "This characterization implied it was basically fictional, a story told to entertain, edify, or advocate rather than inform. Unfortunately, the term *novella* is too broad and imprecise a term to describe the form of Ruth."[58]

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[53] Hermann Gunkel, "Ruth," in *Reden und Aufstätze* (Göttingen, Germany: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1913), 65–92.

[54] Childs illustrates that Fitchener and Campbell have argued for this historical dimension. See Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 562.

[55] This idea is founded in part by the ideas that "nurses are mentioned in the Old Testament;" thus, this story may have been one told by the nurses to the children whom they cared for. Examples Myers gives are in Ruth 4:16 and 2 Samuel 4:4. Jacob M. Myers*, Linguistic and Literary Form in the Book of Ruth* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1955), 42.

[56] Glanzmann, "The Origin and Date of the Book of Ruth," *CBQ* 21 (1959): 201–207.

[57] Athayla Brenner, "Naomi and Ruth" in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth.* Athayla Brenner ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic*,* 1993), 77–81.

[58] Hubbard, *Ruth,* 47.

Genre labels such as *novella* and folktale indicate an ahistorical characteristic of the story. This designation may impede intertextual dialogue with other genres within the canon that may be deemed more historical.

Fentress-Williams argues for *Ruth* to be read as a "dialogic comedy."[59] Dialogue is the main focus of her work on *Ruth*. In looking at *Ruth* through this comedic lens, Fentress-Williams writes, "That part of its function" is to "challenge the established reality of the culture that reads it."[60] This invitation to challenge the social order is one of the main attributes of the משל genre.

Nielsen affirms that *Ruth* should be designated as a patriarchal narrative. With an eye to the genealogy located in *Ruth*, Nielsen asserts that this genre distinction fits best because, "In a combination of narrative and genealogy, *Ruth* presents both the particular events that took place when God elected a Moabite woman and the line of descent of which she herself was part and to which she gave life. It is thus a feature of the patriarchal narratives and *Ruth* that they do not close around themselves but point forward to new events."[61] What Nielsen has alluded to is the dialogic function of the משל genre. The text of *Ruth* refuses to be a closed entity and resists finalization.

In agreement with Campbell, Hubbard uses the genre descriptor of "short story."[62] The four identifying markers that contribute to this genre, as noted by Campbell, include rhythmic elements, didactic value, followed by mundane interests and entertainment value. These attributes afford the reader a "delight in the hearing . . . or reading . . . appreciating the message of the story but also its artistry."[63] Hubbard notes other Hebrew Bible narratives that fall under

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[59] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 18–19.
[60] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 18.
[61] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 7–8.
[62] See Hubbard, *Ruth,* 47; Campbell, *Ruth,* 90–92.
[63] Campbell, *Ruth*, 5–6.

this "short story" category: Joseph (Genesis 37–50); Ehud (Judges 3:15–29); Deborah (Judges 4); and Job (chapters 1–-2, 42:7–17).[64] Linafelt suggests *Ruth* to be a narrative.[65]

Daniel Block leans into the historical claims of Ruth and concludes that *Ruth* is an "independent historiographic short story."[66] Along the historiographic lines, Walter Reed notes that *Ruth's* qualities among the wisdom genre is that of "didactic historiography."[67] Hubbard, in line with Block, regards *Ruth* as a "short story." What is interesting regarding Block's claim is that he still views *Ruth* as distinct from all other Hebrew Historiographic writings because of the dialogic nature of the story.[68]

After a lengthy discussion of the genre of *Ruth*, Block concludes with the assertion that *Ruth* cannot be categorized as a משל because "the narrator makes no plea to interpret this account as a *māšāl*."[69] What is interesting is Block's immediate dismissal of the genre distinction of משל. Block rejects the idea that *Ruth* can function as a משל on the grounds of silence.

In chapter 3, a proposal is set forth that Judges 19–21 functions as משל even though there is not an intrinsic identifier of this genre. This next section will argue against Block's assertion, which rejects the idea that *Ruth* can function a משל, due to the lack of an intrinsic signifier of משל. This dissertation will argue that *Ruth* does indeed function as a משל. Examples of stories attributed with the משל *form* without intrinsic signifiers are evidenced in Nathan's sheep proverb to David in 2 Samuel 12, along with the second examples witnessed with the wise woman of Tekoa's proverb from 2 Samuel 14. Both are widely considered to be in the משל genre without intrinsic signifiers.

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[64] Hubbard, *Ruth,* 47–48.
[65] Linafelt, *Ruth,* xxiv.
[66] Block, *Ruth,* 603.
[67] Walter Reed, *Dialogues of the Word* (Oxford, England: Oxford University, 1993), 62.
[68] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 60, n.63.
[69] Block, *Judges, Ruth,* 602.

This study will propose a wider sense of the משל genre (without the need for narrator pleas), to propose that *Ruth's* dialogic nature in the canon can be classified as a משל. In this purview, the משל designation can withhold the tension of historiography and dialogic polemic which other genres considerations seem to dichotomize.

How can *Ruth* potentially function as a משל? It can be proposed that *Ruth's* movement within the canon classifies *Ruth* as potentially fitting within the writings and more specifically within the wisdom genre. *Ruth's* movement is inherently dialogic within the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, the משל is dialogic in nature, and *Ruth* functions as a משל in the Hebrew canon.

What is interesting, perhaps even ironic, is that silence and gaps are the characteristic foundational entry points of a משל. It is precisely what is *not* said that is the very essence of the elastic nature of a משל, and beckons the other into the dialogue. This dissertation does not argue for the form of *Ruth* to be exclusively in the formal category of משל. The text of *Ruth* functions as a משל as evidenced in the didactic and dialogical mode of this genre.

Ruth's purpose, though not stated explicitly in the text, has traditionally followed five main lines of reasoning:

1. *Ruth* as a polemic against Ezra and Nehemiah's foreign wives' policy
2. *Ruth* as pro-Davidic propaganda
3. *Ruth* as having didactic value for ethical decisions, along with the characters modeling true wisdom
4. *Ruth* as a story for entertainment value alone
5. *Ruth* for the promotion of propaganda in respect to one's social duty[70]

Hubbard regards political purpose as the most likely thrusts of the story's intent. He writes,

> In sum, the book has a political purpose: to win popular acceptance of David's rule by appeal to continuity of Yahweh's guidance in the lives of Israel's ancestors and David . . . given the alien presence under David's rule, the book adds that foreigners who, like Ruth, truly seek refuge under Yahweh's wings (2:12) are welcome.[71]

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[70] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 35, n.18.
[71] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 42.

The wide breadth of descriptions to pinpoint the genre of *Ruth* reveal that it is a story which pays attention to historiographic and literary artistic value. It is my contention that the genre משל can encapsulate the historiographic, artistic, ethical, and dialogic nature of the book of *Ruth*.

The next section will propose a wider sense of the משל genre, to propose that *Ruth's* dialogic nature in the canon can be classified as a משל. The משל designation can withhold the tension of historiography, entertainment value, and theological political intentions which other genre considerations dichotomize. In agreement with Nielsen's engagement with the Canadian literary critic Northrop Frye, genre assignment is "not so much to classify as to clarify, that is, to uncover the literary ties to which the text is linked."[72] Frye notes that with rhetoric, the two basic functions are "ornamental speech" and "persuasive speech," and "The basis of genre criticism in any case is rhetorical, in the sense that the genre is determined by the conditions established between the poet and his public."[73]

With this in mind, *Ruth's* dialogic quality is evidenced in her movement within the canon. *Ruth* functions as an unfinalizable voice with Judges, Samuel, Proverbs, and Psalms. *Ruth* embodies the intertextual qualities of a dialogic משל.

6.6 A New Way Forward: Ruth's Function as a Dialogic משל

In chapter 3, the semantic range of משל in the Hebrew Bible was detailed. משל carries the semantic range of almost every genre within the Hebrew canon. It has been used as prophecy, didactic teaching, thematically, and even with an individual/group of people and how land

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[72] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 6. See also Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1971), 247–248.

[73] Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism,* 245, 247.

should be remembered. משל ties in closely with Bakhtin's use of dialogism in life, art, and

literature. It is more than speech. It is an embodied way of being and becoming. It requires two

subjects to remain open to one another.

In this space of dialogue, something new happens. *Ruth* functions as an open subject in

canonical dialogue. This story has been accepted without much push back in its reception

history.[74] *Ruth*, as a text, has embodied this dialogic quality with the other texts in the Hebrew

canon, and also within the context of life and faith for the Israel people. The way *Ruth* speaks,

intertextually, will be looked at in detail in Chapter 9 in relation to Judges 19–21.

The root משל basically encompasses two categories: 1) "to be like, to use a proverb, to

speak a parable" (see *oracle, prophecy, discourse* in Numbers 23:7; Job 27:1; 29:1 and, *parable,*

taunt, and *riddle* and *memorialization* in 1 Samuel 10:12; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Chronicles 7:20; Joel

2:17) and 2) "to rule" (see Judges 8:22, 23; 9:2; 14:4; 15:11). When looking at the widespread

Hebrew use of this term, the complexity and dialogic nature becomes obvious with the breadth of

translation words such as "oracle," "prophecy," "discourse," "parable," "taunt," "riddle," and

even how one is memorialized.[75] It is this study's contention, with Bakhtin's use of dialogism, to

broaden the metaphysical aspect already inherent in the Hebrew משל, and apply its dialogic sense

to the story of *Ruth* and how it functions in the canon. Noting Bakhtin's use of dialogue and

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[74] Sasson illustrates, "Ruth's canonicity and inspired nature were never seriously questioned" with exception to a much later comment by Rabbi Simeon b Jonai (ca. 125–170 CE) that Ruth, on a case of being less sacred, may "defile the hand." See *Ruth,* 11.

[75] Examples In the answerability of an entire community: "You make us a משל among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples" (Psalm 44:14). In the description of a people remembered as a warning: "But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a משל among all peoples" (1 Kings 9:6–7). In the description of an individual: "But He has made me a משל of the people, and I am one at whom men spit" (Job 17:6); "A man there said, Now, who is their father? Therefore, it became a משל: 'Is Saul also among the prophets?'" (1 Samuel 10:12); Translated as "speech": Numbers 23:7, 18 "he uttered his משל" (Numbers 23:7,18); "Balaam lifted/carried his משל" (Numbers 24:3, 15, 20, 21, 23).

applying this to the משל, with a dialogic impulse, the text of *Ruth* becomes an embodied

intertextual voice within the Hebrew canon.

What is interesting to note is the relationship to the משל in the canon with the varied

genres of literature. This dissertation proposes that *Ruth* functions as a משל of dialogue. This text

is a voice of canonical answerability with the implicit intertextual implications of identity,

gender, and power. Ruth is a response of the אשת חיל to Proverbs 31, as a foreign Moabite

woman. Ruth borders not only ethnic boundaries but also boundaries of gender and genre.

6.7 Ruth as a Dialogic משל and a Voice of Canonical Answerability

Ruth exhibits much more than just a "charming" tale. This tale is connected to a period of

darkness, bloodshed, and political unrest.[76] Following the chronotope connector of being placed

in the period of the judges (*Ruth* 1:1), the following four verses detail the agricultural threshold

of famine which had brought this family from Bethlehem to Moab. As if famine was not tragic

enough, all the men have died by verse 5.

Judges ends with Israel executing חרם on itself. *Ruth* begins with the men being blown

away like chaff from the harvest. There is almost a Jobian twist in reverse. Instead of children,

the inheritance of the family being taken, the ones to provide this inheritance seed are removed.

This "sweet little story" will begin with widows in the lead roles. Death as a motif invites

intertextual connections with the story of Judah and Tamar. Bakhtin's work with the motif of

encounter, where there is a crisis and break in life, will be helpful in this next section of a

dialogic canonical encounter.

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[76] McKeown (in line with several other scholars) notes that Ruth is more than "just a charming story." See *Ruth*, 140.

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In one conversation, *Ruth* is a response to Judges 19–21. *Ruth* also speaks in dialogue with Samuel, as a genealogical birth canal of descendants into futures within the history of Israel. *Ruth* speaks as a voice of wisdom in the *Ketuvim.* Her intertextual connections to Proverbs 31 as אשת חיל contributes to not only a potential example of Ruth as this model, but also as a Moabite on the borders of gender and ethnicity, revealing that her voice is heard in Israel. Ruth's voice will be detailed later as a Moabite woman, but the book of the *Ruth* also functions as a voice in canonical dialogue.

Bakhtin describes the activity of this dialogic place that cannot be neutral: "One cannot be neutral within the unitary and unique event of being. It is only from my own unique place that the meaning of the ongoing event can become clearer, and the more intensely I become rooted in that place, the clearer the meaning becomes."[77] With each location in which *Ruth* is rooted in the different canons, a unique aspect to *Ruth's* voice emerges.

6.8 Answerability as a Feature of the Dialogism: Ruth and Tamar

To illustrate the canonical voice of answerability, this next section will present a carnivalesque reading of Ruth and Tamar (Genesis 38). Reading through the carnival lens highlights the nature of social role reversals with attentiveness to voices from the margins. Although carnival is often marked by gaiety and laughter, this reading will focus more on the former characteristics of the nature of carnival.

As a fellow presenter at a recent *American Academy of Religion* gathering sardonically remarked to me, "Humor in the Hebrew Bible is not funny." Humor in the biblical text may not share the same characteristics with modern cultural definitions, but indeed, biblical humor entails

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[77] Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 129.

the comic, satirical, and ironic. Brenner reminds readers that in later Jewish perception, caution was given when interacting with humorous elements in the biblical text.[78] These later readers refrained from a more lighthearted approach because they were concerned that joy could be a "potentially interfering and distracting agent."[79]

With this in mind, the humor in the Hebrew Bible does reveal several comic semantic elements, some direct and others less direct. Brenner highlights examples with the overt stories involving Eglon's obese figure in Judges 3, Esau's actions in Genesis 25, and also the "sarcastic verbal exchange" of David and Michal in 2 Samuel 6:20-22.[80] Humor is the subversive language celebrated with the nature of carnival in medieval literature, as illustrated by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World*. Nehama Aschenasky illustrates the social role reversal of carnival with the idea that "The folk celebrations that allowed for rowdy humor and the parody of authority offered the oppressed lower classes relief from the rigidity of the feudal system and the church and an opportunity to express nonconformist, even rebellious views."[81]

Therefore, the gaiety of the carnivalesque will be intentionally marginalized but the modes in which the repressed become full-fledged voices, in the spirit of carnival, will be heard. With a careful eye to the subversive intertextuality, attention will be given to motifs of seed, recognition/non-recognition, alluring clothing, and marginalization within the story. Borders will be crossed as these two women navigate their own "becomings" in a society that is *other* to them, mark their own way forward, and become a voice within that alters the trajectory of the familial, theological, and eventually political power structures in their contexts.

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[78] Athalya Brenner, *Are We Amused? Humour about Women in the Biblical Worlds* (London, England: T&T Clark, 2003), 90.

[79] Brenner, "On the Semantic Field of Humour, Laughter and the Comic in the Old Testament," in *On Humour and the Comic Hebrew Bible.* Yehuda T. Radday and Athayla Brenner, eds (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1990).

[80] Brenner, *Humour*, 41–42.

[81] Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth Through a Bakhtinian Lens," 437–453 (especially, 440).

Bakhtin exhibits an *embodied* intertextual reading in his philosophical literary project. Each moment in time bears a unique space of becoming and a unique invitation to respond in answerability. Green's description is worth repeating at this point: "His concept 'answerability' . . . roots in the same dialogic sense of reality that permeates all of his thought and writing. Most succinctly, answerability is the lifework of becoming a self."[82] There is not a pre-scripted format in Bakhtin's dialogic project. Encountering a text (or person) in dialogue for a second time will involve a new way of interacting. Albeit Ruth and Tamar have been placed in intertextual dialogue before, this reading will birth a new perspective.

One can only wonder, as the story of *Ruth* was being told orally and later written down, if Tamar was one of the women that naturally was in dialogue with Ruth in every telling. Certain questions beg consideration with a close reading. Did Ruth decide to remain with Naomi, in part, because Tamar did in fact return to her father's house, only later to initiate *levir* rights on her own accord? Did she navigate her territory as a Canaanite cult prostitute, bringing "defiling" actions, but brilliantly retaining a loophole of life for herself and unborn child through Judah's ערבון ("pledge")?[83]

Perhaps Naomi sensed another way for a foreigner to broach the *levir* code with Ruth, and navigated a similarly risky plot of exposure for the same end goal. Aspects of the Levitical code may speak against the actions of Tamar (Genesis 38); yet, in these stories the risk birthed a future that they intentionally sought in places of familial emptiness.

Ruth's story opens with Ruth initiating a covenantal verbal pledge to Naomi after the men have died. She covenants with Naomi and remains faithful, unlike Judah. Here, readers

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[82] Green, *How the Mighty are Fallen*, 226.
[83] Willem A. Van Gemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 516–517.

encounter a foreign woman who represents the faithful חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"), which a patriarch could not fulfill. The subversive elements of carnival are in full dialogue with these two stories. The marginalized exhibits חסד type faithfulness. The patriarch Judah shirks his responsibility, not only by withholding his third son but in sending Tamar back to her father's house (Genesis 38:11). Ruth, by her words, fulfills her responsibility and answerability to Naomi. Tamar, by her actions, must fulfill the duty that Judah had committed to fulfill, but to which he ultimately became impotent.

Bakhtin's category of recognition and non-recognition will highlight some of the irony found in each of these stories and how they relate in the canon. This next section will show how the intertextual connections of death, motifs of seed, clothing, and genealogy reveal that *Ruth* is in canonical dialogue with Judges and Genesis 38.

The motif of seed connects these two stories in an interesting way. Ruth's story will interweave the agricultural motif of emptiness and fullness, as well as famine and harvest. The women in *Ruth* begin the story empty. The husbands have died and the place where they live—Moab—is in the midst of a famine. This famine extends to family as there is no heir to carry forth the name of the dead.

In one of the heights of irony in the story, Naomi proposes a rhetorical question to the women: "Then Naomi replied, 'Return my daughters for how will you go with me? Are there is still sons in my womb who could be husbands for you?'" (*Ruth* 1:11).[84] Intertextually, the rhetorical humor of Naomi coupled with Judah's empty promise of offering Tamar his youngest son heightens the irony. Judah uttered words that he never intended to fulfill because he was afraid his third son would suffer a fate similar to his brothers'.

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[84] Translation mine.

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Tamar story begins in Genesis 38 with the motif of lost seed. Her first husband, Er, is killed by the Lord. The text gives the reason, "because he was wicked" (Genesis 38:7). To fulfill the duty for his brother, the next son, Onan, is to give Tamar his seed for fertility purposes. The text explains that he refused to do this—although he did engage in the sexual act—because "he knew the offspring (*the seed*) would not be his" (Genesis 38:9). The text goes on to say that because of his *evil* actions, he is put to death by the Lord. Judah sends Tamar home to her father's house with the verbal promise of his third son, Shelah, when he becomes old enough.

Recognition and non-recognition play an important role in the carnivalesque nature of these two stories. Tamar and Ruth change from their "widow wear." When the outer garments are changed in these situations, it is an indication of the women moving forward.[85] The change in clothes is marked by a shift in the agricultural seasons as well. For Ruth, this will be during the barley harvest and for Tamar, during the season of sheep shearing.

The removal of the widow's clothes, in the case of Tamar, is highly ironic. To secure an "inheritance/seed" for herself, Tamar clothes herself as a cult prostitute to obtain the attention of widowed Judah during the festival of sheep shearing.[86] Tamar initiates the first phase to secure her future. Tamar negotiates a pledge (seal, cord, and staff) from Judah before she allows him to "enter" her. The exchange reveals Tamar's intention to be recognized later in the narrative.

After Judah approaches Tamar and requests entry, Tamar asks what he will give her in exchange for the sexual encounter. Judah promises a kid from his flock, at a later date. Tamar insists on a deposit and Judah agrees to hand over his signet, cord, and staff. These items are

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[85] See Deuteronomy 21:13 with the idea of mourning clothes indicating a refusal to move forward in a sexual and/marital relationship for a specified amount of time.

[86] For a discussion on the nature of cultic prostitution and common misinterpretations, see Brad Kelle, *Hosea 2: Metaphor and Rhetoric in Historical Perspective* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 123–132.

personal, revealing, and recognizable. Tamar secures Judah's pledge in preparation to be recognized, and for Judah to be recognized. After she has collected his pledge and he deposits his seed, Tamar is quick to return to her widow attire. Recognition will be held in a place of suspense.

Ruth is prompted by Naomi to change from her widow's garments to different שמלה ("clothing"). The use of this term occurs twenty-nine times, is wide and varied, and carries a generic sense of "clothing." It is used as a literary motif in the Joseph story (37:34; 41:14; 44:13; 45:22). In connection with the perfume Ruth is instructed to use, the time at night, and a plan of redemption, Ruth's "clothing" becomes significant as she changes from her widow's garments to new attire for a redemption request. Ruth will not only ask for Boaz to fulfill a role as a redeemer, she will also ask for marriage. This unusual and bold double request is unique in the Hebrew Bible and is also marked by a change in clothing which illustrates an external transformation in hopes of an identity shift– from widow to married.[87] This clothing change was to be permanent, unlike Tamar's garment change for enticing Judah.

For Ruth and Tamar, both will succeed in changing clothes for diverse purposes of recognition and non-recognition during seasons of celebration. Aschkenasy notes the humor in Boaz's quick decision to play the proper gentleman and to hastily give Ruth some of the harvest:

> The comedy of the body continues when Boaz, in a theatrical gesture, measures out a significant portion of barley and tells Ruth to hold up her apron so that he can fill it up (3:15). Boaz's commendable action is reduced to physical farce: one can only imagine the bawdy visual possibilities, the semiotic signification, of Ruth returning home with her apron bulging provocatively.[88]

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[87] This double request will be further explored in chapter 8. The role of the גאל ("redeeming one") does not assume a marriage.

[88] Ashkenasy, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens," 451.

Narrative sequences pick up the pace at the end of both stories. In Genesis 38, the rapid succession of the narrative gathers speed and it takes only six verses for the completion of pregnancy and birth of Perez and Zerah to Tamar. Within five verses for Ruth, Boaz has entered her, she has conceived, and given birth to Obed. Barbara Green shows that these time references are important in that they "help reinforce the fertility aspects of the story in a number of subtle ways," which include fertility of "seed-field symbolism" located within liminal place (Bethlehem and Moab), the familial and food.[89]

Through these births, the women cross borders into the center yet remain distinct. In true dialogism, there are new births and new thresholds crossed. Synthesis is not the goal. Remaining distinct while open is the nature of dialogism. Here, in the stories of Ruth and Tamar, intertextual, ethnic, and gender borders are crossed . . . yet they remain "other." Revealing the tension of acceptance and resistance, Koosed writes, "As a border crosser, Ruth inhabits the margins . . . [she] claims her legitimacy in the Israelite community but refuses a complete assimilation, leaving her transformation open, remaining a mediator between two worlds."[90] Ruth and Tamar both subvert the story as central and periphery, as integral and as other. In this tension, the agency of these two foreign women have dialogically impacted the people of Israel.

The stories of Ruth and Tamar (Genesis 38) begin with death and end with life. In critical junctures in the narratives, both women will be asked by their in-laws to return to their homelands. Tamar embodies both Orpah and Ruth in her response. Her initial decision was a response of compliance to her father-in-law, Judah. At the outset, Tamar did return to her father's house. After some time, she initiated a return on her own agency. Tamar went on to

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[89] Barbara Green, *A Study of Field and Seed Symbolism in the Biblical Story of Ruth* (Dissertation) Berkeley, CA: Graduate Theological Union, 1980), 62–63.
[90] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 71.

subvert tradition in order to negotiate her place in the unjust familial system. In her return, she destabilized the Israelite structure of morality, and in an astonishing response from Judah in the story, is deemed "righteous."

As a dialogic משל, *Ruth* relates to Tamar through literary motif and intentional intertextual references**.** This birth narrative responds to the problem of an inheritance (seed/offspring). Tamar takes a strong initiative to create life through her body, and in a similar move, Ruth will place herself in a vulnerable position on the threshing floor. *Ruth's* chronotope in the canon reveals threshold crossings through dialogue, and even more voices from the margins. Through relational answerability with Orpah and Naomi, Ruth speaks into issues of identity—as text, as a widow, as a woman, and as a Moabite.

6.9 Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter that *Ruth* is a traveling text within its chronotope in the canons. Adding to the widely attested to influence of this threshold text, I have detailed an investigation into *Ruth's* early canonical acceptance and movement within the canon–– in the MT, the LXX and the Vulgate—which reveals the dialogical nature of *Ruth* as a traveling text. Following this demonstration, the focus of my research shifted to *how* to read Ruth, focusing on previous problematic genre designations such as "*novella,*" "folktale," and an "ancient nursery tale." This culminates in an opportunity for a proposal that contributes to this broad genre conversation, and to propose Ruth's *function* as a משל.

Additionally, I have illustrated how a carnivalesque reading of Ruth and Tamar may prove to be fruitful in establishing a way for marginalized and repressed voices to become heard. These voices begin to become more prominent within this smaller case–study. Reflecting upon these stories (individually and together), has afforded the opportunity to establish a foundation

for the broader case study that will ensue in chapter 10. What is profound about these stories of Ruth and Tamar is that they *could* be deemed as unethical, or even immoral attempts to secure a place within Israel's family. Remarkably, both women are praised for their bold actions. Tamar is deemed "righteous" by Judah and Ruth is later given praise by the women of Bethlehem, with an inherent value that is "greater than seven sons."

What becomes evident based upon this research is that *Ruth* has been an influential voice within the canon. This foundational starting point broadens in chapter 7, with a detailed investigation of utterance in *Ruth* 1. I will attempt to establish how *Ruth* provides a compelling intertextual ethical response to the gendered violence within Judges 19–21.

CHAPTER 7: THE ANSWERABILITY OF BORDERS AND IDENTITY

This chapter advances the conversation of *Ruth* as a canonical response of answerability to Judges 19–21 through a close investigation of the intertextual utterances in *Ruth* 1. What is compelling is that *Ruth* is an interesting point of comparison with Judges 19–21, which heightens the intentionality of these texts in canonical dialogue. Judges 19–21 is marked by nameless women victims and the most extravagant gendered violence in the Hebrew Bible, topped off by the least amount of feminine agency in the Hebrew Bible, as every woman is silent. Conversely, *Ruth* is immediately marked by the most feminine dialogue in the Hebrew Bible, and one could argue, the most feminine agency (especially in light of Ruth's oath to Naomi). Naming is a characteristic of this story, even marked by the title of the entire story being attributed to *Ruth*.

This aim of this survey is to develop the powerful canonical voice of *Ruth,* which will eventually be set in conversation with Judges 19–21, by illustrating that the text of *Ruth* and the woman, Ruth, offers an authoritative voice in the canon through three investigations: (1) the function of names in *Ruth*, (2) intertextual utterances which reveal blurred boundaries between Moab and Israel, as places and people and (3), feminine agency through dialogue and Ruth's oath. This chapter will establish the preliminary groundwork, building the case for *Ruth's* authoritative voice of answerability within the canon.

7.0 Ruth 1

The importance of the function of the genre of *Ruth*, as a משל, contributes to the dialogic nature of this story in the canon. How a text *functions* contributes to the overarching message and intention of what the text artisan desires to communicate to the reader. One of the purposes

of a story such as *Ruth* is that of a dialogic function, as an invitation to the reader to enter the

conversation. The chronotope (time-space) of encounter, as illustrated by Bakhtin, is a familiar

space.

An encounter of utterances emerges from the polyphonic representation of the past,

present, and futures of the dialogic encounter. Bakhtin illustrates this idea:

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when
> the speaker populates it with [his] own intention, his own accent, when he
> appropriates the word, adapting it to [his] own semantic and expressive intention.
> Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral or
> impersonal language (it is not after all, out of a dictionary that a speaker gets [his]
> words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts,
> serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and
> make it one's own.[1]

For our purposes, this encounter represents not only a meeting of individuals but also a

meeting of the intertextual voices within the canon. *Ruth* contains the highest proportion of

dialogue of any narrative in the Hebrew Bible. In the eighty-five verses of *Ruth*, fifty-five of

them contain dialogue. It is very appropriate to look at the text of *Ruth* through a dialogic lens, as

much of the shaping of the characters is witnessed through a close analysis of the dialogue.

Along with this close dialogic reading, each section will specifically look at verbal and

non-verbal utterances that invite an intertextual dialogue of canonical answerability. By

employing the lens of canonical answerability, the genre of *Ruth*, functioning as a dialogic משל,

will begin to take shape and invite voices from the margins to speak. The men are completely

silent in chapter one. The non-verbal utterance of names invites the reader to investigate

potential intertextual clues to comprehend the identity of characters and potential intertextual

nuances that the text artisan may be attempting to illustrate through the use of specific terms of

identification.

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[1] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* 293.

7.1 The Dialogical Nature of Names

The dialogical nature of *Ruth* invites the reader to listen closely to the utterances in the text not only with the sections of dialogue, but with intertextuality, specific wordplay, intentional silent gaps, borders, ethnicity, and all left unspoken. One of the dialogic threads that starts off this story are the names of the men. Although there is gap of explanation by the text artisan of *how* the tragedies occurred, there is an invitation with the utterance of name play.

Names play an important dialogic role in the Hebrew Bible. Names functioned as an important aspect of a person's becoming—what was hoped for with an individual. Bal makes the important point that if meaning was not discovered in the name of an individual in the life of the text, it would be in the afterlife of the story.[2] A short example in Joshua highlights the dialogic function of names, followed by *Ruth's* play on names to illuminate the literary, theological, and political dialogue evidenced in the biblical texts.

An example of the dialogic function of names is wordplay. Taking into account the extravagant use of חרם as illustrated in chapter 5, in addition to the wordplay illustrated through the name of Achan (Achan/Achor), the irony is heightened as the question of "who is truly foreign" eludes an answer. חרם was enacted upon an individual in Joshua, as a microcosm of what was to later be enacted on an entire tribe at the end of Judges. A notable example of this "play with names" is witnessed the case of Achan in Joshua 7.

Achan's name is significant, especially because it is *Achar* in the LXX and *Achan* in the MT. Achan is *Achar* in 1 Chronicles 2:7 in the MT and LXX.[3] Hess cites *Achan* as the original

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[2] Mieke Bal, "Heroism and Proper Names," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, ed Athalya Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 49.

[3] Richard S. Hess, *Joshua* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 18–19.

name because it is cited elsewhere in ancient Near East as a personal name.[4] The root of *Achan* carries "no meaning," but *Achar* does, and is a "wordplay on the valley of *Acho*r" and signifies his new "nickname in 1 Chronicles 2:7."[5] *Achor* in its verbal *qal* form means "to trouble." Hess also notes that a shift from *Acho*r to *Achan* would be "anomalous" because the Bible "has a tendency to nickname."[6] A scribal error is ruled out because the name is used more than once in Chapter 7.[7] Achan's name is also described as the "narrator's attempt to explain the location of the story" (Joshua 7:24, 26. also Hosea 2:17[8]; Isaiah. 65:10).[9]

This paranomasia is foreshadowed in 6:18 with the punitive divine warning from YHWH that whoever takes from the חרם will bring *trouble* on Israel.[10] Ultimately, trouble is witnessed with the loss of the thirty-six lives, as well as Achan and his family at the end of the scene in chapter 7.

Names function dialogically in the story of *Ruth*. Although their moment in the spotlight is brief, the names of the husbands become a dialogic clue of a non-verbal symbol in the narrative. Naomi's husband is Elimelech. Her two sons, who have married Moabite women, are named Mahlon and Chilion. The meanings of the names of the men are interesting in light of

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[4] Hess, *Joshua*, 19.

[5] Hess, *Joshua,* 19.

[6] Hess, *Joshua,* 19.

[7] Hess, *Joshua*, 19.

[8] During the time of Hosea, the name *Achor* carried deep significance. It was more than a "geographical location" because it reminded them of *Achan* the person. "That God radically changes this valley of misfortune and wrath into a 'Gateway of Hope' is an illuminating sign of the breakthrough of his love for Israel." See H.W. Wolff, *Hosea* ed. P.D. Hanson and trans. G. Stansall (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1974), 43.

[9] Steven W. Holloway and Lowell K. Handy eds. *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gosta W. Ahlstrom* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1992)*,* 315.

[10] Alonso Luis Schökel, *A Manuel of Hebrew Poetics* (Rome, Italy: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 30.

Ruth's juxtaposition with Judges 19–21. Elimelech's name means, "My god is king."[11] This name is found only in this reference in *Ruth* in the Hebrew Bible.[12]

The LXX alters Elimelech's name with the more familiar one, Abimelech. Elimelech is used six times in *Ruth* (*Ruth* 1:2; 1:3; 2:1; 2:3; 4:3; 4:9). Mahlon means "to be sick or ill"— basically, "sickly." Chilion means "to be finished" or "weakling."[13] The use of Chilion in Deuteronomy 28:65 connotes the "failing of the eyes," and in Isaiah 10:22, "annihilation." The names of the sons have negative connotations.

One cannot help but see the irony of the immediate death of these three, especially with the husband Elimelech, "God is king," after the literary juxtaposition of the text with Judges 19– 21, which ends with the refrain, "There was no king in Israel" (Judges 21:25). The immediate death of "king God," "sickling," and "weakling" opens the path for the remaining women to take center lead roles in a uniquely feminine gendered story in the Hebrew Bible.[14]

The names of the women too play an important role in the story. Orpah's name is often correlated with her actions of returning home because of a Midrashic explanation of her movement away from Naomi. It is thought that Orpah and the word for neck, *'ōrep*, were closely associated.[15] The name of Ruth is "the most obscure name in the book."[16] Hubbard shows that a

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[11] Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon,* 45.

[12] Campbell, *Ruth*, 52. Campbell makes an interesting note on the use of Elimelek that it has a more common use in the Late Bronze Age, as demonstrated in a list of names (onomasticon) in an Amarna letter (1365 BCE), in Ugaritic texts (from the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries) and Akkadian texts. See J.A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln [Leipzig: Hinrichs,* 1915; repr. Aalem: Zeller, 1964], letter 286) and J. Nougayrol*, Le palais royal d'Ugarit,* IV [Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1956], 215, line 27; VI [1970], 80 line 16.

[13] Robert D. Holmstedt, *Ruth: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2010), 63– 65.

[14] LaCocque notes that the story of Ruth "is a feminine book from beginning to end" in *Ruth,* 5. Of course, many might disagree, but it is important to acknowledge the rarity of such a profoundly female gendered story in the Hebrew Bible.

[15] Hubbard, *Ruth,* 94.

[16] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 628.

likely candidate for the meaning of her name would be "refreshment, satiation, comfort" from

rwh, meaning "to soak, irrigate, refresh."[17]

Other suggestions such as "friendship" requires a dropping of the middle consonant

(*ayin*), which is not attested to with the Hebrew word, *rēa'.[18]* There is a continual reminder

through the story that Ruth is a Moabite. Honig suggests that this is a reminder that Ruth "stays a

Moabite, forbidden, surely noticed and perhaps despised by her adopted culture even while also

celebrated by it."[19]

Naomi juxtaposes her own name, her former identity of "pleasant" and "lovely," with her

new identity as she returns to Bethlehem form Moab—now empty of family. The main wordplay

on name in the story is when Naomi calls herself מרא (1:20).

This is the only time in the Hebrew text where there is an א at the end of this word. It is

usually a ה. Myers notes that this could be a possible scribal error or an indication of an

Aramaism as this is a more common spelling feature in later writings.[20] Readers are introduced

to the scene in *Ruth* 1:19-20:

> So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to
> Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is
> this Naomi?" She said to them, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the
> Almighty has dealt bitterly with me. I went away full, but the Lord has brought
> me back empty; why call me Naomi when the Lord has dealt harshly with me, and
> the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"[21]

Often, the text artisan will play with a name to reveal its significance in the context of a

story and assign symbolic value, as in the case of Achan (Joshua 7). Ironically, Naomi renames

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[17] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 94.
[18] See Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 628.
[19] Bonnie Honig, "Ruth, The Model Emigreé: Mourning and The Symbolic Politics of Immigration," in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth and Esther,* Athayla Brenner, ed. (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 60.
[20] Myers, *Linguistic and Literary Form*, 10. See also Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 21–22.
[21] NRSV.

herself in an attempt to reveal what the Lord has brought upon her, that he answered her with רעע (evil). Naomi alters her name from pleasant to bitter to signify an identity shift. Where Ruth has been one of the main characters in her commitment to Naomi, upon Naomi's return, Ruth is pushed back over the border by Naomi's inattentiveness to the other. Naomi's self-focus begins to marginalize Ruth.

7.2 Women in Relational Answerability: Naomi, Orpah and Ruth (Ruth 1)

The first exchange and the last proclamation in the book of *Ruth* is between women. Journey marks the dialogue: journey of place and journey of identity. Ruth and Naomi will journey to Bethlehem, and as they enter the town in silence, the women of the town will inquire about Naomi's identity. This part of the journey is marked with bitterness. Naomi does not acknowledge Ruth. The actions of Ruth in this scene has the connotation of intense attachment, illustrated in its use in Genesis 2:24 with marriage. Ruth is clinging דבק ("cling," Ruth 2:8, 21, 23) to Naomi. [22]

While Ruth is identifying strongly with Naomi, Naomi seems to dismiss her presence as she describes her life as "empty" (1:20–21). Although Naomi appears to be blind and mute to Ruth, it is at the close of the story where the women of Bethlehem have the final utterance and speak for Ruth. They will praise Ruth, who has journeyed with Naomi to a place a fullness.

The irony at the end reveals that this woman, Ruth, has the final utterance of identity on the lips of the women of Bethlehem. She is praised for her love for Naomi and is valued. The text notes that her value exceeds that of "seven sons" (*Ruth* 4:15). This numeric value is another

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[22] דבק ("cling" 1:14; 2:8, 21, 23) is also the same word used in the idea of marriage (Genesis 2:24), and also as in the context of destruction being upon Lot and his family (Genesis 19:19).

place of irony. The rationale given that Naomi's life is empty is that she has lost three men. In this final statement, Ruth alone more than doubles this loss in her worth.

In the dialogic sense of the utterance, there is not a primary position of power between the text, author, and characters. Each contributes a voice in the grand project of becoming. The project, this event, is a shared experience. Bakhtin described it as "being as event" (*bytie-sobytie*).[23] It is the "lifework of becoming a self."[24] The utterance is the unit in the dialogue that participates yet does not integrate. The utterance can be spoken and unspoken.

As evidenced in Hebrew narrative, gaps are pregnant with meaning, pregnant with becoming. The utterance is the most fundamental unit of discourse and in a dynamic relationship with other utterances, even within silent gaps. Gunn and Fewell comment on the importance of gaps: "But like intervals in music, gaps or silences in texts can carry as much force as do the notes or the words, as the case may be. We recognize the force of silence in life, where failure or refusal to answer may be of utmost significance. No less is true of our text."[25]

This next section will look closely at the polyphonic nature of the reported speech in the text, paying attention to the heteroglossia, double-voices discourse,[26] chronotope connectors (time and space of location), and finally, how speech reveals relational answerability (responsibility) in the life and ethics of how these women are shaped by the text and shaped by one another.[27]

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[23] Holquist, *Dialogism*, 25.

[24] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 226.

[25] Danna Nolan Fewell and David Miller Gunn, *Compromising Redemption: Relating Characters in the Book of Ruth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 17.

[26] Bakhtin writes, "Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized–examples of this are comic, parodic . . . a potential dialogue is embedded in them, one as yet unfolded, a concentrated dialogue of two voices, two world views, two languages." See *Dialogic Imagination*, 324–326.

[27] Again, my desire is to draw out the Russian sense of answerability as responsibility, the ethical nuance of this term. "Answerability" could be minimized to just "answering" but the ethical implications of Bakhtin's notion of answerability is quite extensive.

As noted earlier, gendered language dynamics was not an issue addressed by Bakhtin. Where scholars have found Bakhtin's approach useful is through its careful attention to dialogue. This approach de-centers the authoritative voice and invites the reader to listen in, to pay attention, and to find voices in the margins with an ear to and a glance at the ethical components of such dialogue.

7.3 The Chronotope of Borders: Between and in between Moab and Bethlehem

The chronotope, the time-space of the location of this story, reaches back to issues of ethnicity and enemies, incest, and ill-repute. The utterance of location carries non-verbal intertextual cues to the reader. With the story located during the time of Judges, the irony starts at an all-time high. The reader is pulled into questions of location. Why Moab? What is significant about finding food and family in a place such as this? Both sons will marry Moabite women. The text is silent on the matter of any details connected to these women. The lack of a negative assessment by the text artisan is a nonverbal utterance which invites dialogue on a canonical level.

With this story situated in the period of Judges, it is a highly unusual place to find silence in the text. After the violent actions of killing and kidnapping in Judges 19–21, one wonders if there may be intertextual clues. The readers begin to engage the text in a new way, wondering if the scarlet letter of "Moabite" is indeed a little less repulsive than indicated in other places within the canon. Perhaps borders of identity are being crossed in the silence. Revealing the porous nature of borders, Lau and Havea explain,

> Migration exposes the porous nature of borders: Borders are holey. As people move with their ways, languages and belongings into the domains of others—like Elimelech and Naomi moved with their sons in search of refuge on Moab (Ruth 1)—borders are crossed and at once opened. The crossing and opening of borders coincide: to cross is to open.

The borders of Moab and Judah remained open several years later, when Naomi returned with Ruth.[28]

Similar to the holey-ness of borders, language contributes to dialogic crossings in becoming. What is assimilated through becoming in another geographical place is also a seedbed for becoming with answerability through dialogue. Words and ethics encompass the journey in and out, between and within the borders of place and personhood.

The story of *Ruth* begins with a journey *to* the field of Moab by an Israelite family. Honig remarks that the story begins with Elimelech abandoning kin. This move to Moab was "controversial."[29] Naomi's husband dies in verse 3 and her sons die in verse 5.

At this point in the story, there are three women who take center stage: Naomi the Israelite, and her two daughters-in-law who are of Moabite origin, Orpah and Ruth. It is interesting how the foreignness of Ruth and Orpah are highlighted immediately in Ruth 1:4 when the men took them as their wives: "Then they 'lifted/carried' wives for themselves, Moabites. The name of one was Orpah and the name of the second was Ruth and they dwelled there for ten years."

The verb נשא, which means "to lift" or "to carry" connotes the issues of Ruth and Orpah as *other,* as foreign women. This is the same verb used at the end of Judges in the scene where the Benjamite men "lift" and "carry" wives for themselves at the festival dance. This was a mass kidnapping at the end of Judges. The use of this verb with taking a wife is consistently used of foreign women. The more usual idiom is לקח, "to take" a wife rather than "to carry" one (see Genesis 24:4).

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[28] Jione Havea and Peter H.W. Lau, *Reading Ruth in Asia*, 1.
[29] Honig, *Ruth and Esther*, 51.

The connection with the time period of Judges, along with the unusual verbal link "to take" a wife, that invited the silent utterance in the gaps to be voiced. One wonders, were Ruth and Orpah kidnapped? The close of Judges highlights the kidnapped women of Jabesh-Gilead taken in this same manner (21:23). Readers are not privy to the back story of Ruth and Orpah, but are invited to ask these questions in the narrative gaps.

Perhaps their origin stories are much darker than previously suggested. Concerning the verbs "to lift/carry" and "to marry," Block comments, "Although lexicons tend to treat these expressions as virtually synonymous, closer examination of the latter reveals a phrase loaded with negative connotation. This present idiom occurs only nine times in the Old Testament."[30]

The reader cannot help but ask, "Were Orpah and Ruth stolen from their families?" The intertextual connection with Judges 19–21 demands this be considered. Conversely, the canonical dialogue might suggest an irony of Orpah and Ruth being "lifted/carried" when juxtaposed to Judges 21. Perhaps these "foreign women," Orpah and Ruth, integrated into a very different situation.

A famine enters the chronotope of the story once again, which will drive Naomi home, back to the fields of Bethlehem. Koosed remarks on the importance of the use of שָׂדֶה ("field") in connection with Moab and Bethlehem. She notes that this is not the usual term coined to describe a country. It is found sixteen times in the *Ruth* story. Nine of the uses are concerning Judah and the other seven references are connected to Moab.[31] The intentional use of field begins to stand out as an important motif of land and ethnicity, of where borders begin and are crossed repeatedly.

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[30] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, p. 628. The idiom to "to lift/carry a wife" is found in Judges 21:23; Ruth 1:4; 2 Chronicles 11:21; 13; 21; 24; 3; Ezra 9:2,12;10:44; Nehemiah 13:25. See HALOT 2.726.
[31] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 21.

Famine is the main motivator of displacement and reminds the reader of other important movements of famine in the biblical story.[32] The agricultural leads the procession and Green connects food and fertility with the motif of seed and field, as it pertains to Bethlehem and the house of David. Green illustrates the significance of "food and house/dynasty."[33] This motif will be woven throughout the story of *Ruth*.

7.4 Borders of Ethnicity

The fields of Moab represent a surrogate field to the biblical womb—Bethlehem. The Moabite Ruth will take center stage and continue to play an integral role in the Davidic dynasty. The Moabite connection is interesting canonically as it takes the reader back to the origin of the Moabites in the incestuous story of Lot and his unnamed daughters. A similar dilemma drives the initiation of Lot's daughters as the answerability of Naomi with Ruth. Moab, as a chronotope, invites the dialogic connection with the story of Ehud and Eglon (Judges 3:15–30).

Even with a slightly negative canonical dialogue, the text artisan is silent and does not indicate any negative assessment on Ruth's status as a Moabite. Silence between Ruth and Naomi will also mark the journey into Bethlehem. This space of non-verbal utterance reveals a shift in dialogue and in relationship as Naomi returns. This next section will take a close look at the reported speech in the first chapter between Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth; and how their speech reveals a dialogic relational answerability.

7.5 Naomi, Ruth and Orpah: Relational Answerability

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[32] Genesis 12:10; 26:1; 43:1.
[33] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 63.

Answerability with words and activity poignantly marks this next scene, with numerous interpretations and evaluations of the actions of each of the women. The scene depicts the women deciding what their next moves will be. The men have died, and a famine has returned to Moab. Havea asks an interesting question of Naomi in the narrative, "She returned for the food (*Ruth* 1:6), as we put it in Tongan, she returned because *na'e vaivai ki hono kete* ("she had weakness for her stomach"). Her children had passed so she did not have crying mouths to feed. Did she rise to return only for food? Was there something else in Judah she wanted?"[34] This is an interesting question as Naomi initiates the conversation.

Was Naomi contemplating a way to get back her land? If she did return without her daughters-in-law, the chances of a levirate relationship would not have been possible. It appears that her intention was to return alone. So, she rises and tells Ruth and Orpah to return (שוב) home to the houses of their mothers. Naomi asserts that she will return to Bethlehem. She is aware that these women will have a chance to remarry and establish themselves.

Although the text artisan makes no evaluative assessment of Orpah's decision to return, later midrashic commentary is violent and oppressive. In the Midrash, *Ruth Rabbah*, Orpah returns home and on this journey, is brutally raped by a "hundred men and a dog."[35] Nielsen comments that these were not wild fantasy comments but the "result of learned rabbinical exegesis."[36] Alternatively, both are in purview.

This interpretation of Orpah's return was most likely the result of learned rabbinical exegesis and a deep-seated resentment for Moab coupled with wild fantasies of creative

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[34] Jione Havea, "Stirring Naomi: Another Gleaning at the Edges of Ruth," *Reading Ruth in Asia*, 117.

[35] Nielsen, *Ruth,* 48. See also *Ruth Rabbah: An Analytical Translation,* translated by Jacob Neusner (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press 1989), 172. Hermann Strack notes that this midrashic text was called "Midrash Ruth in the first edition, Pesaro 1519, and has been known as Ruth Rabbah since the Venice edition of 1545." See H.L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, transl. and ed. by Markus Bockmuehl. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash,* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 317.

[36] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 19.

interpretation. The attitude reflected in the oppressive interpretation of Orpah speaks a word against her interpreters. They imagined the movement to Bethlehem as the only viable option, so much so that they thrust a violent homecoming upon Orpah. The text makes no such assessment and fortunately, the return of Orpah has been infused with more positive reception in the last twenty years.

In 1997, papers delivered in San Francisco at the Society of Biblical Literature featured two new readings on Orpah.[37] Although Orpah's role has been marginalized, in part because her role in the story begins and ends rather abruptly, these papers two papers highlight Orpah's role with a fresh perspective. Laura Donaldson and Musa Dube move Orpah from the margins onto center stage. Interacting with modern tales of foreignness, these two papers engage the text on an important sociological level.

Orpah will decide to return. In the turning tide of important and neglected feminist voices entering the conversation, the interpretation of Orpah's actions have been assessed in a much more positive light. It is interesting how negative Orpah has been deemed in light of the silence of the text and her obedience to her mother in law's instructions, the silence in the text is a far cry from the Midrash *Ruth Rabbah,* which portrayed a sexually violent and degrading assessment of Orpah's return.

In a new reading of the dialogue within *Ruth*, this next section will engage in a close dialogic assessment of the reported speech—engaging in a canonical dialogue of answerability. Major questions that will drive this reading include: What will be *dialogized* into the lives of these women through their voices? How do these women move through their *character zones,*

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[37] Laura Donaldson and Musa Dube move Orpah from the margins onto center stage. See Laura E. Donaldson, "The Sign of Orpah: Reading Ruth Through Native Eyes," *Ruth and Esther,* 143; Musa W. Dube, "The Unpublished Letters of Orpah to Ruth" in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth*, 145.

through resistance and integration? Are there canonical and intertextual voices from the margins through certain words, ideas and motifs?

This reading will consider the silent utterances, the gaps (what is said and what reaches toward intertextual intention) to engage the voices which have been placed by the text artisan in the margins of the canon. Again, this reading has a high view of the intentionality and artistry in the text. The silence on the part of the text artisan enables engagement with the story on intertextual, canonical levels, which may shed light and enable new voices to be discovered.

The family had left home in Bethlehem to live in this foreign place: Moab. The text states, "So they went out from the place which she had been, her two daughters-in-law with her, and they walked on the road to return to the land of Judah" (1:7).[38] It is in this "sphere of dialogic interaction itself . . . where discourse lives an authentic life. The word is not a material thing but rather the eternally mobile . . . it never gravitates towards a single voice."[39]

To be somewhere, to live in a new place, alters one's perception of self and the world. The sociological impact of a move away from home invites geographical border crossings that include relational crossings, and places of formation and deformation.

The three women begin the journey together towards Bethlehem—literally, the "house of bread"—because the famine had subsided. It is interesting that even though this story is placed literally in the time of Judges, the Judges narrative does not ever mention a famine. What is driving the famine motif in *Ruth* is intertextual dialogue with the great patriarchal traditions of familial journeys—i.e., Abram and Jacob. They begin the journey together.

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[38] Translation mine.

[39] This approach to dialogically understanding the word is what Bakhtin calls, "metalinguistics." See Bakhtin, *Problems with Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 202.

At some point between Moab and Bethlehem, Naomi stops. She stops moving in the direction of her hometown with her daughters-in-law. She turns to them in motion and emotion. At this point, she commands the women to return to Moab. This is to be their point of departure. In this liminal space of between, a chronotope of encounter marks a true dialogic encounter.

Naomi verbally asserts how and where Orpah and Ruth must take the next steps in their becoming. She desires stability for each of them, indicating a desire for the חסד she has experienced from them to be returned and answered in their own lives.

Speaking in an imperative, she commands them to return.

> 1:8–9 Then Naomi said to two of her daughter-in-law, "Go and return, each of you to the house of her mother. May YHWH חסד with you just as you have done with the dead and with me. May the Lord give to you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of your husband." Then she kissed them, and they lifted their voice and they wept.[40]

It is very unusual to speak of the house of a mother. The more common phrase is the house of a father.[41] In fact, there are only three occurrences of a mother's house in the Hebrew Bible. The other two uses are found in Songs of Songs 3:4 and 8:2. These two references are distinctive from the use in *Ruth* in that they are speaking about a specific location in the house of the mother, a room, in which to meet and drink deep in sensual pleasure with one another. The examples of the woman and her lover in Canticles reveal this use of the mother's house as a specific space in which to express these sexual desires.

> The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me,
> And I said, "Have you seen him whom my soul loves?"
> Scarcely had I left them When I found him whom my soul loves;
> I held on to him and would not let him go

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[40] Translation mine.

[41] Carol Meyers, "Returning Home" in *A Feminist Companion to Ruth,* ed Athayla Brenner (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 94. See also Hubbard, *Ruth*, 102. The other two occurrences are in Cant. Spell out] 3:4 and 8:2.

Until I had brought him to my mother's house,
And into the room of her who conceived me (Song of Songs 3:3–4). [42]

Oh that you were like a brother to me
Who nursed at my mother's breasts.
If I found you outdoors, I would kiss you;
No one would despise me, either.
I would lead you and bring you
Into the house of my mother, who used to instruct me;
I would give you spiced wine to drink from the juice of my pomegranates.
Let his left hand be under my head
And his right hand embrace me (Song of Songs 8:1–3).[43]

The use of the mother's house in *Ruth* is meant to be in direct correspondence with the idea of the house of the Father. This qualifies it as a unique function in the Hebrew Bible. The use of the phrase, בית אמה ("house of mother") highlights the strong female character of this story, a double polemic in double-voiced discourse by the text artisan. The husbands have been removed through death and the "maleness" of this first chapter does not even exist in the household reference in the MT. The "maleness" is in the LXX, which alters this to Father's house.

Orpah and Ruth speak as one in the initial response to Naomi, an utterance in unison. Borders in ethnicity are strong as the young women differentiate from Naomi's people. They are committed to stay with Naomi. Then they said to her, "We will return with you to your people" (1:10).

Naomi's reply reveals a comedic rhetorical irony:

Then Naomi said, "Return my daughters, why will you go with me? Have I still sons in my womb who would be husbands for you? Return my daughters and go because I am too old to have a husband. For if I said, 'there is hope for me,' even if I would be with a husband this night and would also bear sons? Would you wait, until they are grown? Would you shut yourselves off from having a husband for them?" (1:11–13).

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[42] NAS.
[43] Ibid.

Naomi's discourse attempts to finalize the response from Orpah and Ruth. In rhetorical irony, she is not expecting to engage in true dialogue which remains open with possibilities, resisting finalization.

What is interesting is that even in her attempt to close the conversation, and direct them back to Moab, Ruth creates a loophole for herself:

> Then they lifted their voices and they wept continually and Orpah kissed her husband's mother, but Ruth clung at her. Then she said, "Behold, your sister in law will return to her people and to her god; Return after your sister in law" (1:14–15).

Naomi continues again, to direct and persuade Ruth's speech and actions.

Ruth's pleading with Naomi is powerful persuasion. Her decision to invoke a covenant will become the prevailing rhetoric. The oath has been compared to a betrothal motif but the intertextual connection with other types of oaths suggest a more unique use of formulaic language.[44] Ruth matches Naomi's intensity with the use of covenant-oath language to plead her case in 1:16–18:

> Then Ruth said, "Do not plead with me to leave you and return after you. For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people and your God my God. Wherever you die I will die, and there I will be buried. This may the Lord do to me and this he will add to, if even death will divide us. But when she saw that she was determined to go with her, she ceased speaking to her.

The language and formulas for biblical oaths vary widely in the Hebrew Bible. The two nouns associated with the idea of oath are אלה ("an oath") and שבועה ("an oath, curse").[45] Ruth does not employ these nouns, but the formula used is attested to in several places throughout

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[44] Alter has suggested this scene as a "betrothal scene" even though she does not marry Naomi. See Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative,* 52.

[45] Yael Ziegler, *Promises to Keep: The Oath in Biblical Narrative* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 2008), 9. See also Greenburg, *Oaths,* 77; and Herbert Chanan Brichto, *The Problem of Curse in the Hebrew Bible* (Atlanta, GA: SBL, 1963), 2. See Numbers 5:21 for the use of both nouns in one verse.

Samuel and Kings. The particular formula seen here in *Ruth*, כה יעשה ... וכה יוסיף (literally, "thus do ... then thus do again"), is found in twelve occurrences of this usage and is also the most common articulation of oath language.

Oaths are witnessed throughout Ancient Near Eastern culture. Texts outside the biblical narrative, with the use of oaths, suggest a possibility that biblical oaths originally contained an extensive curse within the oath and an invocation of the divinity to enact punishment upon failure of the oath.[46] Note that the oath formula in *Ruth* is one of twelve similar oaths in the Hebrew Bible, yet is the only one that invokes the name of the covenant deity of Israel: YHWH.

From a literary point of view, Ziegler maintains that the use of the divine name in *Ruth* 1:17 and 1 Samuel 20:13 are intended to influence one another, that there is "purposeful design" in these two narratives, and that this design is meant to bring them together in dialogue.[47] This contributes the canonical dialogue evidenced in *Ruth*.

With an examination of these texts together, Zieglar highlights interesting similarities and comparisons. Invoking the covenant name, YHWH, the oaths in *Ruth* 1:17 and 1 Samuel 20:13 illustrate the seriousness on the part of the oath taker. Given the situation, both parties are undermining themselves to enact the oath. For Jonathan and David, Jonathan is forfeiting his role and succession as king, giving allegiance to David. For Ruth, she is risking a future with her people to return to a foreign land where she has pledged to be with Naomi in a covenant similar to a marriage contract.[48]

Hubbard suggests that there is a unique use in *Ruth* in that the formula is normally only spoken by leaders. Although Zieglar sees this as an overstatement on the part of Hubbard, it is

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[46]Manfred R. Lehmann, *Biblical Oaths,* ZAW 81, no. 1 (1969): 74–92.
[47] Zieglar, *Promises to Keep,* 79.
[48] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 52.

worth highlighting the unusual proclamation of an oath by a non-Israelite woman to another woman, without the purpose of dealing with a man.[49]

Oaths in this respect function dialogically to highlight a new movement in the text. In this liminal place between Moab and Bethlehem, Ruth, by invoking an oath, asserts her voice and shifts the outcome of the story as Naomi had envisioned. The oath Ruth invokes provides a key literary shift in the dialogue, a shift to physical movement with Ruth, as she is now accompanying Naomi. This physical movement is accompanied by silent acceptance: "She ceased speaking to her" (*Ruth* 1:18b).

Naomi's silence at this point is intriguing. Upon seeing how אמץ (*determined)* Ruth was, Naomi accepts the terms of Ruth's oath. This verb, אמץ, is in the hithpael and is witnessed 41 times in the Hebrew Bible. In this hithpael stem, it occurs four times (1 Kings 12:18; 2 Chronicles 10:18; 13:7). It connotes the sense of power and resilience, to "strengthen oneself."[50] The resolve Ruth mustered in strengthening herself, coupled with an oath invoking the name of the covenant God of Israel, communicated her position of determination. Naomi's silence is an utterance of acceptance and withdrawal.

In this movement from Moab to Bethlehem, for the readers, there is no dialogue to reveal Naomi's posture towards Ruth's insistence. How Naomi responds to the women of Bethlehem could almost indicate a negative reaction to Ruth's clinging. It is evident in her response in 1:20 that she is in a bitter place and even renames herself, "bitter." She details her experience in Moab with her inner identity and self-identification. The motif of empty will be answered in full, and

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[49] Hubbard shows examples in Kings and Samuel where this formula is spoken "only by readers about weighty matters of the state," in *Ruth*, 119, n. 31. Conversely, see Zieglar, *Promises to Keep,* 70, n.59.

[50] Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 54.

Ruth's silence will be impregnated with praise by these same women of Bethlehem in a final utterance of canonical answerability (*Ruth* 4).

7.6 Naomi's Lament

Upon Naomi's return, her perspective reveals a self-identification with a place of desolation. Readers are aware of a grander story, but the person Naomi can only focus on her own loss, neglecting the oath of her daughter-in-law, Ruth.

> 1:19 And the two of them went until they came in to Bethlehem. When they came in to Bethlehem, the whole city was in a stir and the women said, "Is this Naomi?"
>
> 1:20 "Then she said to them, "Do not call me Naomi; call me Mara. For the Almighty (Shaddai) has greatly embittered me."
>
> 1:21 I walked away full but YHWH has caused me to return empty. Why do you call me Naomi? The Lord has answered against me, the Almighty (Shaddai) has answered me and brought this brokenness upon me."[51]

Literary motifs of recognition and non-recognition play an interesting role here in Naomi's speech. The women inquire of Naomi's outward identity and Naomi responds with an inner identity response, one that encompasses her internal state of being. This revealing is intensified with how Naomi brings YHWH into the conversation, showing a place of resistance to her past identity and names herself accordingly to her new embittered station in life.

Hubbard shows the shift of intensity with Naomi's lament when he writes, "Through a simple stylistic variation—an initial *waw* in place of the previously used *kî* (cf. 1:6, 12, 13, 20)—the narrator perhaps implied a rising intensity in Naomi's voice . . . again, Naomi traced her

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[51] The term, רעע ("evil"), can be translated as brokenness in several contexts (Isaiah 24:9; Job 34:24). This idea of brokenness relays the idea of the loss and break in lineage.

bitter situation to a single, divine source, Yahweh."[52] Although Hubbard asserts that it is not a lament because it is directed to the women of Bethlehem and not YHWH, Fentress-Williams alludes to the exodus motif with Naomi's new identity from lovely to bitter, invoking a sense of return, yet an empty and bitter reunion with her people in her land. Naomi uses the covenant name of god, YHWH, as the one who has "struck her" along with another rarer deity identification שׁדי (Shaddai), as the one who has brought misfortune and made her life bitter.

Jonathan Grossman points out that Naomi's use for Shaddai is especially unique in that she combines it with the more common name for God and this combination could indicate a potential wordplay with שׂדי (field) and along with a possible connotation with fertility.[53] The interesting fertility connection is with "soil or childbearing" and extends to the stories in which it is used: the patriarchal familial blessing of fertility in with the name change from Abram to Abraham with the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17:1–6. It is also used when Jacob's name was changed to Israel and a blessing was pronounced in Genesis 35:9–22.[54]

The interchange of these two reveals an important juxtaposition of name changes and associations: Abram and Abraham, Jacob and Israel, God and Shaddai, Naomi and Mara. Naomi is communicating stories of identity shifts with this name for God: Shaddai. Her return to Bethlehem reveals the land and identity connection that is integral in the story and history of Israel.[55]

Silence underscores as a dialogical utterance on the journey to Bethlehem. One can almost imagine a shift in Naomi as she considers what her return will entail.

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[52] Hubbard, *Ruth,* 126.
[53] Jonathan Grossman, *Ruth: Bridges and Boundaries* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2015), 118–119.
[54] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 118–119.
[55] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 63.

1:22 So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law was with her, who returned from the fields of Moab. And they came in to Bethlehem at the beginning of the Barley Harvest.

Even while noting the absence of an acknowledgment of Ruth by Naomi upon the return to Bethlehem, the text artisan will remind the reader of her existence. The text states, "Ruth, the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, was with her." Although Naomi does not acknowledge Ruth's presence, the text artisan and the women of Bethlehem at the end of the story will become a voice of answerability to this verbal void.

7.7 Intertextual Utterances

Intertextual utterances within the first chapter of *Ruth* alert the reader that this story is indeed much more than a children's nursery tale. In fact, the story of *Ruth* is set in dialogue with the great patriarchal narratives (i.e., Genesis 17; 35) and moments of prominent theological and political transitions such as exemplified in Deuteronomy. The spoken words of covenant are uttered from the lips of Ruth. These covenant words of commitment are found only in the most honored people of the Old Testament, in particular with those of King David. This Moabite woman is a rare character in the Hebrew Bible.

Through an analysis of intertextual utterances, this next section will reveal how the person of Ruth participates as a main character on the stage of some of the most important theological and political narratives in the history of the people of Israel. The boundaries of Israel and Moab—of who is considered "other"—is blurred even further with a close reading of the story of *Ruth*.

The following section will present the idea of Israel's borders remaining porous from the beginning, throughout the history of Israel, and, in particular, as witnessed in the story of *Ruth*.

Do Moab and Israel come full circle in this progentive tale? It is very possible that the intertextual utterances intentionally argue for a reunion of these two conflicted countries, these two conflicted political families. Ishmael and Isaac stood together before the death of their father, Abraham. Famine and death have also united, in the person of Naomi and Ruth, Moab and Israel. From Israel and Moab, one of the greatest kings in the history of Israel will come forth.

Motifs of famine and childlessness connect *Ruth* to the patriarchal narratives. The famine motif is seen with Abram and Sarai (Genesis 12:10), Isaac and Rebekah (Genesis 26:1), and Joseph (Genesis 41:53–54). Childlessness is also witnessed with Abram, Sarai, and Hagar (Genesis 16; 21); Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38), and within the patriarchal family; Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19). Famine drives the narratives forward with the need to sojourn to new places. The literary themes of recognition and non-recognition highlight irony in all these stories.

Moab functions as an integral place of dialogue in the Hebrew narratives. It is the place where Deuteronomy is staged, and where Israel camps before a major transition into the promised land. Moses, the greatest prophet in their history, dies and is buried in Moab. It is an important place in the nation of Israel's theological and political transition. This is where Joshua rose to take the people into the land.

Ruth, as a Moabitess, embodies place and person on the edge of a new horizon. She stands as reminder of place, when Moses and the people of Israel sojourned on the plains of Moab. Moab represents this wilderness moment, the precipice of the journey. The story of *Ruth* stands on such a precipice, between the time of the Judges and the political transition into a monarchy. Ruth is not only a Moabite, but she also represents Moab. What was separated in

Genesis with Abraham and Lot, will come together to birth something joined—Israel and Moab—as a united people in the person of David.

Naomi renames herself, מרא ("bitter"). This reminds the reader of other places of bitterness, and in canonical dialogue with the exodus. Sasson argues for an intentional wordplay with the spelling alteration.[56] Invoking the name Shaddai also harkens the stories in Genesis (17:1; 35:11), which describe name changes of the patriarchs.

The narrator's choice of the verb, אמץ ("to strengthen self"), in *Ruth* 1:18 is interesting in that it is in the hithpael. As noted previously, the verb in this stem occurs only four times (1 Kings 12:18; 2 Chronicles 10:18; 13:7). In each of these occurrences, it includes a sense of rallying "one's faculties" and an aggressive strengthening of self in political contexts of opposition.[57] Ruth was strongly determined, and this verb highlights an intertextual interplay with a sense of urgency and strength as witnessed in other texts (2 Chronicles 10:18; 13:7 and 1 Kings 12:18).[58]

7.8 Conclusion

Ruth is only one of two books in the Hebrew Bible named after a woman (the other being Esther). The focus of Esther resides in a major political crux, with a clash of ethnic discord and a threat of genocide. *Ruth* takes a more intimate approach, centering on a small family being threatened with extinction. Moving from the previous investigation of the book of *Ruth* within the canon in chapter 6, this chapter took a closer look at Ruth the woman and her relationships in

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[56] Sasson provides a very detailed argument for the pun with the name, "*mārā'* and the root *mrr*," which means "to be bitter." The form, being in the hiphil, is not a common usage in the Hebrew Bible and could be a potential explanation for the unique occurrence of the spelling of her name. See Sasson, *Ruth,* 34.

[57] Robin Wakely, *"אמץ"* in Willem A. Van Gemeren (ed.), *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis.* vol.1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 439.

[58] In fearing for his life, King Jeroboam makes haste and flees to Jerusalem (1 Kings 12:18; 2 Chronicles 10:18) and the second example if the sons of worthlessness being "too strong" for Rehoboam because of his youth (2 Chronicles 13:7).

Ruth 1.

Feminine agency pervades this book. I have illustrated this powerful attribute through a survey with the distinctive use of the phrase, בית אמה ("house of mother"), answerability through dialogue, the function of names, and the unique utterance of an oath by the Moabite, Ruth. Discovering utterances within dialogue and identity support the claim that Ruth, as a text and a woman, offers an authoritative voice in the canon.

Ruth charts a new path forward in this dialogue of identity, as a Moabite woman who not only utters an oath with an Israelite woman, but also embodies the narrative as a voice of authority. Ruth's voice will continue to chart a new course, which may have shifted a deep mistrust against the Moabite peoples through oral tradition. The continual reminder that Ruth is a Moabite, coupled with Naomi's marginalization of Ruth, could almost be described as "identity border control." This chapter has revealed that Ruth will not be finalized as a woman, or as a Moabite. This chapter proposes that Ruth offers an authoritative voice within the canon, demonstrated through the examination of Ruth's unique oath. Ruth embodies a strength of character that casts her identity in line with Israel's kings and patriarchs.

The following chapter continues to build on the critical contribution of Ruth, as a text and a woman, within the canon. A detailed analysis of *Ruth* 2 and 3 will continue to highlight Ruth's agency within this story. A focus on Ruth's identity through intertextual utterance (i.e., the idiomatic use of "speak to the heart"), and canonical answerability (*Ruth* 2 and Genesis 19) explores the multiple ways that *Ruth* is a polyphonic voice within the canon. Chapter 8 is critical in building the foundation for intertextual utterances that will be discussed in the final case–study in chapter 10, where I contend that *Ruth* is a powerful canonical voice of answerability to the gendered violence of Judges 19–21.

CHAPTER 8

Chronotope Encounters in Ruth 2 and 3

Figure 5: *Boaz Wakes Up and Sees Ruth at His Feet* (1960) by Marc Chagall.[1]

In this chapter, I continue to lay the groundwork to show how *Ruth* becomes a voice of answerability to Judges 19–21. In Judges 19–21, the crisis of lineage is answered with violence. Alternatively, *Ruth* offers a very different portrait of response to a similar crisis. The journey from progenitive emptiness to fullness takes a significantly different route in the *Ruth* story.

Chapter 8 concentrates on the continued application of *Ruth* as a strong polyphonic voice in the canon– one much more influential and formidable than previously understood. This close

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[1] Lithograph, *Musee National Message Biblique,* Marc Chagall (Nice, France). Marc Chagall was born in Vitebsk, Russia. He returned to his hometown in 1918 and founded the Vitebsk Popular Art School. The spirit of avante-garde pervaded the atmosphere. Clark and Holquist comment that even though Bakhtin "liked Chagall personally," he did not appreciate "left art" because of the understanding that the new avantgarde had superseded" what Bakhtin preferred, which was Symbolism. Vitebsk is also the town where Bakhtin met his wife, Elena Aleksandrovna. See Clark and Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin,* 48–51.

reading will highlight Ruth's unequivocal importance as a response to Judges 19–21 in chapter 10. A detailed analysis of *Ruth* 2 and 3 will continue to highlight Ruth's agency within this story. A focus on Ruth's identity through intertextual utterance (i.e., the idiomatic use of "speak to the heart"), and canonical answerability (*Ruth* 2 and Genesis 19) explores the multiple ways that *Ruth* is a polyphonic voice within the canon. The inimitable double request of Boaz in *Ruth* 3 on the threshing floor is of particular significance, being a unique request within the Hebrew Bible. This scene sets her apart, highlighting Ruth's independent agency from Naomi. Ruth's actions and her request to Boaz in *Ruth* 3 highlights her role as a woman of risk and agency, working within intragroup dynamics, altering her destiny, and the destiny of her mother in law.

This chapter will conclude with an analysis of other significant foreign woman in canonical conversation. This fresh portrait of foreign woman will reveal that marginal voices are nothing new in the Hebrew Bible, and these women continue to be central agents in major politico-theologico transitions for Israel.

8.0 Chronotopes of Field and Threshing Floor

On Feb. 16, 2017, a strike was held in the United States: "A Day Without Immigrants."[2] What was emotionally moving about this strike was that to be noticed, this population removed themselves from their daily jobs and kept their children home from school. They left enormous gaps in businesses and classrooms. By taking a stand and creating a visible absence, communities were able to recognize the important and critical role immigrants have in our society and in our communities. This was a risky but necessary step given the current political

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[2] Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/16/us/day-without-immigrants-vignettes/index.html.

climate in the U.S. Many businesses fully supported their employees in this strike, recognizing the importance of supporting the immigrant community. To be "recognized," this community of immigrants became "invisible."

The theme of recognition and non-recognition plays a critical role also in the story of *Ruth*. Rather than a withdrawal to become visible, she entered a field in Bethlehem in hopes that she would be noticed. The first chapter of *Ruth* reveals the dialogical nature of names and the oath formula. The intertextuality witnessed in this beginning chapter points towards the reflective, intentional and creative voice *Ruth* contributes within the Hebrew Bible. The relational answerability between characters and between borders will continue to be central.

This next chapter will look again at the text artisan's intentional dialogue with identity, as Ruth the Moabite initially takes center stage. *Ruth* 2 will focus on the threshold in the field, with an intertextual analysis of Genesis 19, focusing on key words and phrases used in both narratives. *Ruth* 3 will illuminate the chronotope of encounter on the threshing floor, with a careful eye towards the ambiguity of the redeemer role. By utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism, the conversation within the canon will reveal that the story of *Ruth* is far from a romantic tale. Ruth's subversive and risky actions become a game-changing move at the critical "hour of reckoning."[3]

8.1 The Chronotope of the Field

The chronotope is the unique space where the artistic expression of "temporal and spatial relationship" come into contact.[4] This is similar to Gunkel's idea of *Sitz im Leben,* yet it

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[3] Sasson calls the midnight hour the "hour of reckoning" and this will be expounded on in the section, *Midnight Motif* in chapter 8. See Sasson, *Ruth*, 74.
[4] Bakhtin, "Forms of Time," 84.

encompasses a broader philosophical potential in Bakhtin's project of dialogism. The potential of becoming, through this encounter in the chronotope, is pregnant with possibilities. Each encounter is a new encounter because of the invitation of the text to be read. The encounter with the reader opens up a new avenue for dialogue, and in this space a relationship is formed.

Reading *Ruth* through a Bakhtinian lens of the carnivalesque, Nehama Aschkenasy focuses on the comedic element. This reading highlights subversive modes through "semantic and semiotic codes of cultural exchange between authority and the marginalized inherent in the work"[5] as she writes:

> A Bakhtinian reading uncovers the polyphonic sounds heard in the story—the comical being among the loudest—which counterpoint Boaz's "monologic utterance." It also points to the interaction between the Tale's literary and cultural dimensions and offers explanations for several puzzling elements in the text and in Boaz's conduct that have not been adequately addressed so far… The postmodern interest in uncovering the voice of the marginalized by deconstructing a reading from the exclusive point of view of the ruling class also makes the tale of Ruth of special contemporary significance. Bakhtin's theory, which dates the rise of the carnivalesque to medieval culture yet recognizes its roots in ancient nature festivities, encompasses several of these approaches while at the same time helping to identify a voice hitherto unrecognized in the tale: that of the comic.[6]

Boaz may appear to put forth a "monologic utterance" as Aschkenasy has iterated but as this study unfolds, Boaz dialogizes tradition and subverts it with his acceptance of the proposal of Ruth on the threshing floor. In a dialogue of futures, culture and tradition meet innovation and the entire story will ironically end with a beginning, a genealogy. Bakhtin's theory of dialogism will assist in uncovering the utterances that subvert and create, as Ruth and Boaz meet in a chronotope of encounter on the threshing floor.

8.2 The Chronotope of Encounter

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[5] Aschkenasy, "Reading Ruth through a Bakhtinian Lens, 438–439.
[6] Ibid.

In the second chapter of *Ruth*, the chronotope of encounter happens as Ruth steps over the threshold into the field. This field is familiar place–one where Ruth recognizes her task but does not know how she will be received. In this crossing, she hopes to be seen *with favor* (2:2). This crossing is risky because there is the possibility of abuse. Being looked upon "with favor" will be the dialogical thread woven through chapter 2. For a woman to be "seen" in the open field has brings the potential for a violent encounter.

> 2:1 Now Naomi had an acquaintance of her husband's, a great and wealthy man from clan of Elimelech, and his name was Boaz.
>
> 2:2 And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "let me walk to the field and I will gather ears of grain, after someone in whom I find grace in their eyes." And she said to her, "Go, my daughter."

This chronotope of encounter crossing marks an important turn in the narrative. Ruth, the Moabite foreigner, will encounter not only the gleanings in the field, she will also bump into several different people. The folks Ruth will come across include workers, a foreman, the owner of the field, all of whom are natives to this piece of property in Bethlehem. Ruth is not a local girl. In fact, the text continually reminds the reader that she is a Moabite (1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5,10). The issue of her status as a foreigner is important to consider with the potential threat of violence. David Shepherd takes Ruth's outsider status as an important factor with her "vulnerability to violence."[7]

The literary placement of the *Ruth* story during the days of the judges puts forth a conversation of gendered violence, not only from the literary refrain that "everyone did what was right in their eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25), but also from the multiple victims: the פילגש, dismembered by the המכלת ("knife") of the Levite (Judges 19); the kidnapped women of Jabesh-

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[7] David Shepherd, "Ruth in the Days of Judges: Women, Foreignness and Violence," *Biblical Interpretation* 26, no 4–5 (2018): 528–543.

Gilead; and the kidnapped women at Shiloh (Judges 21). These violent portrayals suggest a foreign woman in a field might rightly fear a violent encounter.

The setting, along with Boaz's command to the field hands to not touch her in Judges 2:8-9, indicate an understanding that the potential for violence existed in every field, including the field owned by Boaz.

> 2:3 So she walked and she came in and she gathered in the field after the harvesters; and she encountered by chance a portion of the field belonging to Boaz, who was from the clan of Elimelech.

> 2:4 Behold, Boaz came in from Bethlehem, and said to the harvesters, "May the Lord be with you." And they said to him, "May the Lord bless you."

> 2:5 Then Boaz said to his servant, the one appointed over the harvesters, "Who is this young woman?"

> 2:6 Then the one appointed over the harvesters answered, "It is a young Moabite woman. She is the one who returned with Naomi from the land of Moab."

We are introduced to the man, Boaz, immediately in 2:1. The syntax alerts the reader as it departs from the narrative flow (imperfect with *waw* consecutive) to a change with the use of the nominal sentence with the preposition which reads "Now to Naomi …"[8] This alerts the reader of something or someone new being introduced: Boaz. He is from the clan of Elimelek and Naomi knows this family. ידע ("to know") is a substantive and expresses a potentially familiar and clan-familial relationship. Campbell translates it with the familial focus given the context, as "covenant-brother."[9] Green, in line with Hubbard, notes that this word is "warmer" than just an acquaintance and translates it as "friend." This follows the *ketib*, which "vocalizes the

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[8] See Hubbard, *Ruth*,132. For a discussion on the "non-basic order" and how in English this is known as a "heavy noun phrase shift" see Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 104.

[9] Campbell, *Ruth*, 85. Conversely, Sasson does not accept Campbell's use of "Covenant-Brother" but does agree with his choice of the *ketib* over the *qere* because it is well attested to in the Hebrew Bible with six uses (2 Kings 10:11; Psalms 21:12; 55:14; 88:9, 19; Job 19:14) as opposed to the singular use of the *qere* in Proverbs 7:4 which Sasson remarks is "highly poetic . . . if not artificial language." Sasson prefers the translation of "friend" or "acquaintance." See Sasson, *Ruth*, 39.

consonants" and is found in several places in the Hebrew Bible—i.e., 2 Kings 10:11; Psalms 31:12, Job 19:14.[10]

Hubbard, in line with the *qere* translation as evidenced also in Proverbs 7:4, suggests that this translation could potentially suit the context of a "distant relative."[11] Nielsen follows the *qere* translation of the Masoretic vocalization.[12] Even though one translation assumes a closer possible relationship, both indicate that there is a relationship with Boaz by Naomi, and the warm response in the following verses of Boaz to Ruth suggests that there is indeed a prior positive relationship. Boaz's desire to bless Naomi and Ruth through the gift of grain reveals the חסד of relationship.[13]

In 2:4, Boaz inquires with his foreman concerning the woman's status. To whom does this woman belong? Linafelt notes that this is a question of belonging, not just identity.[14] Hubbard shows a connection with this inquiry in reference to ancient customs.[15]

One of the interesting dynamics from the one interrogating is that it is solicited by the individual with more power and status. The reader is alerted to Boaz's formidable status in 2:1, and it is indicated in the text as Boaz is described as גבר חיל (literally, "person of strong/mighty-strength/power"). This phrase carries the connotation of a military person but given the context of *Ruth*, Sasson asserts that what is being communicated is that Boaz was not "an ordinary, run-of-the-mill Israelite, but a man of substance."[16] Along with a literal rendering of the aforementioned phrase, the actual name of Boaz ("in him is strength") most likely takes on

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[10] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 23. See Hubbard, *Ruth*, 132.
[11] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 132.
[12] The two ways to read this verb are מְיֻדָּע (*kethib,* to be vocalized as a pual participle) and מוֹדָע (*qere*).
[13] חסד can be witnessed not only in a symbiotic the covenant people and their creator but also from person to person.
[14] Linafelt, *Ruth*, 60–61.
[15] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 224.
[16] See Boling, *Judges*, 197; Sasson, *Ruth*, 40.

symbolic significance in meaning, with one of the pillars to the temple of Solomon bearing the name, "Boaz" (1 Kings 7:21).[17] Boaz is a man with resources and power in the community.

Intertextual examples of this power dynamic are witnessed by the one asking, "to whom someone belongs." In Genesis 32:18, Jacob is preparing for a potential adverse reunion with his brother, Esau. To lubricate a potential disastrous encounter, Jacob sends his servant ahead with gifts. Jacob knows a question of belonging will be asked of his servant. Jacob instructs him to tell Esau that these gifts are from his servant, Jacob, who will be coming soon.

A similar account in 1 Samuel 30:13 reveals David asking this question of belonging of a deserted Egyptian servant of an Amalekite whom David's company has found hungry and alone. David inquires of him, "To whom do you belong?" The community aspect in the ancient world is highlighted in this question as it takes into account not only a name but with whom they are associated. This is an important aspect to consider as shifts of identity are perceived within the dialogue in the story of *Ruth* and also within the intertextual dialogue with Judges 19.

8.3 Encounter with Boaz: A Dialogue of Identity

2:7 Then she asked, 'Please let me glean and gather the sheaves after the harvesters.' Now she had come in and she stood at that time of the morning until now. She has only been sitting at the house for a little while."

2:8 Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Have you not heard, my daughter? Do not walk to gather in the field of another and also, do not pass over from this one. Thus, cleave to my young women."

2:9 "Let your eyes be on the field which they are harvesting and go after them. Have I not commanded the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from that which the young men have drawn."

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[17] Linafelt, *Ruth*, 25.

2:10 Then she fell upon her face and she bowed down to the ground and she said to him, "For what reason have I found grace in your eyes that you noticed me, since I am a foreigner?"

2:11 Then Boaz answered and he said to her, "I have been told all that you have done for your husband's mother after the death of your husband, how you left your father and you mother and the land of your birth and went to a people who you did not know previously before.

2:12 May YHWH reward your work and may your wages become complete from YHWH, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come in to seek refuge."

2:13 The she said, "Let me find grace in your eyes, my lord, because you have comforted me and when you have spoken to the heart of your maidservant, although I am not as one of your maidservants."

2:14 Then Boaz said to her towards mealtime, "Draw near and have some of the bread and dip a bit in the wine vinegar." So she sat at the side of the harvesters and he reached out to her grain. And she ate and was satisfied and had some left over.

2:15 Then she rose to gather and Boaz commanded his young men, "Let her gather between the sheaves and do not humiliate her.

2:16 And also, pull out for her from the bundles of grain and leave them for her to gather, and do not rebuke at her."

The words exchanged between Boaz and Ruth reveal an illuminating dialogue of identity. Ruth describes herself several ways, in an intentionally deferential way. This next section will explore the recent scholarship of how this exchange has been understood and offer a new reading which will take into account the dialogue of identity as a potential voice of canonical answerability with Judges 19.

Ruth's identity as a Moabite is an important component in the entire story, highlighted twice by the text artisan in chapter 2 (v. 2, 21). Boaz will remark on her Moabite status twice in chapter 4 (v. 5, 10). Hubbard and Linafelt both see this as a significant aspect of the story.[18] The LXX, the Syriac, and the Old Latin traditions on *Ruth* remove the text artisan's identification as Ruth the Moabite in her speaking line in 2:21. This interpretive move reflects an interesting

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[18] See Linafelt, *Ruth*, 26–27, and Hubbard, *Ruth*, 137.

interpretive position that did not deem the inclusion of her Moabite ethnicity as central to the story. When one reads this through the lens of irony and double-voiced discourse, the inclusion of her ethnicity becomes central. Ruth, the Moabite, is a key identifier as Boaz called her a Moabite twice (4:6, 10). The text artisan references the ethnic attachment three times (1:22; 2:2, 21) and it is declared once by the foreman (2:6).

Koosed remarks on the intentionality of the oddities and strangeness of this story, "The point still obtains: after reading *Ruth* for nearly twenty-five hundred years the inconsistencies, incongruities, and peculiarities of the book pass largely unnoticed. Highlighting instead of downplaying the oddities of the story brings the comedic to light."[19] This comedic will be brought to the foreground through noting the identity shifts of Ruth, along with an intertextual comparison with Judges 19 to pull out the irony of these identity alterations.

Through wordplay and shifts in identity terms, the reader is continually thrust into this dialogue of identity. As if her status of Moabite is not enough to make her distinct, the text notes shifts of Ruth's identity as verbalized by Naomi, Boaz, the foreman, and Ruth's own self-reflexive references in her speech.

Naomi calls her "my daughter" in 2:2. After an initial greeting, Boaz inquires of Ruth and refers to her as נערה ('young girl/maiden," *Ruth* 2:5). The foreman details who she is to Boaz and comments on her Moabite status and also calls her נערה (*Ruth* 2:6). He details her days' work. The foreman's response is "incomprehensible."[20] Exactly what he is trying to say has left scholars flustered. From a literal rendering (Linafelt) to a smoother one (Sasson), the basic gist is that Ruth has requested to glean and has worked very hard.[21] There is a possible

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[19] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 14.
[20] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth,* 73.
[21] Linafelt, *Ruth,* 31–35.

misrepresentation of Ruth by the foreman, and this is pointed out by Grossman. The reason for the awkward verbal account of Ruth's actions by the foreman is probably her ethnic status as a Moabite. Though Deuteronomic law (Deuteronomy 24:19; Leviticus 19:9–10) allowed for gleaners (foreigners, widows, and the fatherless) to provide for themselves in this way,[22] Koosed reflects on the possible prejudice that could have been part of the foreman's response, not only because she is a Moabite, but also "because she is one of the poor women come to profit from his hard work."[23] Boaz takes matters into his own hands and immediately the dialogue shifts between Boaz and Ruth. This intentional dialogic shift cuts the foreman off at his knees and out of the conversation.

Although Boaz commands the "young men" to keep away from her, it would have been within earshot of the foreman to reinforce. The foreman's new responsibility as iterated by Boaz now involves his oversight to keep her safe and provide for her needs. Boaz speaks to Ruth and leverages his powerful and also familial position by calling her "daughter." He tells her to stay and glean in his field, to cling to the other women, and to obtain food and drink from what the young men have drawn. Here is another level of gender irony as she is told to drink from water the men have drawn.

In response, Ruth lowers herself before Boaz, which Trible views as an appropriate response.[24] Alternatively, Koosed views Ruth's actions as exorbitant and describes them as "even bordering on self-humiliation."[25] There is a wordplay with her next self-identification term as she asks, "How have I found favor in your eyes that you take notice of me, a

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[22] Jonathan Grossman, "Gleaning Among the Ears—Gathering Among the Sheaves: Characterizing the Image of the Supervising Boy (Ruth 2)." *JBL* 126, no. 4 (2007): 711.

[23] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 75

[24] Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1978). Trible comments, "Her deference results from her daring . . . Ruth has accomplished what she set out to do . . . 'to find favor,'" 176–177.

[25] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 76.

foreigner?" (2:10; with נכרי "foreign" and נכר, "recognize"). She continues to tell Boaz he has spoken to her heart because of such favor, but denies her status as even one of his שפחה ("maidservants") in *Ruth* 2:13. She elevates her self-identification term to אמה ("maidservant") later in 3:9, which is a servant eligible for marriage. Conversely, both terms are used for second wives and those in service to another. [26] This resists an immediate romanticizing within the story. The identity shifts are important aspects to consider, especially with the wordplay of "foreign" and "recognize," which highlight her Moabite origins.

The dialogue of identity intensifies and climaxes in verse 2:10 when the quandary from 2:2 is answered. Ruth has not only found favor, but she has found a safe field to glean in. The wordplay heightens the intensification and the irony. Ruth, a foreigner, has been recognized as a Moabite and also has found favor. The interaction between Boaz and Ruth is viewed by Gunn and Fewell as more than a thoughtful interest but an attraction with sexual overtones.[27] This is a minority view, but curious with the eagerness Boaz exhibits to take care of Naomi through the widow Ruth. It could lead one to wonder if there was an initial attraction to this Moabite widow, along with his later attentiveness to the kinsman role he subsumed as part of Elimelek's clan.

Ruth's response is a noteworthy place of canonical dialogue. She responds with the words, "You have spoken to the heart of your maidservant." Given the juxtaposition of this phrase with the Levite's intention to speak to the פילגש in the similar phrase, "to speak to her heart," this idiom deserves attention to draw out the dialogic connections and to uncover the multiple nuances that such a phrase invokes.

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[26] אמה ("maidservant," same term used of Abigail in 1 Samuel 25:14 and Bathsheba in 1 Kings 1:17).

[27] Gunn and Fewell, *Compromising Redemption*, 40–44.

8.4 Ruth's Response: Speak to the heart

The idiom, "speak to the heart," occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 34:13; 50:21; Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13; 2 Sam. 19:7; Isaiah 40:2; Hosea 2:16; 2 Chronicles 30:22; 32:6-7). Four of these occurrences are in the context of a king speaking words of encouragement to his people. In 2 Chronicles 30:22, King Hezekiah speaks words to encourage the hearts of the wise Levites. In 2 Chronicles 32:6-7 he encourages his military. In 2 Samuel 19:7, Joab instructs David in David's grief over his son Absalom, to encourage the hearts of his servants. Two occurrences are in the context of comforting others when they are in a place of fear. In Genesis 50:21, Joseph comforts his brothers after they have realized he is alive. In Isaiah 40:2, YHWH comforts Jerusalem in the context of its people's fear of punishment. Three of these occurrences are to curry favor or entice a woman (Genesis 34:13; Hosea 2:16; Judges 19:3). Two will include rape in the passage (Genesis 34:13 and Judges 19:3), and the Hosea illustration concerns YHWH enticing Israel to reestablish the marriage relationship and to respond positively at the invitation (Hosea 2:16–17).

Almost every dialogic use of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible—"speak to the heart"—is spoken by a figure in power. What is unique in the story of *Ruth*, is that this idiom is spoken by Ruth herself, a woman and a foreigner. Most often on the lips of royalty persons in places of political power, here in the story of *Ruth*, this idiom rolls off the lips of one who has continually subverted any attempt at a normative "ideal" Israelite. *This* woman, this *Moabite* woman, has proclaimed a covenant oath formula in the first chapter.

In chapter 2, she has used an idiom spoken only by those in authoritative positions in the Hebrew Bible, even of YHWH through the prophetic utterance of Hosea. The irony and subversive nature of this narrative reveal that this story is much more complex and nuanced, and

as Koosed has so rightly stated, is "strange."[28] It is my contention that the subversive elements in this text are double-voiced and create loopholes for the characters. A full treatment of this idiom in relation to Judges 19 will be detailed in Chapter 10.

8.5 Canonical Answerability: Genesis 19 and Ruth 2

Ruth 2 recalls significant stories within Israel's history. Hubbard shows this connection with Boaz remarking on all Ruth left behind to stay with Naomi. Boaz says, "You left your father and mother and the land of your birth and went to a people which you did not know prior." This statement reflects the great Abrahamic migration of faith. The phrase to leave "father and mother" is found only in one other passage, in reference to marriage (Genesis 2:24).[29] Along with connections to Abraham, *Ruth's* story is canonically in dialogue with Tamar, Leah, and Rachel (*Ruth* 4).

In chapter 6, motifs of clothing and grain reveal intertextual dialogue with Tamar (Gen. 38). Fentress-Williams develops a connection with *Ruth* 3 and Genesis 19 by highlighting the following similarities in each text:

> [T]he following elements are present: first, there are two women conspiring to continue the family line. Second, there is one man, presumably unsuspecting. Third, there is drinking and darkness involved. Fourth, the central action occurs outside of the cities of liminal space. Fifth, there is uncertainty around the identity of the women and the time of their arrival and departure . . . Sixth, children come of these unions.[30]

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[28] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 14.
[29] Hubbard, *Ruth,* 164.
[30] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 90.

Fentress-Williams illustrates the literary connection of these elements between Genesis 19 and *Ruth* 3 to reveal Naomi's intentional role in the story, along with the movement that, "Moab comes back to Israel in the same way that Moab became an outsider."[31]

Alternatively, I agree with Koosed that the Moab-Israelite relationship, though complicated and at times negative, is not one of such distinct borders as is often argued. The borders between Moab and Israel were not like the borders we imagine today with passports or biometric controls. In fact, Naomi's family moved to Moab when a famine presented itself in Bethlehem. Movement between countries is quite fluid in the Hebrew Bible. Likewise, literary boundaries can exhibit fluidity. Bakhtin comments helpfully on this idea of literary boundaries in interpretive methods and how the chronotope is a place of creative activity:

> An exchange between work and life occurs, and which constitutes the distinctive life of the work . . . However forcefully the real and the represented world resist fusion, however immutable the presence of that categorical boundary line between them, they are nevertheless indissolubly tied up with each other and find themselves in continual mutual interaction; uninterrupted exchange goes on between them, similar to the uninterrupted exchange of matter between living organisms and the environment that surrounds them. As long as an organism lives, it resists fusion with its environment, but if it is torn out of its environment, it dies . . . Of course, this process of exchange is itself chronotopic.[32]

This idea of exchange and mutual interaction is more characteristic of the Moab and Israel relationship than is often depicted. Koosed remarks on this tribal dissonance with a provocative inquiry into some interpretive models. Along with Koosed's rereading of the Moab/Israel relationship, it can be demonstrated through a textual analysis that *Ruth* 2 is intentionally in canonical dialogue with Genesis 19:19.

Many postcolonial readings of *Ruth* have highlighted an oppressive relationship between Moab and Israel "dependent on an equation between modern Europe colonization of Africa,

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[31] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth,* 91.
[32] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 254.

Asia, Australia, and the Americas with ancient Israelite contact with Moab. An imperialization based on *racial* hierarchy is read back into *Ruth*, a time and a place where, historically, neither exist."[33] These readings are always very interesting and provocative, and Koosed highlights that the relationship between Moab and Israel in the Hebrew Bible was not quite as oppressive as many readings have equated it when one takes the biblical story on its own terms. The goal of this next section is not to undermine or contest the important rereadings and interpretations offered by diverse interpretive grids, but to offer a canonical reading of the text in an attempt to discover more of the subversive complexities within the Hebrew Bible itself. Dialogism invites new readings, and every reading is an attempt to create something. *Ruth* is not a simple story. In fact, its dialogue within the canon is actually complex and subversive as will be evidenced in a close reading with Genesis 19.

The obvious connection between *Ruth* 2 and Genesis 19 is the story of the Moabite peoples' origins. These incestuous beginnings detail the desperate initiation of Lot's daughters after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. They concoct a plan to inebriate their father and have sex with him for progenitive purposes to secure the family memory and inheritance. Although Ruth is most often seen in parallel with the Rachel, Leah, and Tamar and Judah stories (Genesis 38), I will argue that her Moabite origins (2:2,6,21) and her strange שוב ("return," *Ruth* 1:22) to Bethlehem in chapter 1 become the strongest intertextual voices within the *Ruth* story. Specifically, word choices and idioms make this connection even clearer.

In chapter 2, resonance from Genesis 19 are found in *Ruth* 2 with the verb "to cling" (1:14; 2:8, 21, 23) and the phrase, "someone who sees me with favor/grace" (2:2, 10, 13), along with the use of חסד. These ideas are woven throughout the *Ruth* story, converge in chapter 2 and

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[33] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 28.

recall Genesis 19:19 and ironically subvert this idea of Ruth's "returning" to a new place and a new people, in order to take a central role in the Israelite lineage from which she never truly departed. Below, Lot is conversing with the angels and recognizing the kindness shown to him and his family. Crisis in lineage pervades these two stories, connected by theme and intertextual utterances.

> Genesis 19:19: Behold, your servant has found grace in your sight, and caused your חסד, which you have shown me by preserving my life; I could not to escape to the mountain, for the injury will overtake me and I die.

> Later in Genesis 19, the origin story of the Moabite (and Ammonite) tribe will detail a

"bed trick" under the cover of night with excessive drinking, similar to other progentive stories. What is unique about the Ruth connection is the strange "return" in 2:6. Campbell notes that this verb with the definite article, also seen in 1:22 and 4:3 in reference to Naomi, is particularly a "favorite syntactical device in the MT of Ruth."[34] After Ruth declares the oath to Naomi, they "return" to Bethlehem. The irony with Ruth "returning" parallels Genesis 19 and the familial ties with Lot and Abraham. Abraham deeply loved his nephew. The story of Lot's salvation is credited to this dialogue between Abram and YHWH on Lot's behalf (Genesis 18: 16-33; 19: 29). The relational boundary intricacies resist dichotomization.

LaCocque has drawn parallels with similar short stories of women in the Persian through Hellenistic period (*Ruth*, Esther, Judith, Susannah) which offer a voice of protest against the postexilic monologic voices of the establishment in Jerusalem, in particular with the problem of "mixed marriages" as witnessed in the stories of Ezra and Nehemiah.[35] The story of *Ruth* weaves

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[34] Campbell, *Ruth*, 78.

[35] André LaCocque, *The Feminine Unconventional: Four Subversive Figures in Israel's Tradition* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1990), 1–2, 4. LaCocque places the genre of story of Ruth in the Persian period.

an imaginative canonical complexity with gender, subversion, and protest that continually

dismounts ideals and thwarts an attempt of a simplistic hegemonic reading.

8.6 Chronotope of Encounter: The Threshing Floor

The intrigue with *Ruth* 3 has been a source of scholarly inquiry from the beginning. From

canonical connections and early Midrashic explanations, to the modern quest for answers, Ruth

continually eludes the reader and embodies the characteristic of a woman of mystery. The scene

on the threshing floor is a critical chronotope (time-space) of encounter in the story. The place of

the threshing floor, along with her chosen moment to enter that space–at midnight, is significant.

Naomi and Ruth begin the chapter with a risky plan. Ruth follows Naomi's guidelines but

subverts them and creates her own paradigm shift. This shift in 3:7 is where Ruth, through

dialogue, creates something new. Bakhtin's dialogism will be useful in revealing the effect that

when two remain open to one another, creative agency occurs within mutual interaction. Within

the canon, the subversive nature of Ruth's voice imports a vital voice for the foreigner, who is

often marginalized, but time and again takes center stage. Once we begin to imagine that we

understand her, we cross borders in language and identity and we are once again baffled. In *Ruth*

3 direct speech takes up almost the entire chapter. The dialogism displayed connects the reader

with the Torah, and then subverts it. Simplistic analogies will not suffice.

The canonical dialogue of *Ruth* 3 juxtaposed with foreign women within the canon will

reveal that the national identity of Israel is continually subverted against any attempt of an ethnic

homogeneity within the Hebrew Bible. Similar to Bakhtin's description of the Rabelaisian

chronotope, these next sections will show how these narratives reveal the "false connections that

distort the authentic nature of things, false associations established and reinforced by tradition and sanctioned by religious and official ideology."[36]

8.7 Ruth 3:9 in Canonical Dialogue with the Torah: Violator or Creative Agent?

The scene at the threshing floor is one that invites canonical dialogue from all over the Hebrew Bible but most explicitly with the Torah and the Prophets. Naomi has given her instructions to Ruth in 3:1–4 and Ruth replies with a strong desire to follow these instructions and the text indicates that she did everything as Naomi instructed:

> 3:1 Then Naomi, her mother-in-law, said to her, "My daughter, shall I seek for you a resting place, that will be good for you?"
>
> 3:2 And now, is not Boaz our kinsman, with whose young women you have been. Behold! He is scattering barley on the threshing floor this night,"
>
> 3:3 Now wash, anoint and set a mantle upon yourself and go down to the threshing floor. Do not let yourself be made known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking."
>
> 3:4 And it will be when he lies down, know the place which he will lay down and come in and uncover his feet and lie down. He himself will declare to you that which you are to do."
>
> 3:5 Then she said to her, "All that you have said top me, I will do."
>
> 3:6 Then she went down to the threshing floor and she did all that her mother-in-law commanded.

In the next few verses, the scene is set. The eating and drinking motif evokes the chronotope of seduction, request, and even trickery as witnessed before with Lot's daughters (Genesis 19), Jacob and Esau, and also with the exilic Esther (Esther 2:18).

In order to understand how to "read" this threshing floor scene, this next section will look at the canonical dialogue of what Ruth requests by looking closely at what she inquires in

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[36] Bakhtin*, Dialogic Imagination*, 169.

retrospect of her conversation with Naomi and the location in which the request is made. Unique

aspects of her personhood in this story, along with the actual request, subverts and shifts not only

the paradigm of the entire story, but also the legal codes[37] as in the roles of kinsman-redeemer

and a levirate marriage.

The following three verses have taken up much ink in scholarly discussion within the

story of *Ruth*. The decent or indecent battle lines become drawn with the understanding of "legs"

or "feet," along with the nature of Boaz becoming "startled" in the middle of the night. The

question most scholars are trying to understand is whether or not Ruth had a sexual encounter

with Boaz, the eighty-year-old farmer.[38]

> 3:7 Then Boaz ate and drank and his heart was glad, and he came in to lie down at the
> end of the grain heap. She came in secretly and she uncovered his feet and lay down.
>
> 3:8 Then it was in half the night (midnight) and the man trembled and twisted about and
> behold! A woman was lying at the place of his feet!
>
> 3:9 Then he asked, "Who are you?" And she said, "I am Ruth, your handmaid. So spread
> out your wing over your handmaid because you are a redeeming one."

The comedic elements of irony within this story begin with Ruth's entering the scene.

She secretly approaches Boaz. With this stealthy entrance, she will end up startling him in an

interesting twist of events. The nature of the startling, given the time of the night, her approach,

and her actions of uncovering lead the reader into a wonderful dialogic encounter of

recognition/non-recognition, ironic twists of identity and loopholes in the dialogue. Ruth's

identity in a canonical dialogue of answerability will add to the ambiguity of her actions. This

obscurity creates resistance to a simple definition of this woman. Her request will ultimately alter

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[37] See Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 25.

[38] We do not actually know his age from the text itself, even though he was most likely older. LaCocque notes that Boaz was eighty in one of the midraishic traditions (LaCocque, 2004, 100).

the course of this story and reveal that Ruth's actions are not only subversive but will completely alter this family's trajectory towards impoverishment.

Ruth לט "secretly" comes to the threshing floor. Out of the nine occurrences, לט is often used as an adverb and translated as "quietly" or "secretly" with the preposition ב (Genesis 37:25, 43:11; Exodus 7:22, 8:3, 8:14. Judg. 4:21, Ruth 3:7, 1 Samuel 18:22, 24:5). The only other use in connection with a woman is that of Jael in Judges 4:21 when she "secretly" went into the tent and drove a tent peg through the temple of Sisera. With very different intentions, Ruth and Jael both moved secretly to execute a plan.

Although *Ruth* 3:7 is the only use of לט that has been debated in light of its use with Jael, it can be contended that "secretly" is the intentional use, rather than "softly." The use of "softly" has been suggested because of it potentially being related to the root of the adverb, לט. "If *lāt* derives from *'t* (gentleness), then "softly, quietly" is a more appropriate translation . . . but if *lāt* is related to *lwt* (wrap, cover), then "secretly" or stealthily" may be a more suitable rendering."[39] The interpretation of this adverb has part of Ruth's identification as a demure and gentle figure. Understood in intertextual connection to Jael, the use of לט in *Ruth* signifies a purposeful and covert encounter on the part of Ruth.

Previous characterizations of Ruth as meek and humble will have only added to this idea of her entering the threshing floor scene in a quiet way. Another interesting use of לט ("secretly, stealthily") is evidenced in 1 Samuel 24:5 when David "secretly" enters the cave to cut off the extremity כנף ("wings"), of Saul's robe. Noting Ruth's strength as a game changer, this characterization needs to be shed of its old skin. The danger and secrecy of entering at night, along with the undebated other uses within the canon, reveal that Ruth moved secretly and

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[39] See Andrew E. Hill and Malcolm J.A. Horsnell in #4319 "לט" in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 794–795.

surreptitiously, similar to Jael. With the covering of night, Ruth is beginning to execute Naomi's plan. The irony of identity will continue to thread through this scene as Ruth creates a possible loophole for herself through her double request. Ruth's request departs from her mother-in-law's instructions. Not only will Ruth request redemption for the property but will request Boaz to act as a redeeming one in order to fulfill a role that will enact a levirate marriage.

8.7.1 *Midnight Motif*

I will argue in this section for the significance of the moment of the chronotope of encounter on the threshing floor. I contend that this particular time reveals intertextual utterances of theological and political significance. Along with the chosen moment to appear on the threshing floor, there is also a comedic element which cannot be dismissed in this text, as the ambiguity of Ruth's identity continues to be a key motif. Recognition and non-recognition interplay as the reader is invited along with Boaz and Naomi throughout the story to continue to ask of Ruth, "Who are you?" On the threshing floor at midnight (literally, "in the half of the night") is the "turning point" of this entire dialogic משל.[40] Ruth's identity will continue to shift at this critical hour of the night. The chronotope of encounter creates an important theological dialogue within the canon.

Midnight, according to Sasson, is the "time of reckoning."[41] Midnight recalls the final stage in Israel's release from bondage in Exodus 11:4 and 12:29, when the first-born children of the Egyptian people were struck down. This was *the* final display of power before the people of Israel crossed over their threshold of slavery into the desert. In Judges 16:3, after Samson has spent the night with a prostitute, the people of Gaza prepare to kill him. At midnight, Samson

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[40]Eskult, "Literary Style," 74.
[41] Sasson, *Ruth*, 74.

rose and displayed his power by tearing down the city gate. Conversely, two texts reveal that the midnight motif is a time of surprise. Elihu tells Job that for those who do not administer justice, midnight is the hour the wicked, "die in an instant, in the middle of the night, the people are shaken and they pass away; the mighty are removed without human hand" (Job 34:20). In the story of the ruling by King Solomon, midnight is the time when the woman was accused of stealing a baby and replacing the living baby with the dead one (1 Kings 3:20).

Ruth is covered by darkness in this scene. She is not recognized at first under the darkness covering but will be revealed later by her voice. Entering this space, at this time, is a dangerous and risky move. Ruth places herself next to the man who has the power to alter her identity in multiple ways. She exerts her own power by advocating for a redemption and marriage in this very vulnerable moment in this very vulnerable place. Covering and uncovering will carry the next stages forward as more ambiguity pulls the reader into the dialogue of "feet" and "wings." Ruth's actions will recall intertextual uses of these terms to expose a very bold move on the part of Ruth to navigate her identity with the purpose to secure a new future for her and Naomi.

8.7.2 *The Foot*

One of the significant chronotope (time-space) of encounter moments involves the space in which Ruth places herself. One of the controversial terms presented in this space is the term in *Ruth* 3:7, מרגלות ("place of the feet"). It is derived from the noun רגל ("foot"). The meaning of this term and the understanding of what body part/s has been exposed has ranged from Ruth uncovering the foot of Boaz to uncovering his genitalia. It has also been suggested that Ruth has uncovered herself, revealing a ploy of seduction. The term used for the place of the feet, מרגלות,

is found five times in *Ruth* and in only one other place in the Hebrew Bible, with the terrifying vision in Daniel 10:6. Sasson remarks that this term, "foot," is "contrasted with arms so is rendered legs."[42] The use of רגל ("foot") in the Hebrew Bible is normally associated with both male and female sexual organs (male: Exodus 4:25; Judges 3:24; 1 Samuel 24:3,4; and female: Deuteronomy 28:57; Ezekiel 16:25).[43] What is curious is that the use of גלה ("to uncover") in the *piel* is employed two times with foot and both occurrences are indicating an act of uncovering the body. In Isaiah 47:2, the exposure of the leg of the woman, Babylon, is an indication of her shame.

The use of uncover in the *piel* in Hosea 2:12 is associated with the idea of nakedness and shame. Several scholars see the ambiguity with this section as intentional, while others have noted that Naomi's plan "centered around sexual entrapment using Ruth as bait."[44] The question that seems most appropriate after all of the discussion is to contemplate whether or not the text artisan intended the use of "foot" to be intentionally ambiguous (Campbell, Nielsen).[45] Nielsen remarks that because it is not implicit in the text, the reader, "must draw conclusions."[46] This appears to be one of ironic comedic ploys throughout the text of *Ruth*, and it is possible that the elusiveness of what this text is referring to *is* intentional. The use of the term foot, alongside the intertextual connections to Genesis 19 and Genesis 38, reveal that the secrecy, crisis of lineage, and sexual connotations lead the reader to view this as more than just a literal rendering of foot. The use of גלה ("uncover") in the *piel* possibly demonstrates that Ruth uncovered her own body.

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[42] Sasson, *Ruth*, 69.
[43] Sasson, *Ruth,* 69.
[44] Charles Halton, "An Indecent Proposal: The Theological Core of the Book of Ruth," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 26, no. 1 (2012): 32.
[45] The ambiguity is intentional and noted by several scholars. See Campbell, *Ruth*, 121.
[46] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 68–69.

Even without this rendering, the ambiguity is an intentional rhetorical device, one that creates a rich canonical dialogue.

8.7.3 *Wings*

Ruth will make a very bold request within the chronotope of encounter on the threshing floor with Boaz. The term she uses, כנף ("wings"), contains significant intertextual nuances. Ruth's use of כנף ("wings") reminds the reader of Boaz's own request of the Lord in the previous chapter in 2:12, "May YHWH reward your work and may your wages become complete from YHWH, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come in to seek refuge." In 2:12, if the *qere* reading is used rather than the *ketib,* then the dual form would seem to harken back more loudly with the dual form of the Lord's wings in chapter 2. Campbell argues that the *ketib* reading is the correct one.[47] Either reading will indicate a symbolic reminder to the reader of wings and their protective and provisional nature in both occasions (*Ruth* 2:12 and 3:9). Sasson notes that this is a "play on words."[48] כנף ("wings") in *Ruth* 3:9 is also reminiscent of the marriage metaphor in Ezekiel 16:8 with the idea of God spreading wings over the nakedness of Jerusalem in a betrothal-type scene. The canonical dialogue continues to add depth and mystery to Ruth's request and actions.

Fentress –Williams focuses on what Ruth does not say, her silent utterances, as Ruth asserts her identity here as a "handmaid" rather than the "Moabite . . . not the daughter–in–law of Naomi."[49] With so many twists in the story of identity, the reader is invited to ask with Boaz, "Who are you?" With her assertion of identity as אמה (maid, handmaid), her self–identity shift

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[47] Campbell, *Ruth*, 73.
[48] Sasson, *Ruth*, 81.
[49] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 96.

from שפחה (maid, maidservant) begins to alert the reader that Ruth's secret approach and uncovering will result in an uncovering of her own plan which will depart slightly from Naomi's. As readers, we are harkened back to the identity shifts of the פילגש in Judges 19 and wonder what will become of Ruth, at night, on this threshold of this threshing floor.

The "motif of encounter" for the פילגש pulled her into abuse and dismemberment. The פילגש was abused through the night and in the morning, she crawls back to the house. The word פתח ("doorway") is used both times for where the פילגש had fallen (Judges 19:26–27). The text artisan changes the final place where she lay, with her hand upon the on the סף ("threshold"). The introduction of threshold, a word used for palaces and temples, alerts the reader to this intentional doorway which marks a locale of new orientation. Finalization is resisted in the Judges story as they cross familiar territories into new ones, with shifts from judges to the monarchy. In a similar way, Ruth lay herself at a threshold with a risky encounter. Her threshold on the threshing floor becomes a place where she exposes herself through words and body. This is her moment to attempt a monumental shift in in opportunities for herself and her mother in law.

The threshing floor is most commonly associated with abundance and fertility. There is a use in Hosea 9:1 where God is warning Israel regarding their unfaithfulness and comparing them to acting the זנה ("prostitute") and loving the wages of a זנה.[50] Again, the ambiguity of this scene at night on the threshing floor of exposure is intentional. The "meek and compliant" characterization of Ruth will continue to be thwarted with a close reading. By utilizing the canonical intertextuality with *Ruth* 3:7, a fuller canonical dialogue will shed light on whether

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[50] The literal and metaphorical rendering of the term זנה encompasses a complex range between the cultic act of prostitution to any illicit sexual activity. In the prophets, the idea of the Israel's unfaithfulness to YHWH is described with the metaphorical use of זנה. For a helpful discussion of this term, see Brad Kelle's, *Hosea 2*, 100–109.

Ruth is a violator or creative agent with her words and actions. The texts that will be the main

foci are those which will illuminate the key aspects and uses of the kinsman-redeemer role.

8.7.4 *The Double Request*

Ruth's request is crucial to this scene and marks a very provocative moment in a very

provocative chapter. Green regards this scene in 3:9 as a key to understanding the whole:

> This verse is a most crucial one for my understanding of the story. It will be my
> contention that Ruth and Naomi and the storyteller are carefully distinguishing
> between requests for marriage and redemption, and yet are deliberately
> associating them here in order to both maintain suspense and keep us from
> guessing how the story will turn out.[51]

The request for Boaz to fulfill two different but related roles has been acknowledged by

several scholars—i.e., Campbell, Nielsen, Hubbard, Green. Naomi has indicated to Ruth in 2:20

that Boaz is a גאל ("redeeming one"). The legal material in the Hebrew Bible referring to this

role to act the redeemer does not assume a marriage (Leviticus 25:24–34, 47–55; Jeremiah

32:7ff; 1 Kings 21:3; Deuteronomy 19:6, 12; Numbers 35:19ff; Joshua 20:3ff; Isaiah 43:1; Job

19:26). In fact, the role indicates that the one redeeming will purchase back property or persons

connected to what has been forfeited or sold. Nielsen observes that the "redeemer does not

appear to be duty bound to marry a childless widow unless he is at the same time the woman's

brother-in-law."[52]

Embry illustrates through the example of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27:1–11,

that along with the kinsmen redeemer and levir customs, the redemption of property is a key

concern. The perpetuated memory of the deceased is often what is in purview. In addition,

Embry's study highlights another example that is solely focused upon the inheritance of

property, since the interaction at the city gate in *Ruth* 4 involves a concern with inheritance of

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[51] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 28, n. 1.
[52] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 75.

property. Ruth and Naomi's plight is similar to Zelophehad's daughters. Both examples are women without an inheritance. For Ruth and Naomi, property redemption is included in the transaction at the city-gate.[53]

As witnessed in Genesis 38, the role to redeem was given to the brothers of the deceased individual. What is unusual with Boaz is that he is a relative but not one of the brothers. In fact, his reply indicates that he is not the first one in line to act in this role. Naomi must have been aware of this as is evident in 2:20 when Naomi mentions that Boaz is "one of our redeemers." The plan takes an even more interesting display of irony when one realizes that Boaz was chosen by these women as the one that *they* desired to act in the role of redeemer. Sending Ruth at night, secretly, indicates that they only wanted Boaz to know of their request.

Ruth now diverts from the plan concocted by Naomi and requests not only redemption but also marriage as she also requests for Boaz to spread his garment over her nakedness as with the betrothal imagery. In the following chapter, Boaz will marry Ruth, and it will become clear that he fulfills both requests after his initial hunt for the closer גאל. The intriguing aspect to this marriage is the query as to whether this *particular* marriage to Ruth would fall under the category of an actual levirate marriage (Deuteronomy 25:5–10). What perplexes scholars is the nature of Boaz's relationship with Naomi, perhaps as one being too far removed from the normative brother-in-law role. The levirate marriage will be further discussed in Chapter 9. What is pertinent to the discussion, here, is that through dialogue, Ruth has dialogized the words of Naomi and altered them into something new for herself and for Boaz. Boaz remains open to her words, and together they begin to reinterpret the Torah in their motif of encounter and, ultimately, rewrite their entire future.

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[53] Brad Embry, "Legalities in the Book of Ruth: A Renewed Look," *JSOT* 41, no. 1 (2016): 31–44.

8.8 Foreign Women in the Canonical Dialogue of Identity

Ruth 3 brings a host of interesting women into the symphony of canonical dialogue. The canonical answerability of this chorus subverts any notion to pin the character of Ruth simplistically. This next section takes its cue from Barbara Green's dissertation chapter, "Investigation of Motifs of the Story of Ruth in Relation To Its Own Canon."[54] In this chapter, Green takes time to recognize the "pattern of foreign women."[55] Canonical connections with Tamar, Hagar, and Rahab have revealed a profound interest on the part of the text artisans to continually remind the reader of the significance of these women, and have been noticed by various scholars.

I contend that Lot's daughters (Genesis 19) can also be inserted into this list, especially in connection to Green's motif. Green finds within these women the "motif assemblage of the alien woman who brings life to her people."[56] Although my addition of Lot's daughters may be looked at through a very negative lens, it is critical to remember that these women brought life into their world, with the tribes of the Ammonites and the Moabites. From the Moabite tribe would come the person of Ruth and ultimately King David.

Green writes that the pattern of foreign woman is similar to the exodus pattern.[57] The exodus pattern contains these following key features:

1. Going out of one's home (sent or taken out)
2. The Lord responds to the afflictions of his people

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[54] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 158–226.
[55] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, iii, 202.
[56] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 202.
[57] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism,* 202.

3. The liberation of his people which also include: hasty departure, the despoliation of the captures by the enslaved, pursuit, gifts in the desert, and instruction.[58]

The pattern of foreign women includes these similar elements to the exodus motif pattern as noted above:

1. The woman is identified as alien or foreign
2. She is betrothed
3. There is some sort of breach in the marriage (infidelity on her part or another's part)
4. The woman is addressed or instructed in some way
5. After the words addressed, the bond between the woman or man is re-established… and she then becomes (once again) the source of life to her people [59]

Green illustrates the foreign woman with the stories of Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21), Rachel (Genesis 29), Gomer (Hosea 1–2), Tamar (Genesis 38) and the woman "Jerusalem" in Ezekiel (16).[60] She qualifies some of the list by mentioning the women who are not foreign. Their status as insiders is compromised because Gomer is a harlot and Rachel is considered foreign to Canaan. What I find interesting is that *foreign*, in this explanation by Green, connects these women as being *other*. Another figure interesting to juxtapose alongside these foreign women, especially in connection to the exodus motif and in particular with the women's life-giving attributes, is the woman Zipporah. Zipporah not only enacts a covenant-type circumcision of her son; she also intervenes between the angry YHWH and her husband, which results in the salvific act for Moses.

Venter and Minnaar make the intertextual exegetical connection between *Ruth* 3:7 and Exodus 4:25.[61] They make the connection by linking Ruth and Zipporah with covenant actions, and the word, רגל ("foot"), in *Ruth* is interpreted in light of Exodus 4:25. Although Venter and

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[58] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism,* 196–198.
[59] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism,* 202–203.
[60] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 203.
[61] Venter, Philip & Minnaar, Wynand, "Rut Wat Boas se 'voete' Oopgemaak en by HoG gaan lê het: Die Betekenis van Hierdie Simboliese Aksie in Rut 3:7 in die lig van Eksodus 4:25," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 34, no. 1 (2013): Art. #757, 4 pages.

Minnaar take the idea of a covenant relationship as the foundation for this interpretation farther than the text would ever deem necessary, the connection of these two foreign women is worth noting. Both women take the initiative, which leads to the survival of important families in the story of Israel. Zipporah functions as another foreign woman who has risked much to save a people not her own. When considering the exodus motif and the pattern of foreign women as Barbara Green has outlined, Zipporah functions as a subversive model alongside Ruth. There is a continual resistance to attempts of ethnic homogeneity due to repetitive border crossings of identity through these foundational narratives. The story is recurrently subverted with stories of foreign women who become central and life-giving risk takers and creative agents.

8.9 Conclusion

The observations from this chapter reveal that in canonical dialogue with the law, prophets, and critical narratives of identity for Israel, Ruth subverts and creates a new future for herself and Naomi. Her risky display of חסד continues to reveal a pattern similar to the "pattern of foreign" women who take risks and become the "source of life" for the "other" (Tamar, Rahab, Zipporah).[62] Ruth's requests on the threshing floor at midnight display a dialogue of subversion and prowess as she charts a divergent path for herself and Naomi. Creating a fuller, more complex image of YHWH and the people of Israel, Green summarizes:

> The patterns of the exodus and foreign woman converge in the symbol of the land: redeemed, re-entered, restored, renewed, restored. Such land is fertile and fruitful, source of life for its people. Both the exodus pattern and the journey of the alien woman pattern are necessary for the fullness of the Lord's relationship with his people to be seen.[63]

Ruth becomes an authoritative figure in the narrative of Israel's identity and relationship with

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[62] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 202–203.
[63] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 209.

YHWH.

This chapter continues to lay the foundation of *Ruth* as an alternative voice of non–violence to Judges 19–21, a violent story encompassing a similar progenitive crisis. A detailed analysis of *Ruth* 2 and 3 highlighted Ruth's agency within this story. Her agency was illustrated through a focus on Ruth's identity through intertextual utterance—i.e., the idiomatic use of "speak to the heart." This chapter returned to the important conversation of foreign identity and more specifically, Moabite identity. This survey's aim was to support the theory that *Ruth* is a polyphonic voice of answerability within the canon, highlighted through a detailed discussion of *Ruth* 2 and Genesis 19. The double request of Boaz in *Ruth* 3 on the threshing floor is of particular significance, being a unique request within the Hebrew Bible. This specific chronotope of encounter sets her apart, highlighting Ruth's independent agency from Naomi. Ruth's actions and her request to Boaz in *Ruth* 3 highlights her role as a woman of risk and agency, working within intragroup dynamics, altering her destiny, and the destiny of her mother in law.

Chapter 9 continues to discuss Ruth's utterances in the canon as a voice of protest, renewal, and subversion in the final chapter of *Ruth* through an analysis of the terms אשה המת ("wife of the dead"), inheritance, חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"), and the unique us of genealogy with the marker of תולדות ("generations"). Ironically, Ruth is silent in this final chapter.

The following chapter explores in detail how the women of Bethlehem are a microcosm of answerability for the woman Moabite, Ruth. These findings will culminate in chapter 10 where the final case–study will demonstrate how *Ruth* illustrates a voice of canonical answerability to Judges 19–21.

CHAPTER 9: PROGENTITIVE PROBLEMS IN RUTH 4

This chapter explores in detail how the women of Bethlehem are a microcosm of intratextual answerability for the woman Moabite, Ruth.[1] In *Ruth* 4, the character Ruth is silent. There are strange ambiguities still unresolved in this chapter. The women of Bethlehem remind Naomi of Ruth's love, her faithfulness, and how she has exemplified חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") towards her mother-in-law.

Through a close analysis of the ambiguities of identity and dialogic encounters (אשה המת "wife of the dead," inheritance, genealogy), this chapter will reconsider through previous research, how *Ruth* reveals a formidable force within the canon, in conversation with the Law and Prophets. Ruth extends the dialogue of identity witnessed throughout the Hebrew Bible, creating a pathway forward with a vision that integrates the initial Abrahamic covenant of Israel as a blessing to the nations (Genesis 22:18). Other visions are often represented throughout the Hebrew Bible, visions akin to Judges 19–21, wherein violence becomes the formidable force, resulting in devastation, horrific violence, and alienation.

Although silent in speech in *Ruth* 4, Ruth as a woman embodies life giving attributes for Israel, in canonical dialogue with חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"). Presenting a similar crisis, a threatened lineage, Ruth's display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") is another facet invited into canonical dialogue with חרם ("the ban") in Judges 19-21. Ruth's creative agency will not only speak for the dead; it will resurrect the name of the dead. *Ruth*, as a text, will reveal a powerful intertextual voice of protest and resistance through

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[1] I have used the term, *intratextual*, rather than *intertextual* because this is specifically an implicit example.

identity, and the women of Bethlehem reveal an implicit, intratextual example of answerability for Ruth as a woman.

9.0 Progenitive Problems Answered by Purchased Possessions

Ruth has navigated a new path forward through law and narrative in chapter 3. Her subversive and bold request of Boaz on the threshing floor has begun the process of charting a potential future for her and her mother in law, creating a way to retain the memory for the deceased. Her identity will embrace an even more ambiguous role in this final chapter as her voice will cease to speak in the dialogue. This is Ruth's silent chapter. Her voice diminishes but the voices of others begin to rise in praise and adoration for this Moabite woman. Her identity will continue to play a noteworthy part as she will marry into an Israelite family once again, thus centralizing her role as part of a genealogy that canonically dialogues in Israel's process of becoming.

There is nothing final about ending a story with a baby. This strange addendum genealogy harkens an intriguing canonical answerability to the story of Israel, the story of the foreigner, and the story of those who have died at the end of Judges. The progeny of this blended family continues the ironic intertextual dialogue of death and kidnapping witnessed in in Judges 19–21. The story of *Ruth*, a foreigner, culminated with a canticle by the women of Bethlehem.

At the close of Judges, no woman has spoken, much less offered a word of praise. At the close of *Ruth*, a chorus of women honors the Moabite, Ruth. This next chapter will look at the chronotopes of encounter in public and private spaces, the continued dialogue of identity for Ruth in chapter 4, and the chronotope of canonical answerability with law and narrative as Ruth continues to be a voice of subversion and protest, even in her silent utterance.

9.1 Chronotope of Encounter: The City Gate

The dialogue of redemption is a unique canonical conversation in *Ruth* 3. Ruth requested redemption from Boaz, as a kinsman redeemer, just as Naomi had instructed. With a unique twist in the dialogue, Ruth also requests marriage as she inquires of Boaz to spread his garment over her nakedness. This betrothal imagery highlights Ruth's boldness in speech and action in negotiating a future for herself and her mother-in-law. Boaz agrees and informs Ruth that there is a גאל ("redeeming one") who has priority over him, according to the Law.

The private evening encounter in *Ruth* 3 on the threshing floor will now subside for public encounters at the city gate during the day, encounters between the elders and the unnamed potential redeemer. Dialogism functions in this chapter as a mode of encounter, compromise, rejection, and acceptance. The literary motifs of meeting/parting, loss/acquisition, search/discover, recognition and non-recognition, come to a dialogic encounter in this final chapter.[2] This chronotope of encounter will highlight the way each participates in the dialogic encounter that will shape a new future and result in a new becoming in this cultural encounter at the city gate in Bethlehem.

9.1.1 *Boaz, the Elders and the Kinsman-Redeemer*

The dialogic encounter between men in public spaces becomes the chronotope of threshold in the apex of this story. The dilemma in the first chapter will be resolved in the ensuing events and discussion. Issues of law and narrative lurk in the shadows, questions for the reader remain unanswered. Boaz has a commanding presence in this scene as he instructs and guides the dialogue and action, and everyone obliges without hesitation. The request of Ruth on

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[2] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 96.

the threshing floor threads throughout the dialogue as Boaz creates the opportunity of

redemption in this public sphere.

> 4:1 Then Boaz went up to the gate and he there and Behold! The redeeming one whom Boaz had spoken of was passing by. So he said, "Turn aside, sit here, 'So and So.'" And he turned and he sat.

> 4:2 Then he took ten men from the elders of the town, and he said, "Sit here" and they sat.

> 4:3 Then he said to the redeeming one, "Naomi, the one who returned from the land of Moab, has to sell a portion of the land which belonged to our brother Elimelech."

> 4:4 And I said, 'I will uncover your ear saying: "Buy (it) in front of the ones sitting here and in front of elders of my people. If you will redeem, redeem! And if you will not redeem, declare to me so I will know, for there is no one to redeem except you, and I am after you."' Then he said, "I will redeem."

The combination of ancient customs, law and narrative form a dialogic encounter. The

city gate was the place where transactions took place, including legal counsel.[3] Deuteronomy

25:5-10 describes the transaction of encounter of the Levirate marriage was to take place. In this

Deuteronomic passage, the directions are made clear:

> When brothers live together and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the deceased shall not be married outside the family to a strange man. Her husband's brother shall go in to her and take her to himself as wife and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. It shall be that the firstborn whom she bears shall assume the name of his dead brother, so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel. But if the man does not desire to take his brother's wife, then his brother's wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, "My husband's brother refuses to establish a name for his brother in Israel; he is not willing to perform the duty of a husband's brother to me." Then the elders of his city shall summon him and speak to him. And if he persists and says, "I do not desire to take her," then his brother's wife shall come to him in the sight of the elders, and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face; and she shall declare, "Thus it is done to the man who does not build up his brother's house." In Israel his name shall be called, "The house of him whose sandal is removed."[4]

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[3] For a list of examples, see A.E. Cundall and L. Morris, "Ruth" in *Judges and Ruth* (London, England: Tyndale, 1968), 297.

[4] NAS

Block shows that there is "nothing in the prescription concerning the levitate marriage in Deuteronomy 25:5–10 that obligated Boaz or the *gō'ēl* to marry Ruth and establish the name of Elimelech or Mahlon."[5] The process to marry, bear a child, and therefore perpetuate the name of the deceased was the duty of the surviving brother as indicated in the Deuteronomic passage above. In this passage, if refused, the widow has the right to publicly humiliate the brother by proclaiming his refusal before the elders at the city gate. The elders were instructed in verse 8 to attempt to coerce him. If he still refused, the final act of humiliation would be to remove his sandal and spit in his face with a curse pronounced.

Interesting similarities and dissimilarities arise with Ruth and Boaz. Boaz is not a brother but a relative, which means that he is part of the family and therefore, as Naomi rightly asserted, is *one* of their kinsman redeemers. Boaz begins the process at the city gate but will begin to shift the dialogue towards marriage after the redeemer declares he redeem the property.

Unique interplay surfaces with Mosaic law and narrative in the voice of canonical dialogue which connects the levirate marriage opportunity with Ruth and Boaz. The אשה המת ("wife of the dead") appears in only two places in the Hebrew Bible: Deuteronomy 25:5 and *Ruth* 4:5. This highlights the canonical dialogue with the levirate duties and the interplay from law to narrative in *Ruth*. The situation between Boaz and Ruth may not have fit this one Deuteronomic description, but it is clear that Boaz was attempting to step into that role in order display חסד ("loving-kindness," "covenant-faithfulness") to the family. The example of Tamar and Judah (Gen. 38) is often utilized to highlight the levirate duty. If Tamar was to have seduced the proper person, it should have been the living brother and not Judah, her father-in-law. As evidenced in the other levirate marriage examples, what the Deuteronomic instructions called for

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[5] Block, *Judges, Ruth,* 715.

and what is actually lived out in the narratives is often a creative reinterpretation and application of the law.

As the dialogue plays out, the unnamed redeemer, "a certain one-someone" (*Ruth* 4:1), could be a wordplay, similar to "Mr. So and So." It has been noted the strangeness of an individual without a name in a legal proceeding such as the one Boaz calls to order. Among the discussion of this unnamed characters' identity, Hubbard makes an interesting assessment from a literary point of view. "Perhaps the spotlight cast on the man's namelessness implied judgment: the one who refused to raise a name over the inheritance of the deceased kin (vv. 5, 10) deserves no name in the story."[6] This redeemer is only made aware, at first, of the property that is for sale.

The irony of private and public requests will pique the readers' interest. Why did Ruth approach Boaz in the cover of darkness? The concealing in chapter 3 indicates that there must have been other concerns not voiced by Naomi prior to the threshing floor encounter. These gaps reveal the silent utterances in the text. Not until Boaz mentions the other redeemer does the reader begin to understand that Naomi's plan was specifically targeted at the hopes of redemption by Boaz. Naomi desires Boaz to be the גאל ("redeeming one") for their family. Boaz's reply to Ruth on the threshing floor leaves the reader in suspense.
Boaz's response to Ruth indicates that he is not the first in line of potential redeeming ones. He will proceed to the city gate to speak to the elders and the unnamed redeemer. The dialogue of the due process of law and the possibility of a new outcome posit this dialogic encounter as open. For Bakhtin, this is unfinalizability.

The dialogic encounter was not finalized until Boaz revealed the entire breadth of purchase: land and widow. The unnamed redeemer was eager to purchase Naomi's property. One

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[6] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 235.

wonders how vulnerable Naomi's situation must have been. The חסד Boaz showed in the field

towards Ruth created an opening of hope for the women, yet the conversation was a private one.

Ironically, the purchase of family land by another would have left the widows destitute

and without hope if there was not a levirate marriage included in the transaction. With a new

marriage would come a new hope. Without Ruth, there was no hope for an heir for Naomi. This

hopeless state was identified early on in chapter 1 as Naomi proclaimed her bitterness and

emptiness in her return to Bethlehem.

Boaz presents part of the situation but retains one more bit of information to create a

loophole in the offer.

> 4:5 Then Boaz said, "On the day you buy the field from the hand of Naomi, with it you
> must buy Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise the name of the dead upon his
> inheritance."
>
> 4:6 Then the one redeeming said, "No, I am not able to redeem, lest I ruin my own
> inheritance. Redeem for yourself my redemption, because I am not able to redeem it."

In verse 5, Boaz introduces something abrupt into the transaction which will make "Mr.

So and So" back pedal on his initial utterance to purchase the land of Naomi. Sasson describes

this scene as Boaz's "trump card."[7] One of the literary issues raised in this verse is whether one

should attest to the *ketib* reading, "I buy," or the *qere*, "you buy." The rendering has implications

to how Boaz executes his plan. With the *ketib* reading, Boaz jockeys for position. After the

unnamed redeemer purchases the field, Boaz will have purchased the "wife of the dead" in order

to "raise the name of the dead" (*Ruth* 4:5). If read with the *qere*, it would render "On the day you

purchase the field . . . you would purchase the wife of the dead . . . to raise the name of the dead"

(*Ruth* 4:5). Hubbard takes the rendering *qere* reading while Nielsen argues for the *ketib*.

The different possible readings and possible implications are summarized well by Holmstedt:

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[7] Sasson, *Ruth,* 119.

The *Ketiv* is clearly 1 cs *qatal* with modal sematics "I shall acquire" or past in the future semantics "I will have acquired," but the *Qere* may be taken in three ways: 1) as a 2ms form with the final /a/ vowel written with a *mater lectionis* ה "you shall acquire"; 2) as a 2ms with a 3fs suffix "you shall acquire her"' or 3) as a 1cs form (written without the final י) with a a 3fs suffix "I will acquire her." Even if the *Qere* is taken to have the 3fs suffix, which would provide a syntactic complement to XXX, it remains unclear what the anaphoric pronominal suffix points back to . . . Is it Ruth that will be acquired with the property or is it the אשה המת, which could describe Ruth but more likely describes No'omi?[8]

Is the אשה המת ("wife of the dead") a reference to Ruth or Naomi? To understand the plight of the widow in relation to land, and to possibly identify to whom this unique phrase corresponds, this next section will show how אלמנה ("widow"), אשה אלמנה ("widow woman"), and אשה המת ("wife of the dead") function in canonical dialogue for a woman who has lost her husband, in order to highlight the unique use of אשה המת ("wife of the dead") in *Ruth* 4:5.

9.1.2 *Wife of the Dead*

One of the twists in the story is the abrupt introduction of Naomi's land. Pressler comments on this as a sudden change for the audience by remarking that, "The storyteller has portrayed Naomi and Ruth as paupers, forced to survive by gleaning. Now, the audience learns that Naomi has rights to a field. How can this be?"[9] Understanding the types of widows mentioned in the Hebrew Bible may help to reveal a possibility of Naomi's claim to property. For the ancient audience, this may not have been a strange and unusual turn in the story. The lack of identification for Naomi as a widow—this gap of Naomi's identity—may have been an intentional ploy for the movement of the story.

In this dialogic משל of *Ruth*, the audience would be asking the entire story, "What type of widow is Naomi? Is she a אלמנה ("widow"), אשה אלמנה ("widow woman"), or, similar to Ruth

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[8] Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 191.
[9] Pressler, *Joshua, Judges, Ruth*, 298.

(*Ruth* 4:5), a אשה המת ("wife of the dead")?" Three of the main descriptors for widow in the Hebrew Bible are: אלמנה ("widow") אשה אלמנה("widow woman"), and אשה המת ("wife of the dead"). In Genesis 38:11, Tamar is the first woman described as a "widow" in the narrated course of events in this foundational story. To care for the widow was a serious matter as witnessed in Job 22:9, when one of the indictments Eliphaz points out to Job as a cause of Job's misery is that he did not care for the widows (אלמנה, Job 22:9).[10]

Ruth (although who this is referring to is a bit unclear, perhaps Naomi?) is the only woman described as אשה המת ("wife of the dead"). This is interesting because this specific identity marker is used in only one other place, the levirate marriage instructions (Deuteronomy 25:5). This phrase indicates that the identity of the woman is still connected to the deceased.

Naomi Steinberg challenges the previous work on the plight of the widow, which tended to create a "romantic universalizing depiction of the widow's circumstance based on sympathy."[11] Instead, Steinberg shows the difficult economic realities and teases out three different identity markers for the widow (אלמנה; אשה אלמנה; אשה המת) and how each identifier is connected to a unique hardship. The importance to provide financial care for widows in ancient Israel as an ethical and community obligation is actually minimal and found only in Deuteronomy (14:29; 24:17, 19. 20–21; and 26:12–13).[12]

With this in mind, Steinberg searches for where each term diverges form the other to be able to grasp if there was a particular economic disadvantage or advantage with each term in the biblical text. Steinberg has summarized her findings in the following ways:

1. *'almānâ*-a widow with limited economic support,

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[10] Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon,* 556.
[11] Naomi Steinberg, "Romancing the Widow: Economic Distinctions Between the 'ALMANA, the 'ISSA-'ALMANA and the 'ESSET-HAMMET," *God's Word for Our World,* eds. Harold Ellens, Deborah Ellens, Rolf Knierim and Isaac Kalimi. JSOT Supplememt Series 388 (London, England: T&T Clark, 2004), 327.
[12] Steinberg, "Romancing the Widow," 329.

2. *’iššâ-’almānâ* –an inherited widow with sons,
3. *’ēšet-hammēt* –an inherited widow without sons.[13]

In dialogue with Steinberg, EunHee Kang takes the questions of Ruth's identity a step further. Kang inquires as to whether Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz as a אלמנה ("widow") or as אשה המת ("wife of the dead") and views these terms as more interconnected than what is portrayed in Steinberg's analysis. Kang points out that אשה המת ("wife of the dead") "seems to designate a position in suspension rather than a permanent title."[14] In dialogue with the one other use in Deuteronomy of אשה המת ("wife of the dead"), Kang's assertion of a position in suspension is correct. The identity is located in liminal space in the plight of the widow and will alter once a levirate marriage takes place. It is possible that this position in suspension could remain permanent; if the family member refuses to accept the role as a kinsman redeemer. This could be one of the contributing factors behind Tamar and Ruth's bold actions with the men in key power positions. Because there was still a potential living brother for Tamar to marry, Judah was still technically responsible to care for her, even though he sent her home to her family.

In Ruth's case, she is free to decide, as indicated by Naomi's encouragement for her to return to her family in Moab.[15] With this idea of the widow's status in suspension, the term, אשה המת ("wife of the dead") most likely refers to Ruth. Naomi's status as a widow does not reflect the possibility of marrying and having an heir of her own, unless through her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Another interesting difficulty that may complicate a possible levirate marriage was Ruth's status as a foreigner. Family members may not have been as eager to accept the levirate role, especially in the case of Ruth.

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[13] Steinberg, "Romancing the Widow," 334.

[14] EunHee Kang, *Sojourner, Fatherless, Widow*, 85.

[15] Sasson writes that in the case of Ruth and Orpah, they would be "urged" to "return to her own parents' home." In the case of Tamar and Judah, it has been suggested that once the unknowing duty had been performed, "he ceased to have any sexual relations with her." See Sasson, *Ruth,* 132–133.

Kang shows a wider breadth to the term, אלמנה ("widow") than Steinberg indicates with a limited connection to the economic plight. With Proverbs 15:25 in purview (the lord protecting the widow's boundary), Kang reveals a broader "semantic possibility" with the term, אלמנה ("widow"), as potentially "a widow with property and a widow with a fatherless child and property."[16] Along these lines, even if a child remains alive, Kang points out that if the child dies before the widow (as with Naomi), the widow will return to a vulnerable place once again. Childlessness can happen because of infertility or death, and this creates another difficult situation for the widow at any time after the death of the husband. What is so interesting in Ruth is that the husband and sons all die in the beginning of the story, setting up a climacteric progenitive problem, similar to what the reader witnessed at the end of Judges (Judges 20-21).

Boaz lets the nameless redeemer know about the field that is to be sold. The unnamed גאל ("redeeming one") immediately says he will redeem the property. His initial, "Yes," immediately changes once he learns about Ruth. Boaz withheld this information as part of a loophole he created for himself in speech. The redeemer, once he learns about the possibility of an heir, realizes that this field will not become permanently his with the possibility of an heir to carry on Elimelech's name. The obvious plight of the women, with no heirs, is advantageous for the estate of the unnamed redeemer.

Ambiguity may play an intentional role in this identification as well. Gaps and ambiguity, loopholes and double-voiced discourse have pervaded the story and a possible verbal "covering" of identity may be at play. Holmstedt highlights this as he writes, "The ambiguity of the phrase אשה המת is intentional and, while it could (and later does) describe Ruth, it could also (and is likely taken as such by the nearer redeemer) describe No'omi. Boaz' stated intention to produce

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[16] Kang, *Sojourner, Fatherless, Widow,* 86.

an heir for Elimelech is a bluff crafted to produce exactly what happens, a change of mind by the

nearer redeemer, conceding the right of redemption to Boaz . . . Boaz intertwines two distinct

Israelite customs, the redeemer and the levir."[17]

9.1.3 *The Sandal*

The legal exchange demonstrated by the sandal removal adds a historical element to the

story.

> 4:7 Now this was formerly the custom in Israel, to confirm all the words upon redemption and exchange, a man drew off his sandal and gave it to his companion, and this was the testimony in Israel.

> 4:8 And the redeeming one said to Boaz, "Buy it for yourself!" And he drew off his sandal.

> 4:9 Then Boaz said to all the elders and the all people, "You are witnesses this day because I have bought all which belonged to Elimelech, and all that belonged to Khilyon and Mahlon, from the hand of Naomi.

> 4:10 And also Ruth the Moabite, wife of Mahlon, I have bought for myself for a wife, to raise the name of the dead upon his inheritance , so the name of the dead will not be cut off from among his brothers, and from the gate of his place. You are witnesses today."

Hubbard does not see a connection between the sandal removal in *Ruth* 4:7 and

Deuteronomy 25:9 because the "texts treat different cases" and are therefore "not directly

related."[18] He continues to show the symbolic use of feet and shoes/sandals throughout the

Hebrew Bible, often symbolizing "power, possession, and domination" (Joshua 10:24; Exodus

3:5; 2 Samuel 15:30; Ezekiel 24:17, 23).[19] The removal of a shoe in a legal real-estate transfer of

ownership is evidenced in Nuzi texts and provides a corresponding analogy with *Ruth* 4:7.[20]

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[17] Holmstedt, *Ruth*, 192.
[18] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 250.
[19] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 251.
[20] Ernest R. Lacheman, "Note on Ruth 4:7–8," *JBL 56* (1937): 53–54.

Hubbard may dismiss the Deuteronomic connection too quickly. Perhaps the example in *Ruth* does indeed employ the Deuteronomic passage evidenced with the intertexual connections of the levirate marriage law, the use of אשה המת ("wife of the dead"), and the transaction and transfer of property to perpetuate the name of the deceased. There are too many similarities in these passages to dismiss the canonical intertextual intentionality. In an oral culture, the Deuteronomic passage may not have listed all the potential symbolic sandal customs that were enacted in everyday life at the city gate.

In light of the Deuteronomic passage of a levirate redeemer refusing to accept the role, one wonders if the explanation was to ensure that the readers would understand that there was no shame involved in the refusal. This particular refusal in *Ruth* signified that the unnamed family would have no claim on the genealogy that would come forth, one that resulted in kingship.

Linafelt writes that this sandal ceremony adds "historical color."[21] Koosed comments that if much of the legal culture was indeed an oral culture, it is possible to see a more flexible interpretation of certain legal codes. The explanation of this "sandal removal" aspect of a transaction as a binding custom of the past reveals the changing relationship between law and cultural practice. Koosed highlights this aspect by commenting that "not only do we have no idea what law and custom structured relationship in Iron Age Bethlehem—neither does the author of Ruth."[22]

This study reveals that in the case of Naomi, she was a widow with land to be redeemed through a levirate marriage. Ruth's status as a Moabite creates an interesting part of the dialogue, in that the text artisan continually reminds the reader through Boaz that once the land was to be purchased, so too was this Moabite woman was to be redeemed. As illustrated above in

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[21] Linafelt, *Ruth,* 109–110.
[22] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 108.

Deuteronomy 25:5-10, the redeemer was not obligated to redeem. He could refuse, though he would suffer public disgrace by the actions of the widow. The case of Ruth is unique in that her identity as אשה המת ("wife of the dead") revealed that she was still connected to her dead husband. She is a widow and a wife. This identity marker, along with its use in Deuteronomy 25:5, creates a levirate canonical dialogue that projects the story of redemption possibilities.

Accompanied by the canonical dialogue with Perez later in the genealogy (*Ruth* 4:18–22), this levirate marriage with a foreign woman, who is also praised in an Israelite family, reveals a new path forward through intertextual dialogue. This newly chartered territory in the genealogy represents a theological and political voice for Ruth and the Moabite people. This reunification (not integration) and return may indicate that the use of שוב ("return") is threaded through this story as another birth story of becoming. This becoming is a voice of canonical answerability through שוב ('return') and חסד ("loving kindness"). There is more than one birth in this story.

9.2 Canonical Answerability for the Silent

Ruth is silent in Chapter 4. The forceful oath formulaic dialogue uttered by Ruth in the first chapter has subsided into silence in voice, but not in actions. Her commitment to her mother-in-law has not wavered. Ruth has embodied חסד throughout the story. Her loyal love reveals a faithful commitment to her family that will result in perpetual memory. This Moabite woman's identity continues to shift in this final chapter in canonical dialogue with Deuteronomy and the patriarchal narratives as she is described as a Moabite (*Ruth* 1:4, 22; 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10), wife of the dead (*Ruth* 4:5), and better than seven sons (*Ruth* 4:15). The chronotope of the genealogy will become a Janus text in canonical dialogue, pointing to the past and the future,

becoming a voice of canonical answerability that births a new path forward between law and narrative. The praise and dialogue of genealogy will reveal how Ruth remains "other" in her שׁוּב ("return," 4:3; 4:15).

> 4:11 Then all the people who were by the gate and the elders said, "We are witnesses! May YHWH give the woman coming into your house be like Rachel and like Leah, the two of whom built the house of Israel. And may you be fruitful in Ephratah and your name be great in Bethlehem."
>
> 4:12 Ans may your house be like the house of Perez, whom was born of Tamar to Judah, from the seed which YHWH gave from this young woman."
>
> 4:13 So Boaz took Ruth and she became for his wife and he came into her and YHWH gave to her a pregnancy and she bore a son.
>
> 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is YHWH who did not remove from you a redeeming one this day and his name be famous in Israel!"
>
> 4:15 May he be to you a restorer of life and support for you in old age because your daughter-in-law, who loves you, she has given birth to him. She is better for you than seven sons."

9.3 Ruth's Loophole of Identity

Ruth's identity has been an important focus for much of the scholarly discussion surrounding this story. The focus on either resistance or assimilation has been the dichotomized debate surrounding the identity of Ruth. The text is clear that she is a Moabite (*Ruth* 1:4, 22; 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10). Her ethnic identity is threaded throughout the text. Along with her ethnicity, there are interesting identity shifts highlighted in dialogue in reference to her status as a woman.

With an eye to the identity shifts and Bakhtin's definition of "other" in dialogue, Ruth's identity takes on a more complex nuance. In some recent translations of Bakhtin's writings, the explanation of his use of "other" reflects the complex dialogic relationship that this section will draw out with Ruth. "Bakhtin's coinage of 'otherness' (*drugost'*) in these essays suggests the friendly boundaries of another person, rather than the orientalized 'other' of post-colonial

theory."[23] Bakhtin's translators have used the term, "alien," when translating *chuzhoi*. In this section, the sense of Ruth as "other" will be in line with this more positive sense "otherness." One of the shared etymological associations with this Russian translation of "other" (*drugoi)* is the word for "friend" (*drug*).[24]

This Bakhtinian sense of "other" as the one who returns to a place that she has never been opens up a canonical dialogue with movement, belonging, otherness, and ethnic borders. The term שוב creates a loophole in Ruth's identity, providing an evasive maneuver which resists finalization. The dichotomization of Ruth's complete assimilation or ultimate resistance to Israelite status is ultimately resisted by the double-voiced utterance of שוב. This return is double-voiced because of its intertextual nuances, which anticipates and resists a single-voiced sense of return. Ruth does not simply return and assimilate within the Israelite people. By charting the identity shifts throughout *Ruth*, with an eye on שוב ("to return"), שוב will reveal a complex canonical dialogue of identity that resists finalization.

The previous chapter (chapter 8) highlighted the canonical intertextual dialogue of *Ruth* 2, 3 and Genesis 19. The origins of Moab were the result of an incestuous relationship with Lot and his daughters. Lot was also Abraham's nephew. Abraham is one of the patriarchs of the Israelite beginnings. Nielsen views a potential healing between the tribes with the birth of Obed when she comments that, "When Lot's elder daughter gave birth to a son, Moab, a part of Israel was split into a foreign people; now the division is healed in the reunited family of David."[25] Nielsen's idea of reunification rather than assimilation is a helpful nuance with this idea of שוב throughout the משל. Grossman illuminates a key word pair throughout this story with שוב ("to

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[23] Bakhtin, "Dark and Radiant Bakhtin," 198.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 93.

return") and ישׁב ("to dwell, to sit"). It is interesting that there are fifteen occurrences of the verb שׁוב in thirteen verses (*Ruth* 1:6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 21, 22; 2:6; 4:3; 4:15).

 Grossman illustrates an inversion use of ישׁב (*Ruth* 1:4; 2:7, 14, 23; 3:18; 4:1, 2, 4) revealing a helpful literary insight:

> These two verbs are antithetical: ישׁב, dwelling, symbolizing passivity that stems from security and calm, while שׁוב suggests movement, dynamic activity, the search for the security of ישׁב. It is clear why ch. 1 is wrought with the verb שׁוב, which is but a distant, uncomfortable memory by chap. 4, where the verb ישׁב dominates the narrative –Ruth has finally achieved a stable secure home.[26]

This idea of stability coincides with Naomi's desire for both Orpah and Ruth to return to the houses of their mothers so that YHWH would grant them מנוחה ("rest") in *Ruth* 1:9.

Along with this idea of dwelling and rest, the return of this Moabite to Bethlehem creates a dialogue of Ruth's return as "other." Her Moabite status is mentioned several times throughout the narrative by the text artisan (1:22; 2:2; 2:21), the foreman (2:6), and Boaz (4:5, 10). Hubbard has taken the position of assimilation into the Israelite people. Once she has been termed אשה ("wife") this has "confirmed arrival to full status Israelite."[27] Conversely, the text does not appear to celebrate assimilation in this way, as Ruth is never called an Israelite. In fact, after her previous marriage to an Israelite, the text continually reminds us that this widow Ruth is a Moabite.

In the final chapter, Ruth is described as "wife of the dead" and will later be a wife of Boaz (*Ruth* 4:5). Her worth is elevated to the status of the famous women in Israel's history (Rachel, Leah, and Tamar) after the birth of Obed, and praised as better than seven sons. Her identity remains complex. Ruth has returned and continues to create a dialogue of identity that maintains a loophole, refusing to be assimilated, yet she is an integral part to Israel's future

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[26] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 63.
[27] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 258.

identity. Her foreignness and "otherness" add a distinct voice in the dialogue, as a rejoinder yet becoming something new, retaining a loophole in her identity.

This loophole as described in chapter 6 is the "the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning for one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole, this must inevitably be reflected in its structure."[28] This loophole is redirected in Ruth's voice and identity in this משל, revealing a double-voiced utterance, and a voice of subversion as Ruth creates a new path forward in this story. Through her identity, Ruth retains and yet alters what it means to be a Moabite woman, a widow, a wife, and a mother. The irony and subversive nature of this dialogic משל reveal that this story is much more complex and nuanced, and as Koosed has so rightly stated, is "strange."[29]

It is my contention that the subversive elements in this text are double-voiced and create loopholes for the identity of Ruth. Again, this text continually resists finalization and reveals a canonical complexity in which gender, subversion, and protest continually dismounts ideals and thwarts an attempt of a simplistic hegemonic reading. Ruth becomes a part of the resurrection of the family name, yet retains a loophole of her Moabite identity, which ironically, has been a part of the patriarchal lineage of Israel all along.

9.4 The Women of Bethlehem: A Voice of Answerability for Ruth and Naomi

Ruth and Naomi are silent in the entire last chapter. Boaz, the elders, the unnamed redeemer, and the women of Bethlehem are the ones who speak. One of the interesting inclusions involve the silence of Ruth at the end of chapter 1 and her silence in chapter 4. There

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[28] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 195.
[29] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth,* 14.

is notable silence in the שוב ("return") of Naomi and Ruth to Bethlehem in the first chapter. After the passionate dialogue in the first chapter, this silence creates dissonance for the reader.

In chapter 1:16–-17, Ruth utters one of the most passionate oaths in the entire Hebrew Bible, using the language of an oath formula, to her mother-in-law, Naomi. After this declaration of commitment, the women head to Bethlehem in silence. Upon arrival, the women of Bethlehem inquire of Naomi's identity. Without a verbal acknowledgment of Ruth, Naomi declares her life empty and bitter. The themes of empty and full are key motifs in the story. Here, Naomi declares her life empty, with Ruth at her side. This irony will come full circle by the conclusion of chapter 4.

> 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed is YHWH who did not remove from you a redeeming one this day and his name be famous in Israel!"
>
> 4:15 May he be to you a restorer of life and support for you in old age because your daughter-in-law, who loves you, she has given birth to him. She is better for you than seven sons."
>
> 4:16 Then Naomi took the child and she set him on her bosom and she became for him as a nurse.
>
> 4:17 Then the women neighbors pronounced to him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi!" And they called his name Obed, and he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Though Ruth has not uttered a word, the women of Bethlehem become voices of answerability in the silence. The women of Bethlehem reveal an implicit, intratextual example of answerability for Ruth.

Her actions have revealed חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") towards her mother-in-law throughout the entire story. This has been acknowledged by Boaz, and, in a chorus of praise, will be acknowledged by the women. These women speak to Naomi on behalf of Ruth, revealing that Ruth is better in her eyes than seven sons. Ilana Pardes comments on the irony, "Naomi, it seems, was 'full' from the very beginning (Ruth being at her side) without

realizing it."[30] Though Naomi can be portrayed in a negative light in this first chapter, Ruth's display of חסד has revealed that they most likely had a positive relationship. The mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship create a canonical dialogue of חסד that is unique in the Hebrew Bible.

9.5 The Canonical Dialogue of חסד in Ruth

In the very first speech Naomi utters, one of the most theologically and covenant-ally defining words is spoken: חסד. חסד embodies history, hope, relationship, faithfulness, and a future kindness that is impossible to define with words alone. חסד is the dialogic example of what words and becoming signify. This word is a sign that reveals, directs and becomes in relationship. חסד is lived through story. Individuals (Miriam, Job, Rahab) praise God for revealing חסד toward them (Exodus 15:13; Job 10:12). God's חסד is praised to be as great as the heavens (Psalm 57:11; 103:11). חסד is witnessed between people, such as Jonathan and David (1 Samuel 20:15), and Rahab towards the spies (Joshua 2:12,13).

In the story of *Ruth*, חסד is displayed in three key passages: between Naomi and her daughters-in-law (Ruth 1:8); YHWH to the family (Ruth 2:20); and from Ruth to Boaz (Ruth 3:10).[31] The word embodies preservation of life, covenant faithfulness, love of God for humanity, love of humanity towards one another, redemption from enemies, and even salvation (Isaiah 57:1; Genesis 39:21. Joshua 2:12,13). חסד is displayed through this story of loss, faithfulness in relationship, and in the risks taken on the threshing floor. Similar to the risks

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[30] Ilana Pardes, *Countertraditions in the Bible: A Feminist Approach* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 1992), 111.

[31] William Lee Holladay, Ludwig Köhler, Walter Baumgartner, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden, Holland: Brill, 1988), 111.

Rahab takes by hiding the spies, Ruth risks violence in the fields and on the threshing floor as she displays this risky חסד towards Naomi.[32]

9.6 Ruth Embodies חסד Towards Naomi

The fairy tale *Cinderella* provides a multicultural classic example of a woman in need, poor and provincial, having lost her parents and her means of security.[33] Cinderella's mother-in-law is abusive and cruel. Although the story of loss resonates in the *Ruth* text, the relationship with the mother-in-law diverges quite dramatically. Koosed points out that in most cases, in story and life, the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationships are strained because both are pining for the love of the mother-in-law's son.[34] Not only is Naomi and Ruth's relationship unique in this story, but throughout this "love story," Ruth has declared her allegiance and affection to only one person, and that is Naomi in 1:16–17.

In an interesting use of doubling, it is both Naomi and Ruth who get the "prince" in a sense. Although Boaz is normally depicted as the rescuer, the text artisan gives credit to YHWH for providing through Obed. And it is Obed who in the end will continue the family name and secure the family land. To continue the analogy, Cinderella is both Naomi and Ruth. Together, they have secured their future through Boaz and Obed, and ultimately, YHWH.

To explain the Naomi and Ruth relationship, many scholars have shown where Ruth maintains her individual sense of self as "other" throughout the story, even in chapter 4. For diverse interpretations of this relationship, the nature of connection has ranged from a

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[32] Risky חסד requires the hope for a positive outcome to be greater than the risk of violence.
[33] The Cinderella story is found in hundreds of versions and goes back as early as the ninth century in China with the story of "Yen Shen," dated in earliest edition somewhere between 618–907 CE. See introduction in Ai Ling Louie's *Yeh Shen: A Cinderella Story from China* (London, England: Paperstar, 1996).
[34] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth,* 105.

heterosexual, to a lesbian, and also to a bisexual reading on the relations between Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz. Koosed points out that in regard to many of the heterosexual and lesbian readings, one relationship is privileged over the other, either Boaz and Ruth or Naomi and Ruth. Celena M. Duncan, inspired by her own bisexual relationships, uses this lens to view a rereading of Ruth as a "bisexual midrash."[35] Koosed describes the helpful aspect of this reading in that one of the key relationships in the story is not privileged over the other.[36]

The unique attachment and ambiguous nature of this relationship of Naomi and Ruth (and Boaz), according to Koosed, has invited these diverse readings. Koosed brings an important insight in dialogue with Duncan's retelling of the Ruth story when she writes, "In fact, Ruth's only words of undying devotion are to Naomi (1:16–17), and the only person she is said to love is Naomi (4:15). In some ways, a romance between Ruth and Boaz is less supported in the text itself, more dependent on the imagination of the reader, than a romance between Ruth and Naomi."[37]

These creative re-readings do invite a fresh look at the relationship dynamic between Ruth and Naomi. The text is ambiguous in regard to any love or romance between Ruth and Boaz. The story does maintain a strong bond between the women, and a stronger argument can be made within the text references (daughter-in-law, daughter) to indicate a maternal relationship of Naomi to Ruth. It is clear that Ruth is completely devoted to Naomi as indicated in her covenant oath. This oath (*Ruth* 1:16–17) invokes the covenant name of YHWH and suggests that Ruth is privileging Naomi over herself in proclaiming this oath.

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[35] Celena M. Duncan, "The Book of Ruth: On Boundaries, Love, and Truth," in Robert E. Goss and Mona West, eds., *Take Back the Word: A Queer Reading of the Bible* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim's Press, 2000), 92–102.
[36] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth,* 55.
[37] Koosed, *Gleaning Ruth*, 55.

Zieglar compares the similarities with the deity invoked and the surrender of power with an analogous oath enacted between Jonathan and David in 1 Samuel 20:13. Ruth is choosing to forfeit her freedom to return home in order to be pledged to Naomi.[38] Jonathan forfeits his rightful role as king in order to give allegiance to David. From the study with oath in chapter 7, it is clear that these texts are in canonical dialogue. A sexual relationship is not evidenced within the text alone, and the nature of these relationships signifies a transfer of power, allegiance, and a purposeful decision of self-denial.

For Ruth, this sacrifice for service does not indicate a sense of weakness but of choice, similar to Jonathan. Fentress-Williams, viewing the story of *Ruth* through the lens of a dialogic comedy, makes the point that "a dialogic reading that takes other cultural constructs into account introduces the possibility that Ruth's behavior in chapters 1 and 2 is not an expression of individualism but one of service to the family."[39] This sense of self-sacrifice and responsibility, answerability to the other, provides another model that could be viewed as strength in service. As witnessed throughout the story, Ruth's strength continues to subvert and create within a system bound with legalities and customs.

9.6.1 *Genealogy (4:18–21)*

The genealogy at the close of *Ruth* marks a unique chronotope of threshold within the canon. This is considered the תולדות of Perez and functions in canonical dialogue with the story of Judah and Tamar. Sasson shows the literary placement of Boaz as seventh in the list and David in the tenth place on the list,[40] which highlights the text's canonical dialogue of the

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[38] Zieglar, *Promises to Keep*, 79.
[39] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 144.
[40] Sasson, *Ruth*, 184.

theological and political scope within Israel's identity. A genealogy at the close of a story is unique and serves multiple functions, depending on when the text is asserted to have been written. The dialogical nature of the genealogy communicates from the past and into the future. Bakhtin describes the powerful dialogic nature of the chronotope:

> A literary work's artistic unity in relationship to an actual reality is defined by its chronotope. Therefore, the chronotope in a work always contains within it an evaluating aspect that can be isolated from the whole artistic chronotope only in abstract analysis. In literature and art itself, temporal and spatial determinations are inseparable from one another, and always colored by emotions and values . . . but *living* artistic perception (which involves thought but not abstract thought) makes no such divisions . . . it seizes on the chronotope in all its wholeness and fullness. Art and literature are shot through with *chronotopic values* of varying degree and scope. Each motif, each separate aspect of artistic work bears value.[41]

The chronotopic values displayed in *Ruth's* genealogy reveal an intentional dialogue of evaluation within the canon. This genealogy reveals several motifs, as it dialogues with meetings/partings; loss/acquisition; recognition/non-recognition. The values inherent in this genealogy become apparent as one begins to wrestle with questions in the artistic gaps. Why list some and not others? *Ruth's* function as a dialogic משל reveals intentionality in choice as this genealogy provides an "organizing center"[42] for the purpose of the story, and at the same time will dialogue with Israel's history and points forward to Israel's future.

Genealogies serve an important function in the Hebrew Bible. Most genealogies are found in Genesis. What is unique with the משל of *Ruth* is that the genealogy is inserted at the end of the story. In Genesis, they come at the beginning of an episode.[43] *Ruth* 4:18 signals the genealogy with the marker of תולדות ("generations"). The root of תולדות is ילד and means, "to bear

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[41] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 243.
[42] Then chronotope provides "the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel." Bakhtin, *Diaglogic Imagination*, 250.
[43] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 281.

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children."[44] תולדות is found 39 times in the Hebrew Bible and is the signal marker that sets up each of the ten accounts of the generations found in Genesis. The structure of Genesis with this signal indicates the structure of the text and marks the significance of what follows the תולדות marker, which is the descendants. The תולדות signifier is listed several times in Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and Chronicles.[45]

Unique in the text of *Ruth* is that the תולדות marker is only used one time. Along with this unusual single use, the genealogy is found at the end of the story. Grossman views this section as an appendix, added on later and not in sync with the main storyline. LaCocque and McKeown view the intentionality of this genealogy as an inclusio, forming a natural bookend of the ten generations listed, paired with the ten years in Moab in Chapter 1.[46] Malamat provides examples from the Old Babylonian period, with analogous examples with Genesis and the use of a the "ten-generation" archetype with the West Semitic tribes' records.[47]

The question of loss and lack of an heir in the beginning is answered in the birth of an heir at the close of the story. Providing this genealogy for David, this record canonically dialogues with the תולדות of Genesis 5 and 11, revealing comparative elements with the Sumerian King List. Hamilton illustrates the influence of these West Semitic lists with Genesis 5 and 11, with comparable antediluvian and postdiluvian genealogies. Comparative elements with the Genesis תולדות, the King Lists, and *Ruth*, is the use of the ten-generation model.

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[44] Bruce Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 83.
[45] תולדות is found in Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1, 32; 11:10, 27; 25:12, 13, 19; 36:1, 9; 37:2; Exodus 6:16, 19; 28:10; Numbers 1:20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 36, 38, 40, 42; 3:1 and 1 Chronicles 1:29; 5:7; 7:2, 4, 9; 8:28; 9:9, 34; 26:31 and Ruth 4:18.
[46] McKewon, *Ruth*, 70.
[47] Abraham Malamat, "King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies," *JAOS* 88 (1968): 163–73.

In Genesis 1–11, the תולדות formula recalls the cosmic תולדות of heaven and earth.[48] The King Lists is interesting in that the beginning of the list states that "kingship was lowered from heaven."[49] The authority originating in the deity is an intentional part of the dialogue here in *Ruth* as well, revealing a genealogy to legitimatize the line of David. Nielsen highlights the possibility of a dispute related to David's origins, and being from Moabite descent might have caused concern.[50] YHWH is given the credit for Ruth's fruitful womb (*Ruth* 4:13). Similar to the beginning of the Sumerian King Lists, the authority originates in the deities and therefore creates an even stronger apologetic of legitimacy.

There is another possibility of a foil being presented with this genealogy. Linafelt suggests that the end of Judges and the end of *Ruth*, "together present bookends of failure."[51] Moving the camera away from the idea of this list revealing "God's favorite King," Linafelt suggests the possibility that this story is upholding the "grace manifested in the persistence of two women, who manage to secure survival against all odds, and in the persistence of their story, which in the end is perhaps—just perhaps—not about some king after all."[52]

By highlighting the literary connection to Judges and Samuel, Linafelt opens up a wider dialogue of canonical answerability. The final chapter will tease out these implications in detail, to reveal the canonical answerability between Judges and *Ruth*, and these voices in dialogue will speak words beyond the monarchial response of a king. The canonical answerability of Judges and Ruth will reveal potential voices for the silent, with a particular focus on the silenced women of Judges 19–21.

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[48] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 95.
[49] Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 252.
[50] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 99.
[51] Linafelt, *Ruth*, 81.
[52] Linafelt, *Ruth,* 81.

9.7 The Dialogic Encounter of Law and Narrative

How is it possible for Ruth to subvert the Deuteronomic law? This section will continue to put forth the proposal that that the canon is polyphonic and dialogic, which enables a plurality of voices within a wide body of texts. One of the overarching questions between law and narrative reaches back to the issue of authority, which was detailed in chapter 2. In the history of the discussion of the formation of the canon, the issue of authority was mainly centered around the Law and the Prophets.[53]

One of the areas that has not been explored as thoroughly in these discussions is the relationship between the collection of the Writings alongside the Law and Prophets.[54] Chapman draws this question out in his final chapter:

> Still at issue, however, is how to gauge hermeneutically the position of the
> Writings within the final form of the canon. Was the collection intended to
> function as a fully equal and authoritative 'third' canon, as the literary structure of
> the MT would imply? Or are the Writings to be interpreted as a commentary on,
> and an application of, a 'more authoritative' Law and Prophets?[55]

Placed in this third section of the Writings (Law, Prophets, Writings), *Ruth* functions as a dialogic משל. The use of legal material has been addressed in diverse ways throughout the story of *Ruth*, but still remains unsatisfactory. Each view dichotomizes law and narrative. Some have argued for the violation of the Law, viewing a notable tension that exists between narrative and law. Others lean towards a personal-ethical higher ground that supersedes the legal code. Rather than place law and narrative in opposition, this section will propose a third way forward that will seek to put these two in dialogue and illustrate how the story of *Ruth*, as an authoritative voice

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[53] See Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*
[54] See Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*.
[55] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 289.

within the canon, posits a re-visioning of the future. This re-visioning is the generative power of the dialogical nature of the canon. By utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism, perhaps there is a way to view law and narrative in a creative dialogical paradigm which births new beginnings and becomings. *Ruth* enters into dialogue with not only legal material, but with the foundational stories at the heart of the history and identity of Israel.

Proceeding forward from previous studies, the use of the legal material in *Ruth* was viewed as an obstacle to be conquered or pushed aside by the higher order of community and love. Campbell, with an eye towards חסד in the *Ruth* story, writes that "the story of Ruth is basically about extraordinary caring, concern, and kindness that is above the call of duty… people in this story whose actions display this 'plus' factor ."[56] In a similar vein, Grossman views a notable tension between law and narrative, especially with the example of the intertextual connections of Ruth and Tamar (Genesis 38).

By teasing out Bal's work on *Ruth*, which highlights this tension between law and narrative, Grossman concludes, "The narrative is motivated by the force of kindness and compassion for the Other, which eclipses law and social convention alike."[57] Grossman's study goes on to show how the narrative "reinterprets" the law. By focusing on the specific literary use of legal material and customs, such as the widow's role, Ruth's verbal commitment to Naomi (1:16–17), the use of "wings" on the threshing floor (marriage imagery), and the term "redemption" among others.[58] Grossman views the way these legal customs are presented as featuring the "personal-ethical significance of these terms, leaving their actual legal implications in the shadows."[59]

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[56] Campbell, *Ruth*, 110.
[57] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 40.
[58] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 41–45.
[59] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 41.

With an eye towards the law remaining in the shadows, he also shows the intertextual connection of Ruth and Tamar to reveal a violation of the law. Grossman views the use of the Tamar and Judah story to "serve a precedent for the author of Ruth, who seeks to justify his attitude towards the law in light of his objective: to bend its formal limits in order to sustain its spirit, in order to ensure family continuity."[60] The issue of the authority of the law is one that underlines these discussions and the apparent dichotomies of Law vs. Narrative or Law vs. Kindness. The legal material, in these interpretations, begins to subsume a monologic characteristic which needs to be silenced, or as Grossman puts it, to "remain in the shadows," in order to move forward with compassion and kindness. To propose a third way forward in the conversation between law and narrative, the work of Bakhtin can add another dimension to this conversation which takes seriously the redactor's canon consciousness and intentionality and the use of law and narrative in dialogic relation.

The juxtaposition of the Law and Prophets in their formation in the canon will be a starting point to unveil a similar connection between the Writings and the Law. In the history of the canon formation discussion, many placed the authority of the Law over the Prophets.[61] Rather than a "naked power" of idealism shaping the entire corpus of the canon, Chapman, jumping off the work of Altieri,[62] has argued for the idea of canon as *theological* "grammar" which provides space for ideals and ethics of becoming, responsibility to the "other," along with subversive voices of disagreement and even protest. Chapman notes the helpful work of Altieri which informed much of Chapman's work and pertinent to the task here:

> For Altieri, the function of a canon is therefore not to preserve the past by
> projecting (or retrojecting) simple dogmas, but rather to form a kind of

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[60] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 53.
[61] Chapman, *Law and Prophets*, 290–295.
[62] Altieri's work utilizes Taylor's "revisionary approach to the philosophy of the self," in Chapman's *Law and Prophets,* 99–102.

"permanent theatre, helping us shape and judge personal and social values . . . our self interest in the present consists primarily in establishing new ways of employing that theatre to gain distance from our ideological commitments."[63]

Thus, in his view canons *subvert* ideals just as much as they enshrine them.[64]

This mutual shaping in the canon begins with the discussion of how the Law and Prophets inform one another. Chapman argues that the Prophets' writings "became canonical together with the Law."[65] Much attention has been given to the authoritative relationship and compilation of the Law and Prophets within the canonical process. Traditionally, the Law (Pentateuch) was the not only the earliest section of the biblical corpus but also was viewed as authoritative over the Prophets. Chapman, in contrast to the standard theory, follows suit with the "critical minority, which has persistently suggested an originally collateral relation between the two sub-collections and an equal level of authority" and that the "Law and Prophets have a dialectical relationship."[66]

In chapter 8, I argue for Ruth as a creative agent in reference to the legal customs. In *Ruth* 3:9, Ruth reaches beyond Naomi's instructions to not only ask for redemption, but also for marriage. This double request is the crux of the threshing floor scene. What will be enacted in chapter 4 at the city gate reveals the intention of Boaz to complete the request, marry Ruth in a levirate-type construct (Deuteronomy 25), and provide an heir for Naomi's family. Within the legal system, Boaz also reaches beyond, in one sense seeking out the closer redeemer but then adjusting to the instruction to reveal his intent to marry Ruth.

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[63] Altieri, "The Idea and Ideal of a Literary Canon," in: Hallberg (ED.), *Canons*, 41–64; *Critical Inquiry* 10 (1983-84): 37–60.

[64] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 95.
[65] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 104.
[66] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets,* 71.

With this in purview, and an eye towards canon-consciousness for the text artisan of *Ruth*, the question that naturally comes to mind is, "Where do the Writings belong in this discussion of canon formation and authoritative weight?" By harkening back to the early stories and matriarchs of Genesis along with Ruth uttering a covenantal oath formula to Naomi (*Ruth* 1:16-17), the Writings encompass important aspects of the foundational stories and dialogically create a new path forward. This application with respect to the identity and history of Israel places the story of *Ruth*, within the Writings, as a voice of authority. This voice is not completely new, as readers have seen the foreign woman motif throughout the earlier stories (Hagar, Zipporah, Tamar, Rahab).[67] Yet, Ruth adds her own voice to the conversation and becomes a subverter and a woman of creative agency in her own place in the story.

In chapter 6, the proposal was brought forth for the genre function of *Ruth* as a dialogic משל. Her movement around the Writings, along with the interesting use of legal customs, places the story of *Ruth* in canonical dialogue. *Ruth* is located in the *Ketuvim* (the Writings) section of the TaNaK (*Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim*) in the MT. Within this section, *Ruth* has been placed in a collection of texts called the *Megilloth* (formed around the sixth-ninth century), which are a group of five festival scrolls which include Lamentations, Esther, Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes. In order of the Jewish festivals their placement is the Song of Songs (Passover), *Ruth* (Feast of Weeks/Pentecost), Ecclesiastes (Feast of Tabernacles), Lamentations (ninth of Ab), and Purim (Esther).

In some Hebrew manuscripts, *Ruth* is placed after Psalms and is the first in the list of these festal scrolls and in other lists, *Ruth* is placed after Proverbs because of the phrase, '*ēšet*

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[67] For a fuller treatment of the foreign woman motif, see chapter 8 in Green's *Field and Seed Symbolism.*

hayil, [68] and then *Ruth* goes on to describe just such a woman, calling her an ʾ*ēšet hayil* in 3:11.[69]
There is a placement of Ruth *before* the Psalms according to T.B. *B. Bat* 14b. Hubbard notes that
this placement before Psalms could be the "earliest one."[70] *Ruth* is placed in the LXX, the
Vulgate and the Christian tradition between Judges and Samuel. The chronotope link in *Ruth* 1:1
"In the days the judges were judging" reveals the literary and chronological attachment that
places the story of *Ruth* as a politico-theological threshold in the story of Israel's shift to the
monarchy.

With this function in mind, *Ruth* provides a case study in the dialogue of the law in
Israelite society. Chapman, rather than focusing on the limitations of the canon, argues rather for
the canon's "imaginative power." He resists the idea of "conscious theologizing" which might
compel the writers to force a unity or singular vision.[71] This dialogic nature of the canon allows
for multiple voices in a complex shaping of an Israelite society. Chapman notes that this was one
of the important emphases of Childs. "Childs emphasized the *other* direction of the
hermeneutical circle…not only did Israel 'shape' the biblical text through a historical and
theological process of selecting, collecting and ordering the literature, but *the text authoritatively
shaped Israel*."[72]

This society wrestled in dialogue with the past, present and future within a diverse body
of literature, bound together in intentional shaping with the "extending vision of the future"

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[68] Campbell, *Ruth*, 34; and Wolfensen, "Implications of the Place of Ruth," 170–172.

[69] Campbell, *Ruth*, 34.

[70] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 7.

[71] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 103. Chapman argues against Ryle who did not see the mutual shaping of texts during the construction of the Hebrew Bible and Chapman writes that, "certain passages of biblical literature voice explicit concerns to amplify, reorient, or further construct the biblical canon by calling attention to other portions of the canon and by weaving a rich web of references and intertextual possibilities (e.g., Deuteronomy 34: 10–12; Malachi 3:22–24 [4:4–6])." See Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 106; and Herbert E. Ryle, *The Canon of the Old Testament: An Essay on the Gradual Growth and Formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture* (London, England: McMillan and Co., 1895), 17.

[72] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 45.

which "compels readers to reach beyond."[73] *Ruth r*epresents for the reader a story in dialogue with Law and Writings within the canon that exemplifies this *reach beyond*.

9.8 Conclusion

This chapter advances the premise that Ruth, as a woman and a text, represents a voice of intertextual answerability within the canon, in dialogue with the Law and Prophets. I have sought to illustrate how Ruth is not a simple fairy tale, but rather is a story that is complex and resists finalization. Through a close analysis of the ambiguities of identity and dialogic encounters (אשה המת "wife of the dead," inheritance, genealogy), this chapter demonstrated through previous research, how *Ruth* reveals a formidable force, an authoritative voice, within the canon.

In Judges 19–21, the women remain voiceless and powerless in how the story unfolds. This silence becomes an invitation for a canonical dialogue and reorientation for the readers. *Ruth* develops a voice of subversion and protest to the entire משל of Judges 19–21. In order to secure progeny for the Benjamite tribe in Judges, women were kidnapped and חרם was executed internally. In *Ruth*, a similar progenitive problem is presented. Rather than a response of death and dismemberment to the dilemma, Ruth and Naomi utilize law and dialogue to chart a progenitive way forward. Without one act of extreme violence, Elimelech is resurrected from the dead and perpetuated in memory.

Although silent in speech, the utterance revealed through the praise of women of Bethlehem in *Ruth* 4 reveals that Ruth continued to display extravagant sacrifice and love towards Naomi. Ruth's display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") invites canonical dialogue with חרם ("the ban") in Judges 19–21. Ruth's creative agency will not only

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[73] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 105, 107.

speak for the dead in *Ruth*, it resurrects the name of the dead. As a canonical voice of

answerability, I will argue that *Ruth* will present an ethical voice of protest and resistance for the

voiceless victims in Judges 19–21. The idea of inheritance נחלה ("inheritance, property,

possession") will be further developed in the next chapter, revealing that the mass of violence at

the end of Judges is not forgotten. The text of *Ruth* exhibits a compelling reminder that

inheritance is more than a plot of land, but a commitment of relationship. The final case–study in

chapter 10 reveals an ethical intertextual counter–utterance to the gendered violence in Judges

19–21.

CHAPTER 10: Judges 19–21 and Ruth in Dialogue

Chapter 10 demonstrates how *Ruth* offers an alternative voice within the polyphonic

nature of the canon that speaks within the intentional gaps, the nonverbal utterances, through this

final case–study. The texts of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* have been noted by scholars to be

"connected" and in "dialogue" with one another. This analysis has taken on the task of exploring

this cursory connection in order to examine *how* they are in dialogue. By employing Bakhtin's

dialogism as a heuristic to facilitate this conversation, this chapter will seek to uncover

intertextual voices within these two stories. Each entity located in the dialogic space of the story

(persons, words, silence, gaps in narrative) is part of the chronotope (time-space) of becoming,

the shaping that takes place through interaction of the characters in their chronotopes, their

dialogue, and even the genres within the canon. This section will reintegrate each of the voices in

this project (Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*) to discover where mutual shaping of the intertextual

analysis will birth something new.

In chapters 2–5, I have illustrated the unusual and atypical use of violence in Judges 19–

21, exemplified in the extravagant use of חרם ("the ban") on a familial tribe, highlighting the

acute degradation that becomes even more obvious when read through the lens of Bakhtin's

literary theory of grotesque realism. In addition, the uncommon use of violence is discussed with

the unusual use of נתח ("to cut") in Judges 19:29 in light of its other uses within the Hebrew

Bible. Finally, the instrument used to dismember the פילגש, המאכלת ("the knife"), places Judges

19 in conversation with *the Aqedah* (Genesis 22). An examination of the use of חטף ("to seize")

in Judges 21:21and Psalms 10:9 reveals an intertextual utterance of answerability within the

canon. Though not exhaustive, these few examples illustrate the atypical and excessive use of violence within Judges 19–21.

Chapters 3 and 6 explore how genre reveals a significant role in placing Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* in intertextual conversation. *Ruth* is a literary conversation partner for three primary reasons: (1) its placement in the Septuagint and Vulgate immediately after Judges, (2) the literary connection in Ruth 1:1—i.e., in "The days the judges were judging," and (3) the juxtaposition of feminine silence (Judges 19–21) with feminine dialogue (*Ruth*). In addition to these primary reasons, a strong case was made for the genre of Judges 19–21 as a משל ("proverb/parable") in form and function. Likewise, a rationale was given for the function of Ruth as a משל. I have argued that these genre signifiers indicate that these stories are inviting a response within the canon.

I have sought to demonstrate the significance of *Ruth's* canonical voice in chapters 7 through 9 by investigating *Ruth's* intertextual utterances, Ruth's agency as a character, loopholes of identity, and an exploration of the extravagant display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant– faithfulness"). This engagement will provide the groundwork to illustrate *Ruth's* authoritative voice within the canon, in particular dialogue with the Torah.

This final chapter will reintegrate research (voices) from the previous chapters as an experiment of polyphony and heteroglossia on a larger scale, to determine how *Ruth* functions as a voice of canonical ethical response, a voice of canonical answerability (responsibility). This alternative voice is a critical appraisal to Judges 19–21: three chapters displaying horrific gendered violence. *Ruth* subverts and creates a path forward through intentional intertextuality. As a story, *Ruth* is unfinalizable, remaining open within the story of Israel, speaking an alternative voice of non-violence.

10.0 Ruth as a Voice of Canonical Answerability

This generative place of becoming through dialogue in the canon allows for more voices from the margins: voices of answerability. There is responsibility inherent within this concept of answerability, constituting the ethical component in the answering. Bakhtin's categories of chronotope, dialogism, polyphony, heteroglossia, utterance, and answerability will be utilized as the foundational method to highlight how these two texts are in dialogue, and more specifically, how *Ruth* is a voice of canonical answerability to Judges 19–21. In order to chart a way forward to begin this canonical conversation, the four central areas that will be the focus of this chapter are as follows:

> 1. Genre considerations of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* (form and function of משׁל)
> 2. The idioms located in both stories, נשׂא אשׁה (Judges 21:23; *Ruth* 1:4) and על-לב
> דבר(Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13)
> 3. Terms of identity for the women in Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* (i.e., פילגשׁ;אשׁה)
> 4. The intertextual connections of נחלה ("inheritance," "possession," "property")
> in Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.

This next section will weave together in dialogue the analysis from the previous 8 chapters. With genre leading the way, a detailed investigation of idioms, identity, and inheritance will reveal that *Ruth* rises as an authoritative voice of canonical answerability. Genre is something old and borrowed, but it can also birth new ideas, new connections, and new interpretations. משׁל is an underutilized dialogical genre in the Hebrew canon that embodies this elastic rhetorical function which is rooted intrinsically in the text.

Bakhtin has provided a way forward in previous scholarship within biblical studies, most significantly in the analysis of dialogical voices of literary genres, speech genres, and the

individual utterance (speech, reported speech, etc.). Notable studies include Newsom and Hyun on the text of Job, Green on the language of Saul in 1 Samuel, Mandolfo on finding the voice of Zion.[1] While these studies have intersected important dialogical and methodological concerns, the polyphonic nature of the canonical voice of answerability has yet to be fully explored.[2]

The answer located in the text of Judges to the dark deeds of rape, kidnapping, slaughter, and mutilation, is a meager refrain: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit (Judges 19:1; 21:25)." The scandalous, abrupt, and violent ending to the book of Judges often leaves the reader in a place of despair. Alternatively, the book of *Ruth* has been noted to bring the reader "welcome relief." Many have challenged this idyllic notion to reveal that there are darker contours within the story of *Ruth*.

Close readings reveal the complexity within the *Ruth* story, literarily set within a violent period in Israel's past. Whatever similarities are discovered, the reader cannot escape the obvious oddity that in Judges 19–21, every woman is silent. Conversely, *Ruth* consists of a significant proportion of dialogue: fifty-five verses out of eighty-five. Within this dialogue emerges a potential voice of protest and subversion to the horrific treatment of the women of Judges 19–21. By focusing on two idioms located in both stories, נשא אשה (Judges 21:23; *Ruth* 1:4) and על-לב דבר (Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13), this dissertation charts a way forward to illustrate this canonical conversation and to introduce potential canonical voices from *Ruth* that speaks into the haunted silence and deaths of the nameless and voiceless women in Judges 19–21. The heteroglossic nature of the dialogue ('other tongues' within the ideological perspectives and gender dynamics inherent within the verbal and non-verbal utterance) becomes more vivid in an attentive

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[1] Newsom, *Job*; Hyun, *Job the Unfinalizable*; Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen?*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion*. See also M. Vines, "The Apocalyptic Chronotope," 109–117.

[2] Hays elaborates on this in "The Silence of the Wives" and comments on the polyphonic nature of canon but leaves it undeveloped.

intertextual reading of these two juxtaposing texts (Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*). The darkness from

Judges hangs on in the opening chapter of *Ruth*. *Ruth* begins with death and ends with life. *Ruth*

functions as a literary embryonic threshold "in the days the judges were judging" (*Ruth* 1:1).

Grossman highlights the significance of the opening literary connection in *Ruth* 1:1 with

the story of Judges. *Ruth* 1:1 locates the story, "In the days the Judges were Judging." This

phrase is reminiscent of the formula "And it came to pass in those days." This particular opening

is used in four other places: Genesis 14:1; Isaiah 7:1; Jeremiah 1:3; Esther 1:1. Grossman points

out that "each of these instances" connects "the narrative to a specific ruler." [3]

Conversely in *Ruth*, the time designation "is not connected with any one person, but

rather with a description of an era."[4] Grossman shows how *Ruth* becomes a bridge from the

anarchical period of Judges to the later "established monarchy."[5] Even more than a bridge, the

משל of *Ruth* is an authoritative voice to speak into the anarchy of Judges 19–21.[6]

10.1 Ruth as a Dialogic משל in Function

I have attempted to demonstrate how *Ruth* functions as a *dialogic* משל within the

polyphonic nature of the Hebrew Bible. With an eye toward *Ruth's* genre function, it creates a

more elastic category, which enables the story to dialogue broadly with not only her movement

within the canon, but also with the important intertextual connections that create another layer of

dialogue through the text artisans' intentional use of terms, idioms, oaths, and ethnic origins.

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[3] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 71–72.
[4] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 71–72.
[5] Grossman, *Bridges and Boundaries*, 73.
[6] In chapter 9, I proposed a way forward to illustrate how the story of Ruth, as an authoritative voice within the canon, posits a re-visioning of the future in dialogue with the Law and Prophets.

Newsom highlights six important aspects of how genres function, from the "unfortunate" category of a "box," to one of "family resemblance," "modes of comprehension," "Social functions," "modes of perception" and last, the dialogic nature of genres.[7] In Judges 19–21, the mode of comprehension, along with how genre functions for cultural communicative purposes, reveals an important aspect to the idea of genre category. *Ruth* is intentionally placed in a dialogic engagement of genres because of the signal association of the Judges time period. Although Block does not view *Ruth* in this manner, I will argue for *Ruth's* function as a משל.

I have argued for this genre designation, which is contrary to Block's conclusion. Block asserts that *Ruth* cannot be categorized as a משל because "the narrator makes no plea to interpret this account as a māšāl."[8] In chapter 6, I proposed a wider sense of the משל genre (without the need for narrator pleas) to support the proposal that the genre of *Ruth* functions as a dialogic משל in the canon. In my purview, the משל designation can withhold the tension of historiography and the dialogic polemic which other genres considerations seem to dichotomize.

The text of *Ruth* moves around the canon in dialogue with the Torah, Writings and Prophets. Close readings reveal that Ruth's story is connected to the faith migration of Abraham and is in conversation with the Proverbs 31, as Ruth becomes identified as אשת חיל ("woman of strength"). This is the dialogic and polyphonic nature of canon. Again, polyphonic describes the many voices inherent in the canon, rather than a single, or monologic voice. The canon represents a unique body of literature which resists merging voices, similar to what Bakhtin found so compelling in Dostoevsky's characters.[9] In this place of dialogue, the sense of "dialogic

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[7] Carol Newsom "Pairing Research Questions and Theories of Genre: A Case Study of the Hodayot," in *Dead Sea Discoveries 17* (2010): 270–288.

[8] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 602.

[9] Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 195.

truth" is discovered and a voice of canonical answerability rises in response to the silent

utterances within Judges 19–21.

As previously stated, answerability, in Russian, can also be translated as "responsibility."

Again, it is helpful to revisit the translation of this term from the Russian to recapture the fullness

of this word. Liapunov shares his reasons for translating it as "answerability" as he writes that he

wants to, "foreground the root sense of the term-answering; that point to bring out the

'responsibility' involves the performance of an 'existential dialogue' (existential as relating to

existence)."[10] I propose in this sense that canon is in dialogue with itself: answering, performing,

and engaging in a metaphysical dialogism. In light of the work of Altieri (philosopher and

literary critic), Chapman illustrates the importance of the "canon for social maintenance" in that

"visionary ideals are *also* included within the 'social maintenance' needs of society, for societies

are never truly static, but rather always in the process of recreating themselves."[11] Chapman

understands the "subversive quality of canons and canon formation" and reveals that the "ideals

are never reducible to one single historical or ideological context."[12] Canon thus provides a

"theological grammar," which "allowed a wide flexibility in the selection and incorporation of

literary works" and "expressed the theological logic of Israel's historical experience."[13] It is in

this place of dialogue where texts within the canon enter into this sense of "recreating

themselves" in canonical dialogism.

Bakhtin notes the powerful interaction within the dialogic relations when he writes that

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[10] Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 226; Bakhtin, "Toward a Philosophy of the Act*,"* 80, n.9.

[11] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets*, 95.

[12] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets,* 95.

[13] Chapman, *The Law and Prophets,* 106. Chapman draws a connection to his proposal of "theological grammar" (which is inspired from Altieri's work on "cultural grammar") with Child's notion of canon "as a hermeneutical guide by which to interpret this complex prehistory of literature." See Chapman*, Law and Prophets*, 106, no. 39. See Childs, *Old Testament Introduction*, 157.

"another's discourse, if productive, gives birth to a new word from us in response."[14] *Ruth* is, in part, a subversive response to Judges. Bakhtin conveys the power of "internally persuasive discourse" and how this flows into new beginnings, new artistic representations,[15] and "embryonic beginnings."[16] *Ruth* is a voice of canonical answerability to Judges 19–21. It is my contention that *Ruth* functions as a משל, and this can encapsulate the historiographic, artistic, ethical, and dialogic nature of the book of *Ruth*. Associating *Ruth* as a fairy-tale assigns it a childlike quality but *Ruth* is much darker, violent and oppressive than previous descriptions such as the loveliest little whole.

As I have argued previously in chapter 6, Ruth has been dialogically connected in the canon with Lot's daughters (Genesis 19), Hagar (Genesis 16; 21), Tamar (Genesis 38), and Zipporah (Ex. 4).[17] These connections reveal *Ruth's* function as a משל, and will be a starting point to illustrate *Ruth's* purposeful and dialogical literary connection, within the context of Judges and specifically with Judges 19–21. The elastic nature[18] of the משל genre, will set the stage for the dialogic nature of this text.

I attempted to demonstrate in chapter 6 that the genre of Ruth functions as a dialogic משל, highlighting *Ruth's* dialogical nature within the canon. In order to support this proposal, I set forth the early acceptance of Ruth within several canonical traditions. As previously stated, from

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[14] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 346.

[15] The "aesthetic whole is not something co-experienced, but something actively produced, both by author and contemplator." See Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability,* 67.

[16] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 346–347.

[17] Venter and Minnaar make an interesting connection with the story of Ruth and Zipporah with an intertextual exegetical connection with the word, רגל ("foot"). Although I do not agree with how far they associate these women as acting on behalf of the covenant in order to qualify them as community members of Israel, their actions were bold and should be regarded as such. They also exhibit the "foreign woman pattern" as illuminated by the examples Barbara Green highlights, connecting to the exodus motif which in turn reveals, "the alien woman who brings life to her people." See Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism,* 202. See also Venter and Minnaar, *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 1–4.

[18] See Boer, *Bakhtin and Genre Theory*; Mandolfo, *Daughter Zion,* 59; Newsom, *Job*, 82.

early periods, *Ruth* has received acceptance in both the Christian and Jewish canon.[19] In the MT, *Ruth* is located in the *Ketuvim* (the Writings) section of the TaNaK (*Torah, Nevi'im, Ketuvim*). *Ruth* is placed in the LXX, the Vulgate and the Christian tradition between Judges and Samuel. The chronotope link in *Ruth* 1:1, "In the days the judges were judging," reveals the literary and chronological attachment that places the story of *Ruth* as a politico-theological threshold in the story of Israel's shift to the monarchy.

But it is *Ruth's movement* in the canons that is significant. The movement of *Ruth* in her ordering, accompanied by her virtually universal acceptance as part of the canons, gives a weightier credibility as a voice of canonical answerability. This elevates her multifaceted function as in the process of the canonization. The movement of *Ruth* in the canon, in the MT, the LXX and the Vg., reveals the dialogical nature of this story.

When looking at the widespread Hebrew employment of this term, the complexity becomes obvious with the breadth of translation words used to signify its meaning: "oracle," "prophecy," "discourse," "parable," "taunt," "riddle," and even how one is memorialized. The proverbial "kernel of truth" comes up short when we look at the Hebrew use of משל. משל can refer to more than a saying: it can reflect a person in judgment (Isaiah 14:4; Micah 2:4), the answerability of a person's life (1 Samuel 10:12; Job 17:6), and even the entire community (Psalm 44:15). Barbara Green captures the complexity of the nature of parable when she contrasts allegory and parable. She clarifies by writing that allegory is easier, but parable is more "dynamic."[20] The Hebrew term, משל, indeed captures the complexity and nuances that invite a fresh perspective. These two texts dialogue in form and

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[19] Hubbard notes with regards to the text of Ruth that "In the 1st century. A.D., both Jewish and Christian writers drew upon it without hesitation as a record of sacred history (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* V.9.1–4; Matthew 1:5; Luke 3:32)." Hubbard, *Ruth*, 4–5.

[20] Barbara Green, *Like a Tree Planted*, 1.

function. *Ruth functions* as a משל and Judges 19–21 has the function and form of a משל. Again, the משל genre is one intrinsic to the Hebrew Bible and dialogic in its nature.

To reiterate this idea of chronotope, Bakhtin defines it as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature."[21] Within this canonical placement, voices of answerability will show how *Ruth* becomes a potential voice of subversion for the hauntingly silent and abused women in Judges 19–21. By noting their intentional placement in the canon, these two stories dialogue as genres that contain a type of family resemblance by their literary intentionality (*Ruth* 1:1–"The days the Judges were judging"). They both function as a משל, which invites comparative inquiries of social function along with modes of comprehension and perception.

Having established the dialogic connection between these two stories, this next section will elaborate on the intertextual connections brought together by genre, revealing interpretive structures that come into dialogic connection. This dialogic approach of these parts relates to the whole and invites a new reading. By looking at the intertextual connections within these two stories, *voices* of answerability emerge in *Ruth* for the silent women in Judges 19–21.

10.2 Judges as a Dialogic משל in Form and Function

In chapter 4, I have set forth a proposal that the form and function of Judges 19–21 should be considered a משל, which is a very pregnant Hebrew term. This next section will highlight some of the results of that chapter in order to initiate another layer in the canonical dialogue between *Ruth* and Judges 19–21. As משל, this story marks an integral chapter in Israel's theologico- political story of becoming, its threshold of transition. By employing an intertextual

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[21] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 84.

analysis of these final chapters with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin on genre, alongside the Hebrew Bible's widespread use of משל ("proverb/parable"), there may be a way forward to bring an alternative perspective to these final, grim chapters. This is not the final word, but a potential voice in the future dialogue that a haunted text, such as Judges 19–21, elicits.

In order to build a case for consideration of the משל ("proverb, parable") genre for Judges 19–21, similar stories were considered that did not have an intrinsic signifier of משל. Second, the governing quality of anonymity (which is witnessed in other משל's) was discussed as an intentional feature of a משל. Third, the tool of dismemberment, המכלת ("the knife") and also the significant Hebrew terms used for threshold—סף and מפתן —were highlighted as an intentional theological and political intertextual tool to create a powerful dialogue with Israel's identity within the canon.

Widely attested examples of stories connected to the משל genre ("parable"/ "proverb") that do not contain intrinsic signifiers of this genre include Nathan's sheep משל ("parable") to David in 2 Samuel 12, and the wise woman of Tekoa's משל ("parable") from 2 Samuel 14.[22]

Along with these two parables, the use of the term, המכלת ("the knife"), could have awakened the cultural memory of the reader. *The knife* with the definite article is in only one other narrative in the Hebrew Bible and it is a significant one. המאכלת is the ceremonial instrument gripped in the hand of their forefather Abraham in the *Aqedah*—the binding of Isaac. The story from Judges most commonly associated with this critical foundation story of the *aqedah* (Genesis 22) is the story of Jephthah's sacrifice of his only child, his daughter (Judges 11).

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[22] Jennifer M. Matheny, "Mute and Mutilated: Understanding Judges 19–21 as a משל of Dialogue," in *Biblical Interpretation* 25, no. 4–5 (Brill, 2017): 625–646.

It can be argued that another story is associated with the binding of Isaac, and it is this final epilogue of Judges. This national story in Genesis 22 is evoked in this "homeless" and "inorganic" narrative of Judges. There are intense political and theological messages screaming off the altar of this dismembered woman. No voice interceded in her case. Perhaps, the voice *is* the parable.

Along with the instrument of dismemberment, another shift of terms alerts the reader that there is a theological and political dialogue going on with the shift in terms for threshold. In the middle of the evening the Levite, host, and women are interrupted by the Benjamite men of the city ("sons of worthlessness," Judges 19:22; 20:13;), who have come ידע ("to know") the guest. Their intention is rape. They seek the Levite, but he thrusts his פילגש upon them. After they abused her all through the night, she somehow makes her way back to the doorway.[23] While fallen on the doorway, her hand was upon the סף ("threshold") in Judges 19:27.

Alone in this scene, her identity in the text is that of אשה ("wife"). Once the Levite opens the door to be on his way, he barely notices her and when he does, commands her to "rise." She is identified in this scene as "his פילגש." There is no answer and he places her on his donkey and continues on his journey. The time of her death is ambiguous in this text.[24] One cannot help but ask through the narrative, *Who is this woman*? Why are there shifts in her identity? Perhaps being a פילגש, a wife, and a young maiden all contribute to the theological intentions of this story.

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[23] As noted in chapter 3, it is important to reiterate the literary importance of doorways throughout the Hebrew Bible. The interpenetration of images is heightened with this scene of doorways as one recalls the imagery of battles and doorway with Jael's tent (Judges 4:20), Abimelech (Judges 9:44), Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11:31), along with other examples not listed.

[24] Again, the LXX attempts to make this clear and indicates that she was already dead, but the ambiguity is apparent in the MT.

The dialogic function of the משל genre, and its potential description of both Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*, connect these two stories through invitation ambiguous in this text. Why are there shifts in her identity? Perhaps being a פילגש, a wife, and a young maiden all contribute to the theological intentions of this story. The Levite will go on to cut her up into twelve pieces to be sent as a message for the tribes to gather for civil war against the Benjamites for what they have done.

There are intentional gaps in his recounting of the crime and the text artisan is well aware that the community will also take notice of these intentional gaps. The description, "sons of worthlessness" (Judges 19:22) will extend from the band of men at the door to later describe every Benjamite in Israel (Judges 20:13). The tribes respond to the Levite and the result is the almost complete annihilation of the tribe of Benjamin.

The word, סף ("threshold"), is most often used with temple and palaces. As Israel comes to this political evolution, the use of סף encompasses this place of political transition for Israel. This word is found in twenty-nine verses within the Hebrew Bible, and some of the uses designate a palace (1 Kings 14:11) as well as the threshold of the temple (2 Chronicles 3:7) and God's place of judgment (Amos 9:1; Zephaniah 2:14). It is also used in Exodus as the basin (סף) which holds the ceremonial blood of the lamb to be placed on the doorposts of the house. The ordinary, sacred, and symbolic are all encompassed in this term, סף. The more common word פתח ("doorway") is used immediately in our episode (Judges 19:26, 27) before the פילגש 's hand lays upon the סף or "threshold" (Judges 19:27), indicating an intentional and significant use of סף.

The word, סף, is only found in this one place in the entire text of Judges. The word, מפתן ("threshold"), is used almost solely for temple (1 Samuel 5:4, 5; Ezekiel 9:3; 10:18; 46:2; 47:1; Zephaniah 1:9). It is well worth noting that סף ("threshold") is used for both the threshold of a

temple and a palace. The literary threshold the community of Israel has been walking through in Judges will left behind as they move from that once familiar territory into a land of new orientation within the Samuel narrative. This final parabolic appendage looks through a theological lens at how the polity and morality of Israel was to be understood. This threshold not only looks at the interpretive history but also looks forward to the possibilities for a people seeking to understand themselves. This משל of dialogue resists becoming finalized.

Although Israel is without excuse at times (1 Samuel 12:17), responsibility is often placed on those in places of political power. Where does this leave us with the longest narrative in Judges (chapters 19–21)? Buber reads the refrain, "and there was no king in Israel," as illustrating "that which you pass off as theocracy has become anarchy."[25] The epilogue of Judges requires a response. Though the "riddle" on one level could signify the rhetorical resolution of the Davidic monarchy, this משל of dialogue is an invitation for reflection on multiple layers. The ironic twist comes when the reason given for the violence that ensues—because there was no "king" in Israel (Judges)—shifts as the foreigner Ruth forms a dialogic answer in bringing forth a king through her sacrificial acts.

10.3 Idioms in Dialogue: נשא אשה and דבר על-לב

The texts of Judges and *Ruth* have been noted by scholars such as Edward J. Campbell, Kirsten Nielsen, Daniel I. Block, and Tod Linafelt, to be connected and in dialogue with one another. In order to discover a canonical voice of answerability through the text of *Ruth*, this next survey will identify and evaluate two idioms used in Judges and *Ruth* to illustrate *how* these texts are in dialogue with a close reading. *Ruth* functions as a dialogic משל and offers a subversive voice in the haunted silence of Judges 19–21.

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[25] Buber, *The Kingship of God*, 78.

The story of *Ruth* begins with a journey *to* the field of Moab by an Israelite family. Honig remarks that the story begins with Elimelech abandoning kin and that this move was scandalous. Naomi's husband perishes (1:3) and her sons die (1:5). At this point in the story, there are three women who take center stage—Naomi the Israelite, and her two daughters in laws who are of Moabite origin: Orpah and Ruth.

10.3.1 נשא אשה *(Judges 21:23; Ruth 1:4)*

The foreignness of Ruth and Orpah are highlighted immediately in *Ruth* 1:4. The idiomatic use to "lift/carry" a wife is used with only foreign women. The ethnicity of Ruth is central to this story; she is immediately identified by this idiom (and also as a Moabite woman). The men have not "taken" a wife, they נשא אשה "lifted/carried" wives for themselves, Moabites (1:4). The verb, נשא which means "to lift" or "to carry" connotes the issues of Ruth and Orpah as *other,* as foreign women. This is the same verb used at the end of Judges in the scene where the Benjamite men "lift" and "carry" wives for themselves at the festival dance in Judges 21:23. This was a mass kidnapping at the end of Judges. The use of this verb with taking a wife is consistently used of foreign women. The more usual idiom is לקח, "to take" an Israelite wife rather than נשא ("to carry") a foreign one (see Genesis 24:4). The connection with the time period of Judges, along with the unusual verbal link "to take" a wife, created an invitation of dialogue.

Were Ruth and Orpah kidnapped, as were the women of Jabesh-Gilead (Judges 21:23)? Perhaps their origin stories are much darker than previously suggested. Concerning the verbs "to lift/carry" and "to marry," Block comments, "Although lexicons tend to treat these expressions as virtually synonymous, closer examination of the latter reveals a phrase loaded with negative

connotation. This present idiom occurs only nine times in the Old Testament."[26] A close reading cannot help but ask the question, "Were Orpah and Ruth stolen from their families?" In the other seven idiomatic uses, four pertain to the forbidden nature of marriage to foreign women in the context of Ezra and Nehemiah. The other uses are in connections to multiple wives. In the 2 Chronicles 11:21 usage, the higher status of loved wife is contrasted with the other wives or פילגש 's.

The text of *Ruth* shows a pattern of divergence. Unlike the Judges use of this idiom, along with its other performative uses in the Hebrew Bible, it is acknowledging Ruth's foreignness on the one hand, yet as the story unfolds Ruth is singled out as *the wife.* Ruth is not among a group of wives. She is solitary in the story from her widowhood to her second marriage to Boaz. I am not arguing for Ruth's status as the *only* wife of Boaz, but the intentional focus on only one woman in the context of this idiom is unique. This subversive move by the text artisan will continue to be sharpened as Ruth speaks one of the most passionate and persuasive speeches in the Hebrew Bible (1:16–17). Ruth is the only foreigner—and the only woman—to utter this particular oath formula, which only comes from the mouths of men in powerful positions. Moreover, Ruth's words and phrases often highlight issues of identity, ethnicity, and gender. The Judges story continually eludes the reader with the question of who is foreign. The resistance through canonical dialogue enables the canonical voice of Ruth to subvert what has previously been presented.

10.3.2 דבר על-לב *(Judges 19:3; Ruth 2:13)*

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[26] Block, *Judges*, 628.

The idiom, דבר על-לֵב "speak to the heart," occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 34:13; 50:21; Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13; 2 Samuel 19:7; Isaiah 40:2; Hosea 2:16; 2 Chronicles 30:22; 32:6-7). In Judges 19, the Levite traveled to Bethlehem to "speak to the heart" of his פילגש.

> Judges 19:3 Then her husband rose and went after her to speak to her heart, in order to bring her back, having with him his servant and a pair of male asses. So she brought him to her father's house, and when the father of the young girl saw him, he rejoiced to meet him.
>
> Ruth 2:13 The she said, "Let me find grace in your eyes, my lord, because you have comforted me and when you have spoken to the heart of your maidservant, athough I am not as one of your maidservants."

Bethlehem will be the place Ruth and Naomi will שוב ('return') after their ensuing tragedies of loss. Both stories begin with a journey of negative emotion. Bethlehem will be an initial place to reside after the emotional pain. For the פילגש, she will enter a home of feasting and hospitality. For Naomi and Ruth, they will be blessed with hospitality and abundance from Boaz. These initial similarities of the pattern of a negative experience, return to Bethlehem, and feasting will then diverge dramatically.

What the reader has been informed of in the example from Judges (pertaining to the separation of the two individuals) is that he has "angered" his פילגש and she returned to the home of her father in Bethlehem. The Levite's stated intention in Judges 19:29 was to "speak to her heart in order to bring her back." The only communication that happens does so when the Levite speaks with the פילגש in Judges 19:28 when he commands her to "rise"—an inescapable, ironical example of silent utterance.

In this gruesome scene, she is laying down, her hand upon the סף ("threshold") after having been abused all through the night. The one in power has commanded cruelty. This idiom, "speak to the heart," in its intertextually within the Hebrew Bible will reveal important

characteristics that will contribute to its distinctive use in *Ruth*. It will be critical to investigate "who" normally uses this idiom and when they do, what is its function in those contexts?

Four of the occurrences of this idiom are in the context of a king speaking words of encouragement to his people. In 2 Chronicles 30:22, King Hezekiah speaks words to encourage the hearts of the wise Levites. In 2 Chronicles 32:6–7, he encourages his military. In 2 Samuel 19:7, Joab instructs David through his grief over his son Absalom to encourage the hearts of his servants. Two occurrences are in the context of comforting others when they are in a place of fear. In Genesis 50:21, Joseph comforts his brothers after they have realized he is alive. In Isaiah 40:2, YHWH comforts Jerusalem in the context of fear of punishment. Three of these occurrences are to curry favor or entice a woman (Genesis 34:13; Hosea 2:16; Judges 19:3). Two will include rape in the passage (Genesis 34:13 and Judges 19:3) and the Hosea passage is concerning YHWH enticing Israel to re-establish the marriage relationship and to respond positively to the invitation (Hosea 2:16–17).

Almost every dialogic use of this idiom in the Hebrew Bible, "speak to the heart," is spoken by a figure in power. What is unique in the story of *Ruth*, is that this idiom is spoken by Ruth herself, a woman and a foreigner. This idiom is most often spoken by those of royalty in places of political power. Here in the story of *Ruth*, this idiom rolls off the lips of one who has continually subverted any attempt at a normative "ideal" Israelite. Here, in chapter 2, she has articulated what has been spoken by those in powerful positions in the Hebrew Bible, even of YHWH, through the prophetic utterance of Hosea. The irony and subversive nature of this narrative reveals that this story is much more complex and nuanced, and as Koosed has so rightly stated, is "strange."

It can be contended that the subversive elements in this text are double-voiced and create loopholes for the characters. The silence of the פילגש and the other abused women in Judges 19–21, in comparison with Ruth's utterance to Naomi in the first chapter, heightens the irony of this idiom use by Ruth. *This* woman, this *Moabite* woman, has proclaimed a covenant oath formula in the first chapter. Ruth alters the course of the story by her speech in *Ruth* 1:16-17. Ruth's voice and agency provide a response of answerability to the Judges horror. This example highlights a moment of similarity and divergence within the canon that creates a path of feminine agency. The unique use of this idiom, especially in the context of its normative use by men in power, could be offered as an alternative voice of hope amidst the violence in Judges 19–21.

I am often asked the question, when real life stories take negative turns, if there is a similar story with a more positive outcome. For example, women who have undergone terrible sexual or ritualistic abuse often struggle to have hope for their futures. When a story is shared of someone in a similar context who has creatively and powerfully moved forward in life, there is a glimmer of possibility that reaches that woman in darkness. Hope cannot be underestimated. In the darkness of Judges 19–21, the story of *Ruth* can provide one response of hope, one voice of answerability.

10.4 A Dialogue of Identity: The Women in Judges 19–21 and Ruth

Every woman is without a name in the משל of Judges 19–21. Every woman is also without speech. The text artisan begins to clue the reader in to these mystery women by their terms of identity. There are incredible gaps in the story, inviting a response. This is the dialogic nature of the משל of Judges 19–21, as an invitation to an active and intertextual reading, not only for the reader but also for the dialogic connections within the canon. One such text is *Ruth*,

which is placed in direct literary dialogue as noted right away in *Ruth* 1:1: "In the days the Judges were Judging."

Ruth 1 and Judges 19 have important connections. Both begin with a journey to שוב ("return") to Bethlehem. The beginnings of these stories are prompted with an intense emotional moment. For the פילגש, the text states that she is angry[27] with the Levite and has returned to Bethlehem, to the home of her father from the hill country of Ephraim.

For Ruth, the story begins with the death of her husband, brother-in-law, and father-in-law. Naomi will urge her daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah, to return to the בית אמה ("mother's house") in Moab. Meyers concludes that the unusual use of "mother's house" reveals the intentional strong female portrait and personalities in this story. This feature, as noted in other female intensive stories, creates another interesting dialogue with the silent, male-driven text of Judges 19–21.[28] As a result of this intense loss and debilitating grief, Ruth and her mother-in-law, Naomi, will שוב "return" to Bethlehem without Orpah. This journey to the "house of bread" will involve abundance.

For Ruth, they are seeking a harvest. For the פילגש in Judges 19, her father provides an immense amount of hospitality. As the stories continue, they weave together a shared dilemma. Conversely, how they proceed diverges dramatically. Oaths will be uttered in both stories. For Ruth, her oath to Naomi will end in life and the resurrection of the memory of the deceased with the redemption of נחלה ("inheritance, possession, property"). For the Israelites in Judges 19–21, their oaths will result in death. The deaths in both stories create progenitive problems.

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[27] This strong emotive element is important because there is very few instances readers get any information about the פילגש.

[28] Carol Meyers, "Returning Home." See Linafelt, *Ruth*, 12.

In Judges, the progenitive problem will be caused after an internal civil war, with חרם

being executed on one of their own tribes, Benjamin. In *Ruth*, the cause of loss is external and

unknown, but will be answered by חסד. Sakenfeld reveals that the חסד ("goodness," "kindness,"

"covenant faithfulness") shown in the biblical text exceeds what one would expect in

relationship, and that "This Ruth could not accomplish for herself; and as it turns out, Boaz is her

only source of help since the closer–of–kin rejects her. The narrator is looking ahead as well as

back."[29]

In her commentary on *Ruth*, Sakenfeld explains the three components of חסד in the

Hebrew Bible:

> The blessing incorporates the first of a series of uses of the Hebrew term *hesed,*
> variously translated as kindness, lovingkindness, faithfulness, or loyalty, a term
> that is of central thematic importance for the book as a whole. In the Hebrew
> Bible *hesed* refers to an action by one person on behalf of another under
> circumstances that meet three main criteria. First, the action is essential to the
> survival or basic well-being of the recipient…the needed action is one that only
> the person doing the act of *hesed* is in a position to provide . . . [f]inally, an act of
> *hesed* takes place or is requested within the context of an existing, established,
> and positive relationship between the persons involved.[30]

What is highly ironic is that חרם in Judges 19–21 also exceeds what one would expect in a tribal

conflict. To facilitate this dialogue, terms of identity employed by the text artisans will be given

a close reading. Ironically, Ruth will serve as a reversal פילגש in her own story, and as part of a

canonical answerability to the silent women of Judges 19–21.

Judges 19 begins with a woman who is identified as a פילגש. One of the oddities in this

story is the shift of identity, depending on whose company she is keeping. The identity of the

woman as a פילגש is complicated in this story. A פילגש is witnessed throughout the Hebrew Bible

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[29] Katherine Dobb Sakenfeld, *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible: A New Inquiry,* Harvard Semitic Monographs (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1978), 107.
[30] Katherine Dobb Sakenfeld, *Ruth* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1999), 24.

as a secondary wife. Schneider highlights the oddity that there is not a "primary wife" located in this story to clarify the status of the פילגש.[31] In other cases of relationship in the Hebrew Bible, the children of a פילגש are at times treated well, and at other times, not as kindly (Ishmael in Genesis 25:6; Esau's children in Genesis 36:12). Schneider draws out an interesting point that when the kings count the number of wives in their harem, the פילגש was in that number.

Alternatively, if a genealogy is given, the פילגש would not be listed by name. On the one hand she "counts" but then again, not as a legitimate person by name in the annals of the kings.[32] Hamley remarks that in biblical genealogies– if one includes Abimelech's nameless mother in Judges 8, along with Abraham's פילגש's in Genesis 25–that even though the פילגש is mentioned, it is the children who are of importance in these lists. After a thorough survey, Hamlet concludes that there are no "neutral" or "positive פילגש stories: they are all dark tales–a commentary, perhaps, on the precariousness and unfairness of their position in Israelite society."[33]

The identity of the פילגש in Judges 19 alters in the text as she enters and exits through doorways with nameless men. When she is present with this Levite, she is described as a פילגש (Judges 19:1, 2, 9, 10, 24, 25, 27, 29; 20:4, 5, 6). Upon crossing the threshold of her father's home, she is described as a נערה, which signifies "a young girl," in relationship to her father (Judges 19:3, 5, 6, 8). When the woman is not in the presence of the Levite, her identity is that of אשה, "a woman or wife," (Judges 19:1, 26, 27). When the Levite journeys to Bethlehem to retrieve this woman and to speak to her heart, her identity is once again a פילגש as they exit her father's home.

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[31] Tammi Schneider, *Berit Olam: Judges* (Collegeville, PA: Liturgical, 2000), 248.

[32] Schneider, *Judges*, 248.

[33] Isabelle Hamley references the following texts in her survey, "Bilhah, Jacob's (Genesis 35, one occurrence); the Levite's פילגש (Judges 19–20, eleven occurrences); Rizpah, Saul's פילגש (2 Samuel 3 and 21, three occurrences); David's פילגש (2 Samuel 5;15; 16;19; 20, six occurrences)." See "'Dis(re)membered and Unaccounted For': פילגש in the Hebrew Bible," *JSOT* 42, no. 4 (London, England: Sage Publishing, 2018): 415–436 (416, 434).

Stating the problem of the oath they swore, the progenitive problem immediately

surfaces. The issue at hand is that they swore to not give their daughters to the tribe of Benjamin

for wives. After they realize the gravity of this oath, they weep. The women who are "off limits"

in this sense have been described as daughters. In order to secure an inheritance for Benjamin,

they decide to enact חרם on Jabesh-Gilead because they did not assemble with the whole of

Israel. In 21:11, the דבר ("word"), which will be become a reality will be חרם ("banned," 21:11).

This violent verb, חרם, is in the hiphil form. After executing the men and women of Jabesh-

Gilead, they kidnaped the remaining נערה ("girls," 21:12), and בתולה ("virgins," 21:12).

After this horrific scene, the progenitive problem is stated again 21:17: "Then they said, 'There

must be a נחלה ["possession/inheritance/property"] for those who escaped from Benjamin

because we do not want a tribe if Israel is to be wiped out.'"

In order to secure the final number of women for Benjamin, the elders command the

Benjaminite men to kidnap the daughters of Shiloh. And they obey, lying and waiting in the field

for the opportune time to חטף ("seize," 21:21) אִשָּׁה ("wife") from the בַּת ("daughters") of

Shiloh.[34]

> By this violent act of kidnapping and rape, these "daughters" will become
> "wives." Each man חטף ('seized') a woman and then returned to his own נחלה
> ("possession/inheritance/property," 21:24).

Identity shifts connect the story of *Ruth* and the plight of the פילגש. The reader is

reminded six times throughout the story that Ruth is a Moabite. These ethnic identifiers are

signaled three times by the text artisan (1:22; 2:2, 21), once by the foreman (2:6), and twice by

Boaz (4:5,10). Ruth's familial identity is depicted as a daughter-in law and a daughter by Naomi.

In the field, Ruth voices terms of self-identification which alter in her chronotope in the field

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[34] Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion,* 202.

before Boaz. She describes herself with a wordplay saying, נכרי ("foreigner," 2:10), and then a

שפחה ("maidservant," 2:13). Naomi and Boaz at different times call her בת ("daughter," 2:22;

3:11,18) and Boaz calls her an אשת חיל ("woman of valor/strength," 3:11).

During the threshing floor scene at night, Ruth alters in her utterance her self-identity

once again as she identifies herself as a אמה ("maiden," 3:9). Boaz replies and calls her a familial

term, בת ("daughter," 3:11) and an אשת חיל ("woman of valor/strength," 3:11). By the end of

chapter 4, Ruth will become the אשה ("wife," 4:13) of Boaz. The women of Bethlehem will

identify Ruth as the one who loves Naomi and additionally, is better than seven sons (4:15). This

term, אהב ("love," 4:15), is employed once in the entire משל of *Ruth*.

Ruth's identity is often voiced through her own utterance, depending on the chronotope

(time-space) within the story. Ruth's ability to voice her identity is a powerful form of

subversion in canonical dialogue with Judges 19 and Judges 21, where every woman is voiceless.

The oath Ruth utters is also a formidable voice which highlights the dialogue of irony with oaths

in both stories. This next section will put the oaths in dialogue in order to reveal how the text of

Ruth subverts the Judges משל and presents the "imaginative power" of the canon.[35]

10.5 Oaths in Dialogue

At the end of Judges, Israel weeps for the loss of its brother, Benjamin. This "brother" is

not solely allocated to men alone. The tribe includes women and children who have been

destroyed in the battles. A question that arises from this story: How did they get to this place of

overwhelming grief? After the Levite shares his report of what happened to his פילגש in Judges

19, which is full of gaps and misrepresentations in the retelling, Israel has decided to execute חרם

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[35] Chapman, *Law and Prophets.*

on the entire tribe of Benjamin because the tribe would not put forward the men who raped the

פילגש (Judges 20:13). This execution of חרם on an entire tribe is the beginning of an excessive

use of force.

To add to this horrific display of violence, oaths were taken at some point which

contributes to an even greater slaughter, followed by rape and kidnapping. Israel states their

progenitive problem in 21:17: "Then they said, 'There must be a ירשה ["possession,"

"inheritance"] for those who escaped from Benjamin because we do not want a tribe of Israel to

be מחה ["wiped out"].'"

They lose many possessions when they enact חרם on their own people. They nearly

annihilate a tribe. Ironically, they are left without enough possessions/inheritance and the tribe of

Benjamin is vulnerable to extinction. The lack of an inheritance/possession, ירשה ("possession,"

"inheritance") described in 21:17 is the enigma at hand. The irony is thick. The degradation of

grotesque realism has taken us into the bowels of חרם.

The main dilemma is stated in Judges 21:7: "How can we provide wives for those who

are left since we have taken an oath by YHWH not to give them any of our daughters in

marriage?" It is interesting that the text artisan does not at this point have YHWH enter into the

dialogue. The questions they ask, after they build an altar and present burnt offerings and

fellowship offerings (21:4), they proceed to answer themselves. Israel then asks itself, "Which

one of the tribes of Israel failed to assemble before the Lord at Mizpah?" Jabesh-Gilead failed to

assemble and because of this failure will pay the price.

The text is not clear as to when this oath was taken. Perhaps the oath was sworn during

the first gathering and decision to go up against Benjamin in 20:8–10, immediately after the

Levite's account of the crime. In 20:18, the Israelites gather at Bethel and inquire of YHWH.

The oath could have been sworn a few verses later in 20:23, during another gathering where the Israelites weep before YHWH again, seeking divine guidance. In 20:26, the gathered community of Israel weeps again at Bethel and this time they fast and present burnt offerings. With the sense of doubt[36] and regret that seems to grow within the Israelites' actions, it would not seem unsubstantiated that the oath may have been sworn during their first gathering when their minds were set on the destruction of the "sons of worthlessness" (20:8–11).

In the Judges 19–21 narrative, Mizpah is first mentioned in 20:1 where the group gathers for the first time to hear the account from the Levite. It was an extremely extravagant oath, enacting חרם on an entire tribe. It would be plausible that the initial oath was taken during the first gathering, especially in light of the fact that in 21:5, they state that they took a solemn oath to enact חרם on anyone who failed to assemble. חרם will be sanctioned at their convenience for a second time in attempt to solve the shortage of progenitive possessions for Benjamin in chapter 21.

In chapter 5, I argued for a way to understand the literary irony through one of Bakhtin's theories: grotesque realism. Grotesque realism, as noted before, is described by Bakhtin: "The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of the earth and body in their indissoluble unity."[37] The misuse and abuse of bodies is akin to grotesque realism.

The use of body degradation in *Rabelais and His World* bears remarkable similarities to the literary use of חרם, death, and bodies in Judges 19–21. The purpose of death, in this sense, is to bring a regenerating vision of life. After oppression comes rebirth. Bakhtin explains:

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[36] See section 4.8, "Sons of Worthlessness, Benjamin our Brother," for a fuller detailed account of this doubt expressed in dialogue.
[37] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 19–20.

To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better . . . [t]o degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other level; it is the fruitful earth and womb. It is always conceiving.[38]

Once the Israelites have enacted חרם on Jabesh-Gilead, they realize they are still two hundred women short for the Benjamite men. The satirical underpinnings of the narrative come full circle with the plan to make complete that which has been rendered incomplete by the same hands. This first attempt to remedy this crisis will be to execute חרם upon a village and will result in the tribe still in want of women.

To solve this problem, they will end the final scene by committing a similar transgression to the one that started it all in Judges 19. The final scene will end with multiple victims—including the kidnapped and raped women and their families who have lost them. The trauma is staggering to comprehend. In order to fill the breach, the final answer to the progentive problem will be to kidnap the women of Shiloh while they are dancing at a חג ("festival"). The festival is not named in the text but with the association of the festival with the covenant name, YHWH, it can be asserted to be some type of yearly festival to YHWH. This heightens the irony of the kidnappings that will ensue.

The absurdity of the violent responses is evident throughout the final chapters of Judges. The enduring silence is truly an *authoritative* silence.[39] The silence is an intentional ambiguous gap. This dialogic משל beckons a canonical response to these final chapters in Judges. Though the refrain indicates a negative view of these chapters, intertextual readings create another response and provide another level of integration and interaction. The "degradation" and hurling

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[38] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.
[39] This silence is akin to Elie Wiesel's camp language which Janzen describes as "putting ambiguity in the place of certainty." See Janzen, *The Violent Gift*. This is developed in chapter 5: "Thresholds of No Return: חרם".

"down to the reproductive lower stratum" takes on a whole new level as the Israelites form an answer to this progenitive problem themselves.[40]

The story of *Ruth* is a canonical voice of answerability. This story becomes a path forward to envision life through a different lens. The irony of oaths takes in Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* highlights the subversive voice of protest Ruth utters forth in response. In Judges 19–21, it is not clear when the oath was spoken. In *Ruth* 1:16–17, it is clear that Ruth is using a formula of commitment. Not only is the oath extravagant, it is voiced by a woman, a Moabite woman. This oath is uttered to an Israelite woman which highlights the intense feminine dialogue undergirding the entire משל of *Ruth*.

The particular formula seen here in *Ruth* 1:17, כה יעשה ... וכה יוסיף, (literally, "thus do . . . then thus do again") is found in twelve occurrences in its usage and is the most "common expression" of oath language.[41] What is notable concerning the oath formula in *Ruth* is that out of the twelve similar oaths in the Hebrew Bible, there are only two instances of these twelve examples which invoke the name of the covenant deity of Israel: YHWH (*Ruth* 1:17; 1 Samuel 20:13).

From a literary point of view, Ziegler maintains that the use of the divine name in *Ruth* 1:17 and 1 Samuel 20:13 are intended to influence one another, that there is "purposeful design" in these two narratives, and that this design is meant to bring them together in dialogue.[42] This contributes the canonical dialogue evidenced in *Ruth*.

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[40] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.
[41] The 12 uses with this formula are here in Ruth 1:17, along with several found in Samuel (1 Samuel 3:17, 14:44, 20:13; 25; 22; 2 Samuel 3:9; 3:35; 19:14), and Kings (1 Kings 2:23; 19:2; 20:10; 2 Kings 6:31). See Zieglar, *Promises to Keep*, 9.
[42] Zieglar, *Promises to Keep*, 79.

Invoking the covenant name in an oath illustrated the seriousness of the oath taker. As evidenced in *Ruth* 1:17 and 1 Samuel 20:13, both parties who initiate the oath undermine themselves to sanction the oath. For Jonathan and David, Jonathan forfeits his role and succession as king, giving allegiance to David. Ruth risks a future with her people to return to a foreign land where she has pledged to be with Naomi in a covenant similar to a marriage contract.[43] This unusual proclamation of an oath by a non-Israelite woman to another woman highlights an interesting dialogical juxtaposition between the character Ruth and the women in Judges 19–21. The women of Judges 19–21 are silent. Here, Ruth speaks words that have only been used by men in powerful positions within the canon and she is able to negotiate a new path for herself. Oaths in this respect function dialogically to highlight a new movement in the text.

In this liminal place between Moab and Bethlehem, Ruth asserts her voice and shifts the outcome of the story as Naomi had envisioned with the invocation of the oath. Ruth represents a stark contrast to every other occurrence of an oath, especially as a woman and a foreigner. With these differences noted, the issues of identity will be expounded on to reveal a potential *similarity* with irony. Ruth, in a similar way to the women of Judges 19–21, represents a reversal פילגש to the problem of progeny. This next section will wrestle with the terms of identity for the women within these two stories in order to highlight a canonical dialogue of answerability. The women of Judges 19–21 and Ruth will represent an "answer" to the progenitive problems for Israel.

10.6 Ruth as the reversal פילגש? Utterances of Identity and Alterity

Ruth as a woman is an interesting character. Taking our cue from recent remarks made by

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[43] Fentress-Williams, *Ruth*, 52.

the President of the United States on January 11, 2018, we can contend that Ruth is from a "shithole" tribe.[44] Even so, the biblical view of the Moabite clan, though portrayed negatively at times, was probably not as horrific as has been teased by later midrashic[45] or post-colonial interpretations, as a tribe rising from the ashes of an "incestuous bastard."[46] Jennifer Koosed advocates for a more generous biblical portrait of Moab and Israel than some interpretive readings of *Ruth* have painted. Ethnicity *is* important in the text, adding to the irony of the issue of foreign identity in Judges, as Ruth's Moabite origins are brought up five times in the story (*Ruth* 1:4, 22; 2:2, 21; 4:5, 10). This story, highlighting a Moabite woman, contributes a canonical voice for the silent women in Judges 19–21. *Ruth* still has a message to voice, crossing over border walls in the canon in order to be heard.

As stated previously, both stories have set forth a progentive problem. Judges answers beyond the readers' expectations to the death and dismemberment of the פילגש with a civil war involving חרם being executed on Benjamin, and then later on Jabesh-Gilead. *Ruth* becomes another voice in canonical dialogue, which responds to a similar issue with the portrayal of risky חסד. Ruth pledges her life to her mother-in-law, forfeiting her own rights and needs for another.

Similar to Jonathan's display of love for David (1 Samuel 20:13), Ruth places the life of Naomi over her own in the oath she gives in *Ruth* 1:16–17. The lives of Naomi and Ruth become deeply intertwined. They are both widows. In the final chapter, there is ambiguity in describing

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[44] This is a reference to President Donald Trump's questionable, negative comment regarding Haiti and African nations.

[45] As mentioned earlier in regards to Moabite aversion in the Midrash, *Ruth Rabbah*, Orpah returns home and on this journey, is brutally raped by a "hundred men and a dog." Nielsen, *Ruth*, 48. See also Neusner, *Ruth Rabbah*, 172. Hermann Strack notes that this midrashic text was called "Midrash Ruth in the first edition, Pesaro 1519, and has been known as Ruth Rabbah since the Venice edition of 1545." See H.L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, transl. and ed. by Markus Bockmuehl, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992), 317.

[46] Randall Bailey, "They're Nothing but Incestuous Bastards: The Polemical Use of Sex and Sexuality in the Hebrew Canon Narratives," in *Reading From This Place, Vol 1: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States.* vol. 1, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995), 128.

the widows, as the text describes one of the women as an אשה המת ("wife of the dead") in *Ruth*

4:5. In a detailed presentation of the diverse ways a widow is described, in Ruth is this term:

אשה המת ("wife of the dead"). The only other place this term of identity is referenced is in

Deuteronomy 25:5-10.

In the passage in Deuteronomy, a Levirate marriage is detailed. There is intentional

ambiguity in this term for identity in *Ruth* 4:5. אשה המת ("wife of the dead"). The descriptor is

most likely referring to Ruth, yet in the final chapter the child will be described as Naomi's.

Naomi will have a child through her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Ruth's identity will serve as the role

of a *reversal* פילגש. In dialogue with Judges 19 and the canonical use of פילגש, Ruth will subsume

the role of a second wife as she hands her son over to Naomi. He will be called "Naomi's son"

(*Ruth* 4:17). Handing the baby over to a mother-in-law serves as a פילגש in reverse. This would

normally be a lateral move to the first wife, but here, the baby will be handed back a generation

in order to secure the memory going forward. Ruth serves in the role of reversal פילגש in her

maternal role, and also in the *reversal* of misfortune.

The story began in an abundance of death-devastation and will end with the fulfillment of

life through progeny. The movement of identity with the women of Judges 21 altered from

"daughters and virgins" to wives. This movement initiated in Judges 19–21 into *Ruth* was the

result of murder, kidnap, and rape. For Ruth, there has been a similar movement of identity but

as a voice of protest, Ruth has shifted her identity through verbal utterance with her request on

the threshing floor for a levirate marriage (*Ruth* 3).

The threshold is a literal and symbolic place of significance in Judges 19 and *Ruth* 3.

Identity of person and place becomes the threshold in Judges 19, where the פילגש is pushed

outside of the house and into the hands of her abusers. The doorway/threshold is where she

crawls back and where her body will lay. The story slows down and captures her hand. Similar to the slowing of the narrative of Noah as he reached out his hand to carefully retrieve the dove safely after the traumatic flood (Genesis 8:9), the פילגש stretches out her hand and places it upon this the סף ("threshold").

Alone in this moment, her identity shifts and she is described as אשה ("wife"). Her body lay there alone at daybreak after the trauma of the abuse. The intertextual dialogue with the terms for threshold in Judges 19 reveals a deeply theological significance with the word chosen in Judges 19: 27. For the פילגש, the symbolic use of threshold is pregnant with sacrificial meaning.[47]

For Ruth, a symbolic threshold is crossed in *Ruth* 3. This scene on the threshing floor reveals an intertextual dialogue of identity. Her agency in that threshold moment on the threshing floor reveals her decision to alter her destiny. Bakhtin describes this motif of encounter as the "decision that changes a life."[48] Ruth's agency departs from Naomi's initial plan and through dialogue, Ruth navigates a new course. Rather than Ruth waiting for a response from Boaz as Naomi had instructed, it is *Ruth* who instructs Boaz. In this double request, Ruth asks for redemption *and* a levirate marriage. The literary motif of threshold is an intertextual utterance of canonical dialogue for Judges and *Ruth*.

Ruth resists, subverts, and demonstrates a woman of creative agency as a reversal פילגש. Her ability to navigate her fate through her own prowess has served as a bold authoritative statement of defiance to the horrors of Judges 19–21. In releasing the child to Naomi, Boaz and Ruth serve as redeemers in order to raise the name of the dead. Naomi "nurses" the child. Yee notes that the Hebrew word used is not of a literal nursing but one of a caregiver, rather than an

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[47] The threshold terms will be illustrated in Chapter 3 to highlight the theological and political significance of the use of סף ("threshold") in Judges 19:27.
[48] Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination,* 248.

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actual wet nurse. Yee examines the role of the resistance to genocide with a survey of the marginalized groups of wet nurses who are the foreign women in Egypt in Exodus 1–2.[49] The Hebrew word for wet nurse in the hiphil, מנקתה ("to suck, nurse") has six occurrences in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 24:59; 35:8; Exodus 2:7; 2 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 22:11; Isaiah 49:23) and is different than the word for the caregiver term attributed to Naomi in *Ruth* 4:16, אמן ("to nourish, foster-mother").

Although the roles are different, both the wet nurses and Ruth have used their bodies as instruments of resistance. Ruth chose to stay with Naomi, made requests of Boaz on the threshing floor, and proceeds to give her child to Naomi in order to raise the name of the dead. The irony of Ruth's role as a reversal פילגש is heightened when she does not disappear as the pattern of פילגש would attest to in other cases. Rather than sinking into the background of silence, Ruth is listed in the genealogy in Matthew 1:5.

Her ability to navigate her fate through her own prowess has served as a bold authoritative statement of defiance to the horrors of Judges 19–21. The irony of her role as a reversal פילגש is heightened when she is listed in the genealogy in Matthew 1:5. As stated before, Schneider has pointed out that the פילגש was denied the rights of memory in the genealogy list of the kings. In Matthew, Ruth is named as the mother. Her identity comes full circle, in a sense, as she is remembered as the mother of the king. The genealogy functions as a voice of canonical answerability. As Nielsen states, it is not the end but a beginning:

> It must be further emphasized that the story of Ruth has not been supplemented
> with a genealogy, as many scholars believe. The genealogy is in fact its basic
> premise and starting point. Admittedly the genealogy is a problem, but within the

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[49] Gale Yee, "'Take This Child and Nurse it For Me': Wet Nurses and Resistance in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 39 (2009): 181.

very problem lies the solution. It simply requires that Ruth be read intertextually, i.e. in light of-among others-the Tamar narrative.[50]

Listening to the voices within intertextual utterances is a way to navigate the strangeness of many of these stories. Though Ruth is silent in the last chapter, the women of Bethlehem have the final utterance in the story, giving praise to Ruth and the son she bore who will fulfill the emptiness in the life of Naomi. They will name the child, Obed. The name of the dead is raised. As Boaz has uttered earlier in *Ruth* 4, he will not only redeem land and acquire Ruth, but will also "raise the name of the dead man over his inheritance" (*Ruth* 4:5). Ruth will function, in this threshold progenitive doorway, as a reversal פילגש.

As a voice of subversion for the women of Judges 19–21, Ruth has chartered a new course through her actions and her voice. Green comments on the difficulties with meaning brought up in a study such as Ruth, as she writes, "the question seems to concern the return of seed to the field and the consequent burgeoning life. The text itself offers numerous indications of both its basic symbol and its basic questions, projecting its own meaning in front of itself, as it were."[51] This place of meaning highlighted by Green coincides with the idea of the canon wrestling with itself with answerability, in all of its voices: resisting, creating, and becoming.

The story of *Ruth* represents an alternative vision for women in the narrative of Israel, creating a new path through loss during the darkest period in Israel's history. Death and life form a full dialogical connection within these two stories. The employment of חרם and חסד in extravagant ways reveals the literary use of what could be considered grotesque realism. Themes of death and life, horror and hope, rejection and renewal, continue to surprise the reader in the complex dialogue of canonical answerability.

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[50] Nielsen, *Ruth*, 27.
[51] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*, 246.

An interesting canonical dialogue is at play with the idea of alterity and the question of "who is foreign?" The entire trajectory of Judges 19 was altered because the Levite refused to lodge in the town of a foreigner (Judges 19:12). One of the voices of subversion is the voice of the foreign women. There is a wordplay in *Ruth* that highlights this term of identity when Ruth is speaking to Boaz and finds his kindness to her above what she would have expected. Ruth states through wordplay with "foreigner" and "recognize" when she says, "How have I found favor in your eyes that you take notice of me, a foreigner?" (*Ruth* 2:10). This Moabite woman is not the only foreign woman to be highlighted in the story. Tamar is praised in the story as well (Ruth), even though she played the trickster in order to secure an נחלה ("inheritance"). There is only a positive assessment of Tamar.

In chapter 9, in connection with Green's work on the motif of foreign women, it was said that Green traced an important theme of salvation with the foreign women motif and their relationship within Israel (i.e., Rahab, Tamar, Ruth) in the "motif assemblage of the alien woman who brings life to her people."[52] Venter and Minnaar have highlighted that Zipporah's intervention between an angry YHWH and Moses had secured a future for such a profound figure in the Israelite story of becoming.[53] *Ruth* is one of these stories of resolve and subversion that showcase the dynamic movement of ethnic borders and boundaries continually being crossed—i.e., Ezra 10:10–11; Nehemiah 13:3.

10.7 The Dialogical Utterance of Earth-Keeping and People-Keeping[54]

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[52] Green, *Field and Seed Symbolism*,158–226.

[53] Venter and Minnaar, *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 1–4.

[54] "Earth-keeping" and "people-keeping" are phrases I have borrowed form Iain Provan's work in "The Land is Mine and You are Only Tenants (Leviticus 25:23): Earth-Keeping and People-Keeping in the Old Testament" in *Against The Grain: Selected Essays* (Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2015) and "On Keeping the Earth," in *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What The Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, TX: Baylor University, 2014).

Death changes the living. To be near the dying, to watch them sink into the earth, becomes part of our dialogue of life. The polyphonic nature of canon places voices in intentional conversation: the stories of old shape the life that is still living. The "imaginative power"[55] of canon is the imaginative power of story. The meeting of lives, similar to the meeting of stories, create dialogic moments that *become.* This was the power of Bakhtin's life work. Integrating parts into the whole—thinking deeply about what these parts mean as they come together and journey forward.

One of the powerful aspects of the biblical stories is that these stories remain open. They continue to be engaged and reengaged. Each scholar brings something new to the relationship, and walks away from a dialogical encounter, different or other—and perhaps as stated in the poem above, may become *strange*. Throughout the history of the church and religion, engagement with these texts has produced both death and life. Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* provide a canonical dialogue of life and death.

The story of *Ruth*, as identified in this project, is a subversive voice of canonical answerability to the silent utterances of the victimized women in Judges 19–21. These texts are in canonical dialogue with issues of gendered violence, oaths, identity, and progenitive problems. One of the main motifs is stated in the refrains of Judges: "There was no king in Israel; everyone did as he saw fit" (Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25). Governance to the dominion command is in canonical dialogue with Genesis 1. The scope of this section will not be able to holistically engage with the broad sweep of ecological hermeneutics but will dialogue with the kingship motif as a steward over land and people in order to draw out the divergences of the employment of חרם and חסד within these two texts in dialogue.

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[55] Chapman, *Law and Prophets*.

One of the areas of dominion is over the area of נחלה ("inheritance"). One of the

theological and ideological issues in Judges is that the lack of morality in Judges is tied to the

refrain: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit (17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25)."

The ecological conversation involves two major responsibilities: "earth-keeping and people-

keeping."[56] This forms the symbiotic relationship to life, and the idea of humanity having the

means and authority/ dominion, to care for the earth as an נחלה ("inheritance"). These major

themes are interwoven in these two משל's (Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*). חרם ("ban") brings death.

חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") brings life. The biblical concepts of חרם

("ban") and חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") form an important dialogue

forward with consideration of נחלה in these two texts (Judges 20:6. 21:23; 21:24; *Ruth* 4:5, 6,

10).

I will attempt to demonstrate in the next section the broader canonical voices of

answerability that speak into the use of נחלה ("inheritance") within Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*. Each

story presents a problem of inheritance, a progenitive dilemma. In chapter 8, I seek to illustrate

through Embry's study of Zelophehad's daughters in Numbers 27:1-1, that inheritance of

property was a key concern in Ruth 4. Redemption of name, along with property, are significant

aspects of this idea of נחלה ("inheritance"). Memory is connected to land and people. I will seek

to expand the broader implications of נחלה ("inheritance") through a brief survey on the role of

king and dominion.

My intention is to illustrate that there are broader theological and political ideals bound

up in this idea of נחלה ("inheritance"). I contend that this broader conversation will reveal how

extraordinary the use of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness") is within Ruth, and in

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[56] Provan, "The Land is Mine," in *Against the Grain*, 337.

particular, in dialogue with the use of חרם ("ban") in Judges 19–21. With an eye on the role of נחלה ("inheritance") within these stories, I hope to show how *Ruth* is a powerful canonical voice of answerability to the violence and destruction of Judges 19–21.

In Judges, נחלה ("inheritance, property, possession") is used in six verses (Judges 2:6, 9; 18:1; 20:6. 21:23; 21:24). In these occurrences, נחלה is connected to idea of land as Israel's possession and inheritance. In chapter 20:6, the Levite severs the body of the פילגש and sends her parts out to each region of Israel's נחלה ('inheritance'). In the final two uses of נחלה, the Benjamites have kidnapped the dancing women and "returned to their inheritance" and then they rebuild their communities with these women survivors. After this mass kidnapping, the text states that the Israelites left that place and each went home to their tribes and clans, each to his own נחלה (21:24)." Immediately, the refrain follows: "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as they saw fit" (21:25).

In *Ruth*, נחלה ("inheritance") is used three times in the final chapter (4: 5, 6, 10). נחלה is referring to the family estate of Elimelek. Ruth, the wife of the dead, becomes part of the conversation between Mr. So and So and Boaz in the redemption of this נחלה. After an initial agreement by the unnamed redeemer to purchase the נחלה, Boaz creates a twist in the story with the introduction of the Moabite, Ruth, as part of the property. Her function as part of this redemption was presented in order to perpetuate the name of the deceased (*Ruth* 4:5). Mr. So and So retracts his initial response and steps aside. Later in 4:10, Boaz declares that he will acquire all the land—and Ruth—in order to "raise the name of the dead man over his נחלה" ("inheritance," 4:10).

Ruth continues to be a canonical voice of answerability as נחלה is used in conjunction with the act of redeeming Naomi's inheritance alongside a levirate-type marriage. This foreign

woman has become part of the resurrection of a family that was headed towards annihilation. Hubbard comments on the desperate issue a family would face with the loss of lineage: "The loss of land and heirs amounted to personal annihilation—the greatest tragedy imaginable."[57] The irony of this ending is that the name of the dead is raised, even after the excessive חרם witnessed in Judges.

After the desperate attempts to secure a נחלה for the tribe of Benjamin, this story of *Ruth* reveals an ethical dialogue with the extravagant use of חסד as a voice to counter the horror at the end of Judges. Not one voice of resistance speaks at the end of Judges for all the executed men, women, and children of Jabesh-Gilead. The voiceless multitudes from the tribe of Benjamin who have been slaughtered without resistance form the other tribes. The mass amount of violence just brushed over at the end of Judges is met with the story of one small family of widows in Ruth. This story presents an alternative pathway to sustain נחלה. נחלה extends in metaphorical meaning beyond land to an even greater sense of memory and rootedness as YHWH is described as Israel's נחלה (Joshua 13:14) and Israel as YHWH's נחלה (2 Samuel 21:3; Jeremiah 10:16; Deuteronomy 4:20).

There is a sense of YHWH's cosmic sovereignty over all peoples and lands (Deuteronomy 32:8–9). The tribe of Levi was the only tribe to not receive land as נחלה (Numbers 26:62), because YHWH was to be the נחלה of the Levites (Numbers 18:20). There is a reach beyond land as נחלה ("inheritance") extends to beyond geographical borders and into landscapes of relationship. This symbiotic relationship between land, humanity, and YHWH becomes a necessary component of what the role of an Israelite king encompasses.[58] Earth–keeping and

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[57] Hubbard, *Ruth*, 244.
[58] Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that the watershed article that has been a reference point with the idea of Christianity as "the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen" in the ecological hermeneutic discussion by Lynn White Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" in *Science,*

people–keeping is the combined task of priests and kings. Harkening back from Genesis 2:15, the instruction to שמר ("keep," "watch," "preserve") the garden is the language of priestly duties (Numbers 3:7-8). Provan comments on this word as "*religious* work, this work of the human being in God's world. It is *holy* work, looking after the garden—a garden that does not belong to us but to someone else."[59] The futures of the earth belong to those that will inherit it, and the duty to those in the present is still to guard and care for the gift that it is.

Genesis 1:28 has been the source of much debate concerning the charge to govern over humanity with the terms רדה ("rule," "have dominion") and כבש ("subdue") the earth.[60] Conquest is a nuance evidenced with the use of these verbs witnessed in Joshua and David's military conquests (Joshua 18:1; 2 Samuel l 8:11). The idea רדה ("rule," "have dominion," Genesis 1:28) implies governance. Though these verbs are strong, there is the compelling divine privilege of power given to the office of the king, under the rule and reign of YHWH to rule and subdue in a way that cares for creation. The King is not unbridled in power and is always answerable and responsible to YHWH. The warnings from Samuel remind the people that they have requested this king. The human king, once enthroned, is still answerable to YHWH. The final warning

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New Series, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (Mar. 10, 1967), 1203–1207 published by the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Much of the discussion begins with the mandate in Genesis for humanity to have "dominion" and "to rule" over the earth. Rather than an oppressive rule, *radah* has been shown to reveal a governance of rule akin with priests (Jeremiah 5:31) and shepherds (Ezekiel 34:4), as well as the monarchy (1 Kings 4:24). Many scholars have taken the task to reveal the biblical mandate to care for creation by citing passages such as Exodus 23:9–12 and Exodus 20:8–11 which reveal rest (Sabbath) in the priestly cycle of time for not only people but land and animals (also Deuteronomy 22). Iain Provan describes it as a "sacrificial looking after creation" opposed to a "Lording over the rest of creation." See Provan's "The Land is Mine," 330. Likewise, John W. Rogerson describes the other passages for the care of animals when he writes: "These passages do not describe a humanity exploiting the natural world and its non-human but rather a humanity exercising a gracious role in an otherwise cruel world, inspired by narrative and cultural memories about God's compassionate action in freeing a people from slavery. Taken together with Genesis, they offer a challenge to modern practice." Rogerson in *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Theological, Historical Perspectives* edited by David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (London, England: T & T Clark International, 2010), 30–31. John Barton views the wisdom literature as a helpful place of dialogue with environmental concerns, even more so than the prophets. In particular, he cites Proverbs and Job as integral texts in this discussion. See "Reading the Prophets from an Environmental Perspective" in *Ecological Hermeneutics,*" 55.

[59] Provan, "On Keeping the Earth," 224.
[60] "subdue/dominion"

alerts the people that this new leadership established in the monarchic role is contingent on this position's ability to govern well, "But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you. Yet if you persist in doing evil, both you and your king will perish" (1 Samuel 12:24).

The Hebrew Bible's vision of ideal kingship is bound with the right and just rule in relation to earth-keeping and people-keeping. The first murder in Genesis reveals this continual struggle to be our brother's keeper and our sister's keeper (Genesis 4:9). This idea of *keeper* encompasses the sense of guarding and protecting the other. Humanity's governance is to execute justice, righteousness, and protection (Genesis 1:28–30; Psalm 72; Leviticus 19:10–18; 1 Kings 2:3–4; Proverbs 31:8–9).

In particular, the Israelite king was to serve and obey YHWH as a steward over what has been entrusted to his care. King David charges his son Solomon to rule wisely:

> Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the Lord may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, "If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel."[61]

נחלה is tied to the idea of land, memory, redemption, and ultimately to YHWH. YHWH and humanity are also described as a נחלה ("inheritance, possession, property"). The role of the king and priest as earth and people keepers remains one of the silent utterances within these texts. The Levite's report of the horrific account of the פילגש is an utterance of ambiguity and misrepresentation. The text artisan has offered clues to the readers with the use of המכלת ("the knife"), סף ("threshold"), and חרם ("ban").

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[61] 1 Kings 2:3–4 NAS.

These terms draw out intertextual, theological and political voices within the literary presentation of suffering. The refrain, "In those days Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit" is pointing to a political doorway toward the monarchy to provide part of the dialogue. Ruth becomes another voice of canonical answerability to Judges 19–21 with an extravagant display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"), which results in the genealogy of a king. Though this king represents a partial answer for Israel during this particular chronotope, the warning admonished by King David to his son Solomon will continue into exile and beyond.

10.8 Conclusion

Ruth functions as a powerful and authoritative voice of answerability in dialogue with Judges 19–21. Although scholars have commented briefly that Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue without a detailed exposition, this research has attempted to illustrate how they are in dialogue, through a Bakhtinian reading strategy, along with a canonical approach. In this chapter, I have attempted to demonstrate how *Ruth* is a voice of subversion and protest with the use of terms of identity, the covenant oath formula (*Ruth* 1:16–17) and the idioms: נשא אשה (Judges 21:23; *Ruth* 1:4) and דבר על-לב (Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13).

In particular, one area of comparison I have attempted to draw out is how Ruth functions as a a פילגש in reverse. The ambiguity of the role of the פילגש in Judges 19–21 becomes an interesting place of comparison with the ambiguity of אשה המת ("wife of the dead") in *Ruth*. Ruth, in an alternative way, encompasses the role of a second wife as she hands her son over to her Naomi. He will be called, "Naomi's son" (*Ruth* 4:17). Ruth could be considered a reversal פילגש in her maternal role, and also in the *reversal* of misfortune. The body of the פילגש ends in death and dismemberment, used to incite חרם ("ban") in Judges 19–21. Ruth becomes a body of

life, resurrecting the name of the dead, through her display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness").

The story of *Ruth* speaks into the haunted silence of Judges 19–21, weaving an imaginative canonical complexity with gender, subversion and protest that continually dismount ideals and thwart an attempt of a simplistic hegemonic reading. The end of Judges displays patterns of extreme violence to land and people. With this in purview, the refrain, "there was no king in Israel, everyone did as they saw fit" (19:1; 21:25) begins to alert the reader that proper stewardship of humanity and land as נחלה ("inheritance") under חרם ("ban") has led to an even greater excess of unwise behavior and choices. The consequences are too great to number.

Within this same literary chronotope, *Ruth* serves as a way pointing forward with an extraordinary display of חסד ("loving–kindness," "covenant–faithfulness"), of self-sacrifice for the other. With the story of *Ruth* beginning with death and ending with life, it becomes clear that this story was meant to be one of the canonical voices of answerability to the horror and violence witnessed in Judges. It is as if the text of Judges 19–21 is calling out for a king to make things right and one reply comes in the form of a story about women, and in particular, a Moabite woman named Ruth.

My attempt to illustrate *Ruth's* canonical response of protest and resistance to the gendered violence in Judges 19–21 is a desire to show the plurality of intertextual voices from the margins that speak into these violent chapters. The gendered violence witnessed in Judges 19–21 will not be buried in canonical literary silence. I contend that this research offers an approach that provides one constructive pathway forward for groups that value the sacredness of the texts, and to be able to challenge difficult stories with close and creative intertextual re–readings within the canons.

10.8.1 *Final Thoughts*

This final section will summarize the aim of this dissertation, which set forth to illustrate how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in intertextual dialogue within the Hebrew canon. The concepts and methodology proposed will be summarized and the results will be identified. Previous cursory observations have been made that Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue without a detailed study of *how* they are set in dialogue. This study has afforded an opportunity for an investigation to facilitate this conversation through a close intertextual and canonical reading utilizing Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism. Bakhtin's use in Biblical Studies has influenced this project in three main areas: (1) the polyphonic nature of canon, (2) the quest for marginalized voices, and (3) genre considerations of Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.

10.8.1.1 *Summary*

Chapter 1 began with an investigation that sought to bring forth canonical voices to speak into the silence and gaps of Judges 19–21, with particular attention to the silenced and abused women at the end of Judges. The text of *Ruth* was placed as one of the main intertextual dialogue partners due to the interplay of three primary reasons: (1) its placement in the Septuagint and Vulgate immediately after Judges, (2) the literary connection in *Ruth* 1:1, "The days the judges were judging," (3) the juxtaposition of feminine silence (Judges 19–21) with feminine dialogue (*Ruth*). Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is introduced in this chapter to propose a method

of intertextual shaping in this pursuit to discover marginal voices for the silent. In particular, key terms and concepts of Bakhtin's work were addressed: polyphonic, double-voiced discourse, living utterance, chronotope, answerability, and the threshold.

Taking these dialogical concepts into account provided a way to listen to the intertextual voices and how they interplay and shape one another, offering intentional intertextual voices from the margins to speak into the silent gaps within the narrative of Judges 19–21. A proposal was set forth in this chapter that an examination of genre could serve to lay groundwork for understanding how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* have already been set in canonical conversation.

Chapter 2 sought to discover a voice of answerability for the voiceless in Judges 19–21 through early canon consciousness. Bakhtin's concepts of answerability and utterance charted a way forward to locate voices of responsibility, of answerability, in the gendered violence located in the last three chapters of Judges. An intertextual study of נתח ("to cut") revealed that there are intertextual voices within the Pentateuch and Deuteronomic History that speak to the unusual use of נתח in Judges 19–21. The atypical use of this term applied to a woman's body, the פילגש, reveals the grotesque nature of its use in the Hebrew Bible, particularly within the Pentateuch, Deuteronomistic History and in the prophetic text of Ezekiel. The outcome of this survey became a launching point to explore the genre of Judges 19–21 more extensively.

Chapter 3 challenges the previous genre identifications assigned to Judges 19–21 in previous scholarship. This final unit has been described as an addendum, a "political declaration,"[62] a "scandalous narrative" and even a "comic resolution" to the book of Judges.[63] With an eye to previous genre considerations such as a "short story"[64] and "heroic genre,"[65] this

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[62] Buber, *Kingship of God*, 77–78.
[63] Robert G. Boling, "In Those Days There Was No King in Israel," 43.
[64] Block, *Judges, Ruth*, 53.
[65] Niditch, *Judges*, 9.

chapter set forth the proposal of Judges 19–21 as a מָשָׁל ("proverb/parable") of dialogue, in form and function. This genre identification was substantiated by an investigation of the treatment of מָשָׁל throughout the Hebrew Bible, with special attention to corresponding examples. These examples exhibit similar characteristics of the מָשָׁל, such as the absence of an intrinsic designation of the term מָשָׁל along with the anonymity of characters. The correlating texts utilized to support this proposal were 2 Samuel 12 (Nathan's sheep parable), 2 Samuel 14 (wise woman of Tekoa), and Judges 9:7–15 (Jotham's parable).

Chapter 4 explores the use of irony through double-voiced discourse in Judges 20 and 21 through reported speech. Ironic encounters are engaged in the text with strange displays of authority (kingly activities), unity, anonymity, and activity (oaths and weeping). Ideologies through intertextual utterances exhibit a double-voiced utterances and loopholes in the story, in particular with the actions and authority of the Levite alongside the description of how the woman, the פִּילֶגֶשׁ, died. The Levite is described as "the husband of the woman, the one slain" (Judges 20:4). Within the context of Judges 19–21, the use of רצח ("slain, murder") reveals one of the violent and immoral characteristics of her death.

Chapter 5 investigates the violent nature of the final chapters of Judges s through the complexities of genre designations. Bakhtin's literary theory, grotesque realism, became a heuristic in which to explore the purpose of חרם ("the ban") with its atypical use of violence. Through a comparative study of the use of חרם in Judges 1:17 and 21:11 with Joshua 6 and 7, the dark irony of Judges 19-21 is heightened. The theological and political intentionality of the use of חרם reveals that it is an extravagant feature of the story. Executing חרם becomes complicated with the question of who is 'other' when the Israelite Achan is placed under the ban in Joshua 7. Combining this use with the strange execution of חרם on the entire familial town in

Judges 21, the oddities and questions of "who is truly foreign?" is accentuated under these uses and executions of חרם.

A closer investigation of the word choices reveal that these stories are disclosed with a sideways glance. The elders command the Benjamite men to חטף ("seize") the women of Shiloh in Judges 21:21. The only other occurrence of חטף in the Hebrew Bible is in Psalms 10:9. The leonine imagery of the kidnapping in dialogue with Psalms 10, which details the activities of the wicked taking advantage of the poor is befitting of the end of Judges. The use of חטף reveals an intertextual utterance of answerability.

Chapters 6 and 7 explores *Ruth's* chronotope in the canons in order to detail how the genre of *Ruth* functions. I contend that *Ruth's* movement within the canons illustrated that *Ruth* is a travelling text, resisting borders, and is in canonical conversation with not only Judges, but also with the Law and Prophets. An intertextual study of Ruth and Tamar is introduced in chapter 6. These findings illustrate that the text of *Ruth* is an intertextual voice, heightening the dialogic nature of *Ruth* as an influential voice within the entire canon.

Chapter 7 demonstrates how *Ruth* charts a new path forward in this dialogue, as a Moabite woman who not only utters an oath with an Israelite woman, but also embodies a voice of authority as a text. This voice will continue to chart a new course, which may have shifted the Moabite peoples' misrepresentation through oral tradition. Along with this identity shift, Ruth also embodies a strength of character, which casts her identity in line with kings and patriarchs. *Ruth's* early canonical acceptance reveals *Ruth* has an authoritative voice within the biblical story. With this foundation laid, this voice will become a provocative intertextual utterance with the silenced women of Judges 19–21.

Chapter 8 establishes that *Ruth* is in canonical dialogue with the law, prophets, and other critical narratives of identity for Israel. The woman, Ruth, subverts and creates a new future for herself and Naomi. Her risky display of חסד continues to reveal a pattern similar to the "pattern of foreign" women who take risks and become the "source of life" for the "other" (Tamar, Rahab, Zipporah).[66] Ruth's requests on the threshing floor at midnight display a dialogue of subversion and prowess as she charts an unfamiliar path for herself and Naomi, in order to raise the name of the dead. The timing of this threshold scene at midnight reveals a broader canonical dialogue with critical political and theological transitions, such as the exodus, conquest narratives, and the political shift from judges to monarchy. This study begins to elucidate how Ruth not only becomes a progenitive way forward for one family, but also functioning as a משל. Ruth becomes a voice of power, agency, subversion, and protest within the wider biblical story. This chapter exemplifies the imaginative power of canon with the process of the nation of Israel, *becoming,* through story.

Chapter 9 continues to expand the analysis with a close reading of *Ruth* 4. *Ruth* 4 and Judges 19–21 share a similar dilemma, a progenitive problem, a problem of inheritance. In the משל of Judges 19–21, the women remain voiceless and powerless in how this משל unfolds. This silence becomes an invitation for a canonical dialogue and reorientation for the readers. The משל of *Ruth* develops a voice of subversion and protest to the entire משל of Judges 19–21. In order to secure progeny for the Benjamite tribe in Judges, women were kidnapped and חרם was executed internally.

In *Ruth*, a similar progenitive problem is presented. Rather than a response of death and dismemberment to the dilemma, Ruth and Naomi utilize law and dialogue to chart a progenitive

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[66] Green*, Field and Seed Symbolism*, 202–203.

way forward. Without one act of extreme violence, Elimelech is resurrected from the dead and perpetuated in memory. This chapter explores how the story of *Ruth* searches for an answer through an extravagant display of חסד. Ironically, Ruth and Naomi are silent in the final chapter. Although Ruth has not uttered a word, the women of Bethlehem become voices of answerability in the silence. Her actions have revealed חסד towards her mother-in-law throughout the entire story. This has been acknowledged by Boaz, and, in a chorus of praise, will be acknowledged by the women. These women speak to Naomi on behalf of Ruth, revealing that Ruth is better in her eyes than seven sons.

Chapter 10 provides a detailed exploration of how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue. The previous chapters provided a close reading of each voice (Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*), analyzing genre, observing intertextual utterances within the polyphonic nature of canon, searching for voices of answerability through double voiced discourse in the chronotope of each story. Particular attention was given to the use of the literal and symbolic threshold in each story– סף in Judges 19 and the threshing floor in *Ruth* 3–in order to facilitate this final analysis of how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue.

I have attempted to demonstrate that *Ruth* functions as a voice of canonical answerability to the gendered violence and silencing of women in Judges 19–21. The extravagant nature of חרם at the end of Judges reveals the struggle of identity and otherness. By the end of Judges, after fratricide and kidnapping, rape and death, the reader is asking, "Who is truly under חרם"? The grotesque and ironic surface in an extravagant display of darkness. This reveals inverse political and societal roles through Bakhtin's literary theory of grotesque realism. Death becomes the absurd literary instrument to bring forth a violent canonical birth. *Ruth* functions as a canonical birth to the משל of Judges 19–21.

Ruth is given a voice of subversion and protest with the use of terms of identity, the covenant oath formula (*Ruth* 1:16–17) and the idioms: נשא אשה (Judges 21:23; *Ruth* 1:4) and דבר על-לב (Judges 19:3; *Ruth* 2:13) and the use of נחלה ("inheritance, possession, property") in both stories (Judges 20:6; 21:23, 24; *Ruth* 4:4, 6, 10). The story of *Ruth* provides an alternative path forward with the progenitive problem. *Ruth* becomes a powerful authoritative intertextual voice of agency and answerability.

10.8.1.2 *Observations and Implications*

This study detailed an analysis utilizing Bakhtin's dialogism and has demonstrated that there are canonical voices for the silenced women in Judges 19–21. In particular, *Ruth* has proven to be a canonical voice of answerability through her unique use of an oath, her double request on the threshing floor, her risky display of חסד for Naomi, and her use of nonviolence in response to the similar progenitive problem of Judges 19–21.

A critical observation within this study has proposed genre designations and established a proposal for Judges 19–21 to be designated in form and function as a dialogic משל. Genre is itself a voice, an utterance in the dialogue. An argument was also set forth for the genre of *Ruth* in regard to *Ruth's* function. Considerations of the nature of genre as an elastic category proved to be useful in the discussion of how Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* participate in the canons.

Ruth's movement is inherently dialogic within the Hebrew Bible. Furthermore, the משל is dialogic in nature, and *Ruth* functions as a משל in the Hebrew canon. The intrinsic genre of משל within the Hebrew Bible proved to be a constructive pursuit. The didactic and dialogical quality of the משל genre was able to encapsulate the historiographic, artistic, and ethical thrusts within Judges 19–21 and *Ruth*.

Bakhtin's literary theory of grotesque realism provided a constructive method to investigate the function of חרם. The extravagant display of חרם, with an eye towards the carnivalesque, begins to illustrate the intentional use of absurd violence. Bakhtin illustrates that the function of degradation in grotesque realism:

> To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grace for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one.[67]

The degradation of Judges 19–21 lowers ideals into the bowels of חרם and provides an alternative path forward through the canonical birth of *Ruth*. *Ruth* thus becomes a regenerating vision and a voice of answerability to Judges 19–21.

The extravagant use of חרם executed in Judges 19–21 revealed that there is a case for alterity within the national identity of Israel. The question of "who is foreign" continues to be elusive as foreign women continue to be critical life-saving women of agency for the nation of Israel (Rahab, Zipporah, Tamar, Ruth) in significant political and theologically defining moments (entry into the promised land; the exodus; lineage of the monarchy) for Israel. Ruth partakes in the resurrection of a family, illustrating that the question of alterity is complicated throughout the biblical story, resisting simplistic observations.

Bakhtin's dialogism has contributed an approach to listen to the negative and positive space, the gaps of silence in the biblical stories. Words and life, ambiguity and clarity, past and future—all meet for a moment to become something new in the present, capturing the dialogic image of literary art. Through interdisciplinary methods, using key concepts from Bakhtin and a

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[67] Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 21.

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canonical approach, this research provides a comparative case study of *how* Judges 19–21 and *Ruth* are in dialogue.

Bakhtin is to be credited for inspiring new ways to listen into the gaps of silence in any story, but especially in the violent stories in the Hebrew Bible. Thinking with Bakhtin has facilitated a way forward with my research in an attempt to demonstrate how particular intertextual readings may reveal an ethical canonical response to the gendered violence, as responses of answerability.

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