ELIJAH THE TISHBITE: THE ZEALOUS HE-PROPHET'S GENDER PERFORMANCE IN 1 AND 2 KINGS

by

Matthew Webster Spielman Argonauta

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Religious Studies

Charlotte

2022

Approved by:

_____
Dr. Barbara Thiede

_____
Dr. Kent Brintnall

_____
Dr. Emek Ergun

ABSTRACT

MATTHEW WEBSTER SPIELMAN ARGONAUTA. Elijah the Tishbite: The Zealous He-Prophet's Gender Performance in 1 and 2 Kings.
(Under the direction of DR. BARBARA THIEDE)

The prophet Elijah is known for his zealousness on behalf of the Israelite deity, Yhwh. This zeal particularly manifests itself as Elijah defends the exclusive worship of Yhwh in the northern kingdom of Israel during the reign of King Ahab, after Ahab and his Phoenician wife Queen Jezebel promote the worship of the Canaanite deities Baal and Asherah alongside Yhwh. This thesis argues scholars of biblical masculinity have yet to closely study Elijah's gender performance and have not recognized the complexity of Elijah's masculinity because it has been presumed his zealous hyper-masculine gender performance is static and stable. This research suggests not only that Elijah's masculinity is complicated, but that important failures of his masculine performance, including feminization by Queen Jezebel, reveal an unstable masculinity and lead to Elijah's downfall and replacement as Yhwh's chosen prophet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am most grateful for the guidance of Dr. Barbara Thiede, both on this particular project and throughout my time in the Religious Studies Department at UNC Charlotte. She has been a true mentor, challenging and championing me at the same time. I am so thankful for the time and energy she put into this thesis project. Thank you to Dr. Kent Brintnall for his work as both a reader and the department Graduate Director. In addition to this project, he has been a great conversation partner during the course of my studies. And, thank you to Dr. Emek Ergun for her time as a reader on this project and also her guidance and instruction during my Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies course work. This work also owes a debt of gratitude to all the faculty and students of the Religious Studies Department; their contributions to my thinking and research are innumerable. Finally, I must thank my very loving friends and family. They are too many to name, but without them I would not be here.

DEDICATION

To all who have been harmed by masculinity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction:

Elijah is described in 2 Kings 1:8 as "A hairy man, with a leather belt around his waist." In 1 Kings 18:40 he single-handedly slaughters 450 prophets of Baal. His rugged appearance and his capacity for superhuman violence have led scholars to describe him as a hypermasculine he-prophet.[1] Rhiannon Graybill presents the problem of Elijah as limited to one of "too much masculinity, virility, divine spirit, power."[2] Focusing on Elijah's hyper-masculinity, however, can prevent us from understanding that his masculinity is anything but static. For that reason, Elijah is problematic as God's chosen prophet. Elijah's problems from his masculinity are not limited to excess. Elijah also experiences feminization which exposes the instability of his hyper-masculinity. Elijah lacks necessary self-control in exercising violence and refuses to show empathy to the repentant Israelites or humble himself before Yhwh. Although scholars have previously recognized particular failures leading Yhwh to replace Elijah with Elisha, they have neglected to realize that these failures are directly tied to his performance of masculinity. Scholars have pigeonholed Elijah as overly masculine in his zealous defense of Israelite worship of Yhwh and missed important nuances of Elijah's gender performance as a result. This essay will utilize scholarship on biblical hegemonic masculinity and multiple masculinities theory to closely examine Elijah's masculinity alongside related biblical characters, paying special attention to the nuances of the prophet's gender performance which ultimately cause his downfall.

---

[1] David J.A. Clines, "He-Prophets: Masculinity as a Problem for the Hebrew Prophets and Their Interpreters," in *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, ed. Philip R. Davies, et al. (New York and London: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd, 2002), 314; Rhiannon Graybill, *Are We Not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 46.

[2] Graybill, *Are We Not Men?*, 46.

Historical Period:

Before looking at Elijah's gender performance it is necessary to situate his character and the narrative within the biblical historical record. After the death of King Solomon (928 B.C.E.), the northern tribes withdrew their allegiance to Solomon's successor, Rehoboam, and Jeroboam ben Nebat became the first king of the Kingdom of Israel.[3] Jeroboam's rule began in approximately 928 B.C.E. The Kingdom of Israel continued until its defeat and expulsion by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.E.[4] During this two-century period, Israel saw "the rapid rise and fall of petty dynasts (belonging to nine different families)."[5] The army commander Omri successfully took power in 876 B.C.E. instituting the Omrid dynasty, during which Elijah's prophetic activity is situated.[6]

The prophet Elijah and his successor Elisha occupy a cycle of biblical narrative from 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 10, which covers an eighty-year span. Six kings of the northern Kingdom of Israel, from Omri's son Ahab to Jehoash, rule during this time span, the last of which ruled until approximately 784 B.C.E.[7] Within the biblical narrative, Elijah appears suddenly at the beginning of 1 Kings 17. Elijah announces a drought in the northern kingdom of Israel that will only end by his word (1 Kings 17:1).[8] Although this is his first appearance, he is a fully

---

[3] Julius Wellhousen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885), 457; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, s.v. "Solomon," 755. Gale eBooks accessed March 12, 2022, https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587518817/GVRL?u=char69915&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=6d35e7de.

[4] Joseph Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 68.

[5] Blenkinsopp, 56.

[6] Blenkinsopp, 57.

[7] Benjamin Uffenheimer, Early Prophecy in Israel (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1999), 315; Mordechai Cogan, *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2001), 508.

[8] All biblical citations New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

functioning prophet, proclaiming a drought in Israel. Whatever legends of Elijah's earlier life may have existed, they have been lost to history. The author simply demonstrates that Elijah is a primary prophet in the northern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of the kings Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram (2 Kings 1). These three kings reigned in Israel approximately thirty-one years, 873-842 B.C.E. We can confidently place Elijah's prophetic activity within this thirty-one-year period.[9]

This historical period was also characterized by close interaction between Israel and Phoenician cities.[10] The Israelite-Phoenician encounter was so close that King Omri arranged for his son and heir Ahab to wed the daughter of the Tyrian king Ittobaal to secure a political and commercial alliance.[11] This princess, who would become queen of Israel when Ahab succeeded his father as king, is Queen Jezebel who features prominently in the Elijah narratives as an opponent to both Elijah and Israelite worship of Yhwh. While it is clear that Yhwh remained the Israelite national deity, Baal worship was not only tolerated, but supported by Ahab and vigorously defended by Jezebel.[12]

Composition and Compilation of Elijah Narrative:

---

[9] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 508.

[10] Blenkinsopp, 42.

[11] Blenkinsopp, 57.

[12] Wellhousen, 461-62; Blenkinsopp, 58. Ahab and Jezebel's children were given Yahwistic names and archaeological evidence suggests that the worship of Yhwh alongside Baal and Asherah was common among the majority of the population. For a comprehensive treatment of the archeological evidence see William G. Dever, *Did God Have a Wife: Archeology and Folk Religion in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005).

The Elijah material found in 1 and 2 Kings existed previously as separate stories or in separate collections of stories.[13] Joseph Blenkinsopp notes a number of recurring hagiographic motifs of the narrative including that "the saint is fed miraculously by birds (1 Kings 17:2-7) or by angels (19:5-8), he controls the weather (17:1), levitates (18:12; 2 Kings 2:1-12, 16), and performs preternatural feats of endurance ([1] Kings 18:46; 19:8)."[14] Although these miraculous feats are legendary, Blenkinsopp rightly adds that they convey the prophet's spiritual prowess and zeal.[15]

Although the Elijah cycle comes from different sources, it comes to us as a narrative unit. There has been little redactional expansion other than to turn the various independent sections into a cohesive narrative. Scholars have attempted to determine precisely where these editorial additions are, and which narrative sections belong together or with other parts of the Hebrew Bible. Despite these efforts there remains no definitive conclusion. Martin Noth proposed a single author of a "Deuteronomistic History" which recorded the downfall of Israel. Within this proposed unified work, Kings is the "final stage in this epic that set out Israel's history from the occupation of Canaan to its Exile from the Promised Land."[16] Frank Moore Cross proposed a delineation between two themes found in the Deuteronomistic History and analyzed Kings in particular. Cross separates out the Deuteronomistic History into Dtr^1 and Dtr^2. Dtr^1 is said to be closer to the contemporary period of the historian and contains the climax of the presented history. It contains two primary themes; that the "crucial event in the history of the Northern

[13] Uffenheimer, 341.

[14] Blenkinsopp, 59.

[15] Blenkinsopp, 59.

[16] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 96.

Kingdom was the sin of Jeroboam" which will be its downfall and cause it to be erased; and that the Davidic line of kings in Judah which was chosen by Yhwh will reign from Jerusalem forever.[17] Dtr^2, according to Cross, was added by an editor during the exile when a revision to the notion of an everlasting Davidic dynasty needed updating. This editor added "conditionality to the Davidic promise" adding the sin of Manasseh placing an image of Asherah in the Jerusalem temple.[18]

Considering the Elijah cycle contains legendary stories from older and differing collections, and that multiple layers of editing exist within the entire Deuteronomistic History, it is impossible to determine with absolute confidence precisely where each Elijah legend belongs. However, Benjamin Uffenheimer identifies "five clearly identifiable, self-contained literary units: I Kings 17-18:37a; 19; 21; II Kings 1; 2."[19] Uffenheimer writes, "The different collections comprising the Elijah Cycle bespeak a gradually increasing idealization of the figure of Elijah."[20] Chronologically, Uffenheimer hypothetically organizes the Elijah cycle as: 1 Kings 21; 1 Kings 17-18; 19; 2 Kings 2; 2 Kings 1.[21] These literary units and the proposed chronology are helpful for thinking about the Elijah cycle's literary development to its current composition in standard Hebrew Bible editions such as the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS) and translations based

[17] Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 278-282.

[18] Cross, 286-287; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 97.

[19] Uffenheimer, 341.

[20] Uffenheimer, 345.

[21] Uffenheimer, 346.

on this but augmented by other manuscripts such as those from the Septuagint (LXX) and Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS).[22]

Because there is ongoing scholarly debate about authorial and editorial layers in both the Deuteronomistic History and the Elijah Cycle, this thesis project will treat the Elijah material as a literary unit as it is contained within the BHS.[23] It is necessary to know that a long process of collection and editing took place, but what remains, remains for a reason, and thus there is ample merit in approaching the text as a single unit.

Masculinity Theory and the Hebrew Bible:

Prior to the 1990's there were only a few studies of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible. In 1966 Harry A. Hoffner Jr. published "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals." Hoffner argued that masculinity in the ancient near east was gauged by how effective a man was in battle and through his virility. As a result, the accompanying symbols for masculinity usually had duel meaning representing both "military exploits" and "sexual ability."[24] Hoffner focuses his analysis on weaponry symbolism, specifically bows which signifies both military and virile success.[25] Hoffner's study includes the Ancient Near East more broadly and therefore includes the Hebrew Bible only minimally. Two

[22] Rudolf Kittel, Karl Elliger, Wilhelm Rudolph, Hans Peter Rüger, and G. E. Weil, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997), XIV. BHS is itself a transcription of the Leningrad Codex dating from 1008-1009 C.E.

[23] Unless otherwise noted, the New Revised Standard Version translation will be used.

[24] Harry A. Hoffner, Jr., "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85, no. 3 (September, 1966): 327.

[25] Stephen M. Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory: Past, Present, and Future," in *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, ed. Ovidiu Creanga (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019), 22.

scholars, John Goldingay and Harold Washington, separately applied Hoffner's work more thoroughly to the biblical text.[26] Goldingay's "Hosea 1-3, Genesis 1-4 and Masculist Interpretation" identifies three features of masculinity within Genesis 1-4: a man determines who he is by seeing who a woman is; men have authority granted by God; and men have physical strength and a penchant for violence.[27] Harold Washington took the Hebrew Bible masculine appetite for violence further, arguing the ideal site for this violence is the female body. His essay "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach" suggests that ancient Israel is a "rape culture." Within rape cultures "sexual assault is viewed as a manly act and women are regarded as intrinsically rapable."[28]

Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* is an important analysis of masculinity and the male body—specifically the body of Yhwh—in Hebrew Bible.[29] Eilberg-Schwartz traces a shift of the Israelite conception of their deity and argues that when the Israelites began viewing Yhwh as not having a female consort an anatomical problem arose for human men. Imagining an embodied male deity, which includes the deity possessing the male member, presents a homoerotic dilemma for human men who are worshiping, and striving to be close to, the deity. Eilberg-Schwartz further argues this dilemma regarding the male deity results in men desiring, or needing, to be feminized.[30] According to

---

[26] Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 22.

[27] John Goldingay, "Hosea 1-3, Genesis 1-4 and Masculist Interpretation," in *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan and Carole R. Fontaine (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1995), 163-64.

[28] Harold C. Washington, "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach," *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 5, no. 4 (1997): 352.

[29] Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 23.

[30] Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), 18.

Eilberg-Schwartz's argument, human men should be subordinate to Yhwh who represents the dominant masculinity.

An additional influential work for the study of biblical masculinity is Cynthia Chapman's, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter*. Chapman focuses on gendered language in Assyrian and biblical accounts of war. In these narratives a defeated king, especially when fleeing, is routinely referred to with feminizing language. The victorious king has typically masculine epithets such as "the manly one, the strong one."[31] Importantly, this gendered language of ideal masculinity and feminization in defeat was utilized for "expressing, justifying, and maintaining asymmetrical relationships of power."[32] The Assyrian kings employed this gendered language to portray themselves as the ideal representation of masculinity and to justify their conquest; likewise, the biblical prophets used gendered language to portray Yhwh as the preeminent man of power.[33] Chapman's monograph is a significant contribution to understanding gender construction and gendered language in the ancient near east of which the Elijah legends and narrative were formed.

Earlier theorists either argued that hegemonic masculinity is "the true nature of men"—biologically rather than socially constructed—or an individually based "male role" theory positing that social conflict arises because a range of masculinity from "hard" to "soft" all fail to live up to society's "impossible standard at the hard or gynaephobic ends of the scales."[34]

---

[31] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter,* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 1, 35, 37.

[32] Chapman, 3.

[33] Chapman, 7-8.

[34] Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell, and John Lee, "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity," *Theory and Society* 14, no. 5 (September 1985): 579.

Connell, et al. critiqued these conceptions and say that rather than being "the male role," hegemonic masculinity is "a particular variety of masculinity to which others—among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men—are subordinated."[35] In *Masculinities,* first published in 1995, Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as a system whereby a society or culture has a standard for the masculine characteristics that make up the ideal man.[36] As the title suggests, there is no such thing as static masculinity, only masculinities. Connell added the important concept of multiple masculinities to her discussion of subordinated masculinities.[37] Within multiple masculinities there are three groupings identified by Connell. Hegemonic masculinity is a culturally accepted dominant and ideal masculinity that occupies the top spot in the gendered social order. Very few, if any, men actually achieve every attribute of the hegemonic ideal, but some men do enjoy a considerable amount of the power and privilege associated with the hegemon. The second grouping Connell named as subordinate masculinities. Although other subordinate masculinities exist, Connell highlighted homosexual men in Western society as subordinate to heterosexuals. Connell writes, "Oppression positions homosexual masculinities at the bottom of a gender hierarchy among men."[38] Connell next identifies a third grouping, marginalized masculinities, that are also oppressed though differently than subordinate masculinities. Subordinate masculinities are oppressed from within the gender order while

---

[35] Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 587.

[36] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, 2nd ed. (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 76-77.

[37] Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 20.

[38] Connell, *Masculinities*, 78-79.

marginalized masculinities are oppressed due to external factors such as race, ethnicity, and economic class.[39]

An important accompanying concept of multiple masculinities is complicity. Connell explains that because all men benefit from the "patriarchal dividend" they are all complicit in upholding the hegemonic ideal.[40] In other words, even subordinate or marginalized masculinities gain by being positioned above other men or women, and so participate in upholding the overarching gendered order.

Connell's study was conducted in a contemporary Western context and therefore caution must be applied when using a modern construct to study ancient societies or ancient texts. For instance, since there was no concept of a homosexual identity in ancient Israel it would not be appropriate to read into the text a subordinate grouping of homosexuality. Though the particularities of what makes up a hegemonic, subordinate, or marginalized masculinity, and how men negotiate within the construct, will vary significantly across time and space, the framework of multiple masculinities and complicity are helpful in analyzing how male characters negotiate their masculinity in Hebrew Bible. Multiple masculinities theory will be utilized to examine the performance of masculinity among characters in the Elijah narrative including Elijah himself, King Ahab, Elisha, and Yhwh, among others.

Scholars studying Hebrew Bible masculinity in the wake of Connell's *Masculinities* have identified a number of characteristics that make up the hegemonic biblical male. David Clines's essay "David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible" incorporates multiple masculinities theory and has set the standard for all recent such studies. Using King

---

[39] Connell, *Masculinities*, 80.

[40] Connell, *Masculinities*, 79.

David as the archetype, Clines identified four primary attributes of hegemonic masculinity in Hebrew Bible; possessing physical strength and being a warrior; the ability to be persuasive with speech; physical beauty; and a preference for the company of—and bonding with—other men.[41] Although scholars have provided more nuance to these categories such as questioning the extent to which violence is necessary to demonstrate physical strength, all but physical beauty have thus far withstood scrutiny to remain within the consensus of Hebrew Bible hegemonic masculine attributes.[42]

Clines's essay also makes clear there are significant differences in the portrayal of masculinity in Hebrew Bible as compared to what is acceptable in contemporary Western masculinity. For example, David is portrayed as crying without provoking any question of his manhood, while the message about men crying in the contemporary U.S. is that it should be avoided at all costs. One's masculinity is especially questioned if crying publicly.[43] With the outsized influence ideas about Bible have on our society this delineation is of utmost importance. In addition to illustrating that modern ideas about masculinity are not as closely tied to the Bible as might be assumed, this differentiation also demonstrates that what counts as proper masculine performance varies across time and space, culture to culture.

Female Masculinity and the Hebrew Bible:

---

[41] David J.A. Clines, "David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible," in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 216-27.

[42] Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 24-26; Stephen Wilson, *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 173n4. I follow Wilson's reading here that Clines's additional masculine trait for David—his musical ability—is an enhancement of David's masculinity and not indicative of a broader marker of biblical masculinity.

[43] Clines, "David the Man," 233.

In 1998 Jack Halberstam made a significant contribution to the study of masculinity with the publication of *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam suggests that female masculinity is far from being a mere imitation but is instead integral for understanding how "masculinity is constructed as masculinity."[44] Halberstam uses culture studies and queer theory in *Female Masculinity* and therefore does not incorporate hegemonic masculinity or multiple masculinities theory into their analysis; however, they do employ the terms "heroic masculinities" and "epic masculinity," and suggest that these are built on the subordination of other masculinities.[45] The primary argument Halberstam makes is that masculinity becomes understood as masculinity "where and when it leaves the white middle-class body."[46] Whereas other theorists focused on homosexuals or racial/ethnic minorities, Halberstam suggests the site to best analyze modern masculinity is female masculinity.[47] As with multiple masculinities theory, female masculinity must be used with caution in an analysis of an ancient culture such as those presented in the Hebrew Bible. For instance, Halberstam's work presents a challenge to the binary construction of gender; while this challenge is appropriate in our contemporary Western context, it is a mistake to impose this analysis onto the world of ancient Israel which constructed gender even more rigidly binary than our own.[48] Nevertheless, female masculinity in Hebrew Bible is helpful for analyzing biblical hegemonic masculinity.

Hilary Lipka's essay "Queen Jezebel's Masculinity" applies Halberstam's work to the principle antagonist in the Elijah narrative, King Ahab's Phoenician wife Queen Jezebel. Lipka

---

[44] Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, (1998; repr., Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 1.

[45] Halberstam, 1, 4.

[46] Halberstam, 2.

[47] Halberstam, 3.

[48] Halberstam, 13-29.

says female masculinity occurs when a person who is born female, according to a culture's understanding of female physical characteristics, performs their gender in such a way that the female gender performance takes on characteristics understood by the culture to be masculine.[49] Jezebel's masculinity is a challenge to biblical hegemonic masculinity and the masculinity of the male characters she interacts with, including Elijah and her husband Ahab, among others.[50] Before exploring Jezebel's female masculinity and what reveals it about Elijah and other male characters, we must look closely at Elijah himself.

Elijah's Masculinity:

Elijah's masculinity is complex. A close study should not only examine his gender using the hegemonic masculine ideals identified by biblical scholars, but also the gender performance of other characters in the narratives. Any analysis of Elijah's masculinity is incomplete without placing him in comparative context beside the other characters from the Elijah-Elisha cycle of narratives and Moses. When characters interact with Elijah each are performing gender; these interactions signal to the reader which characters are, and are not, doing their gender correctly—and therefore are, or are not, in proper alignment with the hegemonic male, Yhwh. Using the framework of multiple masculinities theory, each male character is positioned on the spectrum of hegemonic, subordinate, or marginalized within the particularities of the culture under consideration. Unlike other Ancient Near East cultures who uphold the king as the hegemon, Yhwh is the hegemonic male in the Hebrew Bible.[51] All earthly men are expected to remain

[49] Hilary Lipka, "Queen Jezebel's Masculinity," in *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, edited by Ovidiu Creanga (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019), 125-26.

[50] Lipka, 126.

[51] Chapman, 7-8; Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 30-31; David Clines, "The Most High Male: Divine Masculinity in the Bible," in *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, ed. Ovidiu Creanga

subordinate to the deity, putting them in precarious negotiations of their gender where they must project adequate masculinity among their earthly peers yet submit themselves to Yhwh. Kings and prophets are men who are elevated above the general population. Ordinary Israelite men are further removed from the hegemonic ideal and foreign men are the most marginalized men in this scheme. Given this range of masculine presentations it is necessary to look at gender at work among the characters of the Elijah narrative to understand Elijah's masculinity and how it helps or hinders him in his role as Yhwh's chosen prophet. Because the Elijah material so carefully alludes to Moses it is also necessary to place Elijah—and his masculinity—alongside this critical biblical figure.

The prophet Elijah exhibits hyper-masculinity. This is especially true when he is placed among the other prophets of Hebrew Bible. The abundance of masculine characteristics present in Elijah has led scholars to uphold him as an exemplar of hegemonic masculinity among prophets, but has also led to a lack of close scrutiny of his gender performance. In writing about the relative harmlessness of Hebrew Bible prophets, David Clines says, "I mean the 'writing' prophets, not the Elijahs."[52] Rhiannon Graybill adds that Elijah "perhaps more than any other prophet in Hebrew Bible . . . fulfills Clines's description of the 'he-prophet.'"[53] In contrast to the harmless "writing prophets," Elijah belongs to a category known as "war prophets" who were marked by ecstatic and violent behavior.[54] Ecstatic behavior is absent in Elijah, but violence by

(Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019), 61-82. Although Clines does not explicitly name Yhwh as the hegemonic male, the title of his essay eludes to it and Clines carefully names the masculine attributes of Yhwh—strength and power, size and height, violence and killing, honor, and holiness.

[52] David J.A. Clines, "He-Prophets," 314.

[53] Graybill, 46.

[54] Blenkinsopp, 48-53.

the prophet is a recurring theme. Elijah is an almost entirely solitary figure. He is always on the move, lives primarily in the wilderness, and only relies on others when divinely mandated to do so or when his survival is at stake. He is described as hairy and wears a leather loincloth (2 Kings 1:8). His physical description, coupled with his preference for wilderness and solitude, exude a ruggedness of character. Elijah's hyper-masculinity is also on display through his exceptional physical strength and endurance. He is able to journey in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights on the sustenance of only a couple of cakes (1 Kings 19:4-9). The most obvious display of strength by Elijah is his slaughtering of 450 prophets of Baal. Elijah exercises this slaughter with a sword, by his own hand (1 Kings 18:40, 19:10). There is no mention of Yhwh in this event; the exceptional strength mustered to slaughter a full 450 men with a sword is Elijah's alone.[55] As if this slaughter is not enough of a show of strength, shortly afterwards Elijah runs ahead of King Ahab's chariot from Mt. Carmel to Jezreel (1 Kings 18:46). A man who has just single handedly slaughtered 450 men is now running ahead of horse drawn chariots. The slaughter of the prophets of Baal also highlights another of Elijah's hyper-masculine traits; Elijah has a penchant for sudden, impulsive violence.

In addition to the aforementioned slaughter of the prophets of Baal, Elijah twice calls down fire from heaven to consume sets of a captain and fifty men (2 Kings 1). In both of these violent episodes the word of the Lord comes to Elijah with instructions, but the instructions are unrelated to Elijah's use of violence. The word of the Lord comes to Elijah in 1 Kings 18:1 and instructs him saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab; I will send rain on the earth." Elijah instructs Ahab to assemble 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah at Mt. Carmel for

[55]Just prior in 1 Kings 18:36-38 Yhwh is present in the narrative when fire descends on the altar after Elijah's prayer request, however, there is no mention of Yhwh when Elijah gives instruction to seize the prophets of Baal and subsequently slaughters them.

dueling sacrifices, after which Elijah slaughters the prophets of Baal on his own accord (1 Kings 18:19-40). Later in 2 Kings 1 impulsive violence takes place after a fall and injury by the Israelite king Ahaziah. In 2 Kings 1:3-4 an angel of the Lord says to Elijah, "Get up, go to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, 'Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?' Now therefore thus says the Lord, 'You shall not leave the bed to which you have gone, but you shall surely die'" (2 Kings 1:3-4). Elijah delivers this message, fulfilling the instructions he has been given. Subsequently Elijah calls down fire on two groups of men which is outside of his original mandate. Significantly, when a third group of fifty and their captain arrive in 2 Kings 1:15, the angel of the Lord tells Elijah not to fear and to go with them. This instruction by the angel leaves no doubt that Elijah is operating outside of the purview of divine instruction.[56] It is clear in these two examples that Elijah's zealousness causes him to lack self-control in using violence.

Elijah's physical strength, solitude, and hairiness clearly mark him as a hyper-masculine male. He additionally displays features scholars have identified in biblical masculinity, including womanlessness, defense of his own and Yhwh's honor, and able-bodiedness. We have already seen plenty of evidence of Elijah's physical strength, solitude, and hairiness. His solitude is also indicative of his womanlessness. Womanlessness refers to both emotional and physical distance from women.[57] Elijah is only associated with two women, the Widow of Zarephath whom Yhwh sends him to during the drought in 1 Kings 17:8-24 and the adversarial

[56] It is important to note that immediately after this episode the narrative shifts to Elijah being taken to heaven. The result of his first impulsive violence is his decommissioning and the result of this second one is Yhwh taking him. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore Elijah's ascension further, but it can be read as a direct result of this second instance of impulsive violence.

[57] Clines, "David the Man," 225-227.

Queen Jezebel. No wife is mentioned and he is otherwise alone or among men.[58] Although it did involve impulsive violence not divinely mandated, Elijah maintains his—and by extension Yhwh's—honor during the contest with the Baal prophets by besting them in the sacrificial dual and then slaughtering them (1 Kings 18:20-40). Though he ultimately fails, Elijah's zeal in defense of Yhwh is evidence of his intent to uphold the deity's honor. Although Elijah's body is not described with much detail other than his hairiness, his physical strength and the lack of any mention of defects indicates he is able-bodied (2 Kings 1:8).

Elijah is not always a perfect exemplar of masculinity. His record includes failures which reveal the instability of his hyper-masculine persona. For example, Elijah has mixed results with persuasive speech. Elijah's most effective use of persuasive speech occurs when he challenges the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel. The assembled people even recognize the persuasiveness and comment on it replying, "Well spoken!" (1 Kings 18:22-24). As we will see, however, Elijah does not always succeed in persuasive efforts; he will later fail to convince Yhwh at Mt. Horeb, repeating the same falsehood twice (1 Kings 19:9-18).

There are three areas where self-control is important to the performance of masculinity—namely violence, sex, and food consumption.[59] As with persuasive speech, Elijah is inconsistent with self-control. We have already seen that Elijah is impulsively violent; nothing in the narrative cycle suggests Elijah has self-control regarding violence. On the other hand, Elijah is unmarried and only comes into close contact with one woman, the aforementioned Widow of Zarephath.[60] There is no indication that a sexual encounter takes place and therefore it is evident

[58] Other prophets are married including Isaiah (Isa 8:3), Ezekiel (Ezek 24:18), and Hosea (Hos 1:2-3).

[59] Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 24-27. Wilson acknowledges there is still some debate regarding this.

[60] Elijah's unmarried status is also relevant to the masculine characteristic of virility, the only characteristic Elijah definitively does not have.

Elijah excels in exercising self-control in sex. This episode is also significant regarding food consumption. The word of the Lord came to Elijah and sent him to this widow during a drought. He is first fed by ravens in 1 Kings 17:3-7. When the water at that wilderness location dries up he is sent to the widow (1 Kings 17). The widow only has enough flour left for one more meal for her and her son, but Elijah instructs her to make him a cake telling her the jar of flour and a jar of oil will not go empty "until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth" (1 Kings 17:14). In a later episode Elijah is fed by miraculously appearing cakes on hot stones (1 Kings 19:6-8). Together, these episodes demonstrate that food is not foremost on Elijah's mind. He is either sent somewhere to be fed or food is brought to him through miraculous means, but Elijah is not relating to food in any excessive way (1 Kings 17, 19:4-9). Though there are deficiencies such as his impulsive violence, overall Elijah performs his masculinity in line with the characteristics of biblical hegemonic masculinity identified by scholars.

Elijah's Masculinity in Context and Comparison:

Elijah and Elisha:

Elijah is most closely associated with two other Hebrew Bible prophets, Elisha and Moses. Elisha succeeds Elijah as the primary prophet in the northern kingdom and leader of the sons of the prophets, and receives a double portion of Elijah's spirit when Elijah is taken in a whirlwind in 2 Kings 2. Because of these close links it is necessary to consider Elisha's masculinity in comparison to Elijah's.

Elisha replaces Elijah as Yhwh's primary prophet; Elijah is specifically instructed by the deity to anoint Elisha "as prophet in your place" (1 Kings 19:16). Both Elijah and Elisha are

primarily womanless, though Elisha far less so than Elijah. Elijah only interacts with the Widow of Zarephath, and only because of Yhwh's instruction (1 Kings 17:9). Elisha, though unmarried and primarily in the company of other men, has contact with more women than Elijah. Chief among the women Elisha has a relationship with is the Shunamite woman in 2 Kings 4:8-37. She is married and wealthy, and invites Elisha for a meal when he is passing through Shunem. We are told Elisha stopped at this woman's house for a meal regularly when he passed through and the Shunamite woman and her husband even construct a rooftop chamber for Elisha to stay during future visits to the area (2 Kings 4:8-10). Elisha also encounters a widow of one of the members of the company of prophets (2 Kings 4:1-8). Elisha performs a miracle for the widow so she can pay off a creditor and avoid her children becoming slaves. Unlike Elijah's going to the Widow of Zarephath because he is instructed to, the deity does not instruct Elisha in these instances. Elisha is far more willing to be in the presence of women than Elijah.

Elijah and Elisha are together very little in the text, but when they are Elisha is always subservient to Elijah. In total these two are specifically pictured together in 1 Kings 19:19-21 where Elijah tosses the mantle on Elisha and in the moments leading to Elijah's ascension and the ascension itself in 2 Kings 2.[61] Upon Elisha's first encounter with Elijah, Elisha leaves his work and his family to follow the prophet (1 Kings 19:20-21). Because we are told Elisha "followed Elijah, and became his servant," and because we are later told Elisha poured water on Elijah's hands, the two must have travelled together (1 Kings 19:19-21; 2 Kings 3:11). Elisha is always subservient to Elijah which is never more evident than in their final scene together in 2 Kings 2:1-14. It is clear that Elijah would rather Elisha not be there by Elijah's repeated

[61] The comment in 2 Kings 3:11, "Elisha son of Shaphat, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah," infers that Elisha spent much more time with Elijah. However, very little interaction between the two remains in the biblical text.

attempts to move on without Elisha. Nevertheless, Elisha three times continues on with Elijah, each time exclaiming, "As the Lord lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you" (2 Kings 2:2, 4, 6). Then, when they arrive on the opposite side of the Jordan River, in 2 Kings 2:9, Elisha asks to receive a "double share" of Elijah's spirit. Elisha remains loyal, serving and learning from Elijah, despite Elijah's repeated attempts to leave Elisha behind and Elijah's clear disregard for Elisha each time the two are together. Elisha is subservient to Elijah throughout their time together; it is only after Elijah is gone that Elisha steps into a leadership role among the company of prophets. From their initial encounter in 1 Kings 19:19-21 to their last in 2 Kings 2, Elijah would rather be alone; in both scenes he intends to leave Elisha behind. Womanless is a marker of biblical masculinity that Elijah performs much better than Elisha, but Elijah also shuns the company of men as these scenes with Elisha demonstrate. The biblical male should welcome the company of other men. Elijah's hyper-masculinity again places him outside of the expectations of biblical hegemonic masculinity.

Elisha is not nearly as solitary a figure as Elijah and is routinely in the company of other men, and some women. In 2 Kings 2:9-18, after Elijah is taken in the whirlwind, Elisha encounters the sons of the prophets. While these men could have followed Elijah previously, we are not told they do so in narratives containing Elijah, and Elijah never speaks with any of them.[62] Elisha on the other hand, spends time with the sons of the prophets and encounters them repeatedly (2 Kings 2:3, 5, 15-18; 4:1-2, 38-44; 6:1-7; 9:1).

Another example of Elisha's more social nature is that he has a servant, Gehazi. Though Gehazi eventually disobeys Elisha, becoming leprous as a punishment (2 Kings 5:25-27), he is with Elisha in the narratives of the Shunamite woman (2 Kings 4:11-37) and the episode where

[62] The only place there is mention of Elijah having a companion is the servant who keeps watch for rain to end the drought in 1 Kings 18:42-45.

Elisha cures the Aramean army commander, Naaman, of leprosy (2 Kings 5). Though Elisha previously served Elijah as Gehazi does Elisha, Elisha in no way demonstrates the disdain for Gehazi's presence as Elijah does in the initial encounter with Elisha and in their final scene together. Throughout the Elijah-Elisha cycle, Elisha is far more social than the solitary Elijah, performing miracles, prophesying for both Israelite and foreign soldiers and monarchs, and leading Gehazi and the sons of prophets. Despite returning multiple times to the Shunamite woman's home, Elisha predominately spends his time in the presence of other men including his servant and the sons of the prophets. This homosocial masculinity of Elijah's replacement calls attention to the problem of Elijah's own solitary nature and the inflated sense of self that causes his downfall.

Elijah and Elisha also differ in how violent they are. Elijah is very violent; as we have already noted he slays 450 prophets with a sword (1 Kings 18:40, 19:10) and calls down fire to consume 102 soldiers (2 Kings 1). 2 Kings 2:23-25 is a scene where divine violence is enacted on Elisha's word, but there are significant differences between this violence and Elijah's fiery attack on the soldiers. In this narrative a group of young boys taunts Elisha saying, "Go away, baldhead! Go away, baldhead!" Elisha curses the boys in the name of Yhwh and two she-bears come from the woods and maul "forty-two of the boys." This is of course a very violent scene, but is it Elisha who is violent? Elisha does curse the boys in Yhwh's name, but he does not actually call for the bears. When Elijah is confronted by the soldiers he specifically calls for fire saying, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty" (2 Kings 1:10, 12). Elijah specifically initiates the fiery killing. Elisha only curses the boys; the bear attack is Yhwh's doing.

2 Kings 6:8-23 is a second Elisha narrative similar to Elijah's fiery confrontation of the soldiers in 2 Kings 1:1-16. Like the scene with Elijah, 2 Kings 6:8-23 involves soldiers sent by a king to seize the prophet. Unlike Elijah who has two companies violently consumed by fire, Elisha temporarily blinds the soldiers, lures them inside Samaria to more favorable ground, instructs the king of Israel not to kill the foreign men, and instead instructs that they be fed and allowed to return to Aram. Elisha is confident in his ability to channel the power of Yhwh to perform miracles, acts with determination rather than impulse, and provides sustenance rather than destruction to the soldiers. These are but a few examples of Elisha's deeds; in all of his many miraculous acts, he never kills with his own hand and most of the miracles he performs are healing rather than destructive.[63]

These two prophets also have a different relationship with the deity. Elisha never speaks directly to Yhwh as Elijah does at Mt. Horeb and Elisha's method of receiving Yhwh's direction is different from Elijah's. Where Elijah is said to have "the *word* of the Lord" come *to* him, Elisha has "the *hand* of the Lord" come *on* him.[64] Having the deity's word come to you is vastly different than having its hand come down on you; the latter is more overtly hierarchical than the former. Elisha never speaks directly with the deity as Elijah does, and receives directives in a more subservient fashion than that of Elijah. As we saw above in multiple examples, Elijah often veers from the exact instructions of Yhwh; Elisha is far more obedient to the precise commands he receives from Yhwh.

---

[63] One significant exception is Gehazi being struck with leprosy as punishment in 2 Kings 5:25-27. An additional healing miracle is Elisha purifying the water of Jericho in 2 Kings 3:19-22.

[64] 1 Kings 17:2, 17:5, 17:8, 17:16, 17:24; 18:1; 19:9; 21:17, 21:28; 2 Kings 3:15. Italics added.

Compared to Elijah's hairiness, physical strength, and overall rugged persona, Elisha's body is more complicated. In a full contrast to Elijah's hairiness, Elisha is described as a baldhead in 2 Kings 2:23-25, and is ridiculed for it. Elisha possesses less physical strength than Elijah also, which is demonstrated well when Elisha restores life to the Shunammite woman's son in 2 Kings 4:18-37. Before Elisha himself goes to the boy, he sends his assistant Gehazi ahead, instructing Gehazi to gird up his loins and lay Elisha's staff on the boy's face. Gehazi does as instructed but there is no response from the boy. Both the girding of the loins and the staff evoke masculinity. Rhiannon Graybill points out that this scene demonstrates a failure of phallic power.[65] When Elisha himself arrives it takes prayer to Yhwh and multiple attempts of laying on the boy—"his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands"—before the boy is finally brought back to life (2 Kings 4:34). Elisha is successful in restoring life to the dead boy, but not without difficulty. Graybill writes, "Elisha is a powerful prophet, but his power is not always channeled in ways that are culturally legible as dominantly masculine."[66] In terms of his body, Elisha is presented significantly less powerful and hyper-masculine than Elijah.

Despite occupying a very similar place as Yhwh's chosen prophet in the northern kingdom and leader of the sons of the prophets, Elisha's masculinity is more complicated and less overtly present than Elijah's. Elisha is presented as less violent—including less impulsive—less confrontational with the deity and others, more interested in healing than in destruction. Elisha has less zeal for Yhwh and so is also more obedient to Yhwh's instructions.

---

[65] Rhiannon Graybill, "Elisha's Body and the Queer Touch of Prophecy," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 49, no. 1 (2019): 36. A similar scene occurs with Elijah in 1 Kings 17:17-24. A key difference in the two scenes is the lack of failure by a servant sent with the prophet's phallic power.

[66] Graybill, "Elisha's Body," 37.

David and Jehu:

Many men in Hebrew Bible exhibit hyper-masculine traits; however, hyper-masculinity is not synonymous with hegemonic masculinity in Hebrew Bible. As multiple masculinities theory suggests, all men exist on a continuum in relation to the hegemonic ideal. Within Hebrew Bible it is the deity who is ultimately the hegemon and because of this, biblical men are expected to be subservient to Yhwh.[67] This is particularly true of prophets who are Yhwh's earthly representatives. Yhwh is a male deity in Hebrew Bible and the language used to describe his attributes and actions evokes masculine traits such as power and military might. The writing prophets exhibit the deity's masculinity with their words, but rarely engage in physical violence or feats of strength as Elijah does.[68] In strength and violence Elijah is more akin to divinely anointed kings such as David and Jehu. Among other displays of strength and violence, David and his men kill one hundred Philistines and bring their foreskins to Saul to pay the bride price for Saul's daughter Michal (1 Sam 18:20-29). Much like Elijah, Jehu is hyper-masculine in his gender performance. In 2 Kings 9:20 Jehu is recognizable from a distance for the distinctive way he commands his chariot, "like a maniac." Beginning at 2 Kings 9:14 Jehu kills Joram, is responsible for the killings of Ahaziah and Jezebel, and personally kills all who are left in the house of Ahab after the heads of "seventy sons" are brought to him by elders and guardians of the cities. This series of violence culminates at 2 Kings 10:18-28 when Jehu and his men kill all of the prophets, priests, and worshipers of Baal left in Israel, accomplishing what Elijah could

[67] Chapman, 7-8; Wilson, "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory," 30-31; David Clines, "The Most High Male: Divine Masculinity in the Bible," in *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, ed. Ovidiu Creanga (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019), 61-82.

[68] Clines, "He-Prophets," 312-15.

not (2 Kings 9:14-10:28).[69] Deryn Guest refers to Jehu as "the man's man" and explains that he has no use for women and is not associated with any women.[70] In fact, Jezebel is the only woman mentioned in the Jehu narrative sequence and she is an adversary who meets her death. Elijah is similarly womanless, although he does depend on the hospitality of the Widow of Zarephath. Despite their similarities, Elijah and Jehu have vastly different encounters with Jezebel which will be explored in greater detail below.

Elijah has much in common with the violent masculinity of the kings David and Jehu; however, he is not a king, but a prophet. Elijah may be an especially violent war prophet, but he is still a prophet and does not command soldiers as kings do.[71] Nevertheless, it is clear from the text that Elijah sees himself as engaged in a war for Yhwh, aiming to eliminate Baal worship from Israel. Elijah is clearly not afraid of confrontation or the use of violence as the contest with the prophets of Baal and their subsequent slaughter demonstrate. It is also apparent Elijah can call upon divine violence as he does in bringing down fire upon Ahaziah's men in 2 Kings 1. It is therefore all the more surprising what happens to Elijah when he is confronted by Queen Jezebel at Jezreel. Before we turn to this pivotal confrontation it is important to situate the relationship between Elijah, King Ahab, and his wife Queen Jezebel.

Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel:

Ahab and Jezebel are Elijah's royal opponents in his campaign against Baal and Asherah worship. The Elijah narrative opens in 1 Kings 17 with Elijah announcing to Ahab that there

---

[69] Deryn Guest, "Modeling the Transgender Gaze: Performances of Masculinities in 2 Kings 9-10," in *Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation*, eds. Teresa Hornsby and Deryn Guest (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 59-61.

[70] Guest, 58.

[71] Blenkinsopp, 48-64.

will be a drought in Israel, one which will endure until Elijah decrees its end. Immediately these two men are placed in opposition. Elijah is the zealous prophet of Yhwh, defending the worship of the deity in Israel whose people are also worshiping the Phoenician gods, Baal and Asherah. According to the author it is Ahab, under the influence of his Phoenician queen, Jezebel, that is responsible for the worship of these foreign gods (1 Kings 18:18). Ahab has sent his palace manager Obadiah to search for Elijah, but Ahab never actually confronts Elijah. When the two men meet, the closest Ahab comes to confronting Elijah is his rhetorical question: "Is it you, you troubler of Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17). Further, Elijah is not afraid of meeting Ahab. Ahab is a poor military leader; he projects no intimidation and fails to confront his adversary Elijah. This failure of leadership and military prowess is a failure of biblical masculinity.

Ahab's weak masculinity is further displayed when contrasted with his wife Jezebel. As the foreigner, Jezebel is the very reason—according to the biblical author—that the Israelites have strayed from solely worshiping Yhwh; she is a Phoenician princess and brought her gods with her when she married Ahab. Jezebel, in her role as queen, is the primary benefactor of the prophets of Baal and Asherah (1 Kings 18:19). Throughout the Elijah-Elisha cycle Jezebel is positioned as the primary enemy of Yhwh worship. Gender performance is an important component of this characterization. Jezebel exhibits certain masculine characteristics. In fact, Jezebel's female masculinity is so pronounced that Hilary Lipka writes, "In terms of gender performance, the figures in these narratives that Jezebel has the most in common with are Elijah and Jehu. The three share certain character traits, including displays of different kinds of strength, leadership ability, taking agency, and a propensity towards violence."[72] Lipka identifies the masculine characteristics of Jezebel as leadership, agency, violence, and a

[72] Lipka, 146.

preference for the company of men. It is important that Jezebel also continues to embody many clearly female characteristics. For instance, there is no indication from the narrative that Jezebel would have strayed from the expected mode of dress and adornment for a queen. Nevertheless, her masculine characteristics are notable.

Jezebel's female masculinity is most easily juxtaposed to her husband Ahab's poor performance of masculinity. Where Ahab is "weak ineffectual, passive, and compliant," Jezebel is "confident, determined, and powerful."[73] Jezebel is not afraid of making decisions and acting, using violence or the threat of violence when necessary. The episode of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21 is a case in point. Ahab goes to Naboth to acquire the vineyard, promising to give Naboth a better vineyard in another location, but Naboth cites an Israelite ancestral inheritance commandment in refusing Ahab. Ahab becomes "resentful and sullen" (1 Kings 21:2-16).[74] Jezebel first tells her husband he should act like the king he is, but when he fails to act she takes matters into her own hands, effectively acting as the king including the masculine traits of leadership and action the role requires (2 Kings 21:8-10). Jezebel and Ahab are portrayed as opposites; Jezebel exercises a masculinity she should not, while Ahab fails to perform the masculinity he should.

To fully understand why Jezebel is a threat to Elijah we must consider another foreign woman he encounters, the Widow of Zarephath. This widow harbors Elijah in 1 Kings 17:8-24. The Widow of Zarephath and Jezebel are both foreign women of means and are even from the

[73] Lipka, 144.

[74] Lipka, 144.

same area, Sidon.[75] These similarities expose precisely why only one of these women is a problem for Elijah; where these two women differ is in their gender performance.

Despite being a widow, which was a perilous position in antiquity, Stephanie Wyatt explains the Widow of Zarephath is called the "mistress of the house" inferring home ownership and a woman of means.[76] The Widow also provides a room for Elijah further indicating economic privilege (1 Kings 17: 8-19). Regardless, because of the drought, the Widow is on the last bit of meal for herself and her son when Elijah comes to them (1 Kings 17:12). Elijah assures her not to be afraid and says, "The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth" (1 Kings 17:13-14). This woman trusts Elijah's instructions despite the fact that he is a prophet of a foreign deity. Throughout the episode, the Widow of Zarephath recognizes Elijah's authority as a prophet of Yhwh and keeps herself within the domestic sphere, in line with the expected feminine gender performance.

In contrast to the domestically oriented Widow of Zarephath, Jezebel routinely involves herself beyond the palace in Jezreel. With her husband Ahab, Jezebel leads a war on the prophets of Yhwh and sends a direct threat to Elijah (1 Kings 18:13, 19:2). Jezebel also takes matters into her own hands to secure Naboth's vineyard when Ahab fails to do so (1 Kings 21). Throughout the narrative, Jezebel involves herself in affairs beyond the domestic sphere, in those places reserved for biblical men.

These are two women similarly positioned by geography and economics. The central divide between them is their performance of gender. Jezebel as a foreign woman Israelites are to

---

[75] Stephanie Wyatt, "Jezebel, Elijah, and the Widow of Zarephath: A *Ménage à Trois* that Estranges the Holy and Makes the Holy Strange" *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 4 (2012): 438.

[76] Wyatt, 451.

be wary of.[77] Her female masculinity and patronage of Phoenician deities are a problem for the biblical author.[78] The widow is in the home, the woman's domain; Jezebel gets involved in the affairs of ruling, the domain of men. The Widow of Zarephath trusts a foreign deity, Yhwh, and Yhwh's prophet Elijah; Jezebel imposes her gods on Israel and seeks to destroy Yhwh's prophets, most significantly Elijah. These two women present the reader with contrasting images of how women should perform their gender, and crucially Elijah's masculinity is only threatened by Jezebel because she confidently incorporates masculinity into her gender performance. Jezebel directly confronts Elijah and threatens his life (1 Kings 19:2). This act of gender deviancy is a dire threat to Elijah's masculinity.

Despite the obvious juxtaposition with Ahab, Jezebel's female masculinity is most effective in destabilizing the hyper-masculinity of Elijah. Hilary Lipka primarily contrasts Jezebel's masculinity with her husband, King Ahab, against whom she "is depicted as performing masculinities more effectively than he does."[79] Lipka does take up the issue of Jezebel's threat to kill Elijah and his fearful flight, but fails to consider the effect this pivotal scene has on Elijah's masculinity despite her essay's focus on Jezebel's gender performance.

There is a backstory to the confrontation between Jezebel and Elijah. To set the scene we must back up to 1 Kings 18:20 and Elijah's contest with Baal's prophets. To no avail, the prophets of Baal spend the majority of the day calling on their deity to send fire to consume their offering (1 Kings 18:26-29). Elijah then assembles an altar to Yhwh and pours enough water on

---

[77] Wyatt, 457-58. Wyatt rightly argues these two women's portrayal is more nuanced than merely the ideal foreign woman and the evil foreign queen; however, there is no doubt the Widow of Zarephath is treated more favorably by the author than Jezebel is.

[78] Lipka, 146.

[79] Lipka, 145.

it to fill even the trench around it (1 Kings 30-35). Upon Elijah's call to Yhwh "the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench" (1 Kings 18:36-38). Immediately the assembled people recognize the power of Yhwh, and Elijah instructs them to capture all 450 prophets of Baal, after which Elijah slaughters all 450 with a sword (1 Kings 39-40, 19:10). Next, Elijah and his servant ascend the top of Mt. Carmel in 1 Kings 18:42; Elijah crouches prostrate and instructs the servant to look towards the sea for rain (1 Kings 18:43-45). When Elijah's servant sees rain, Elijah instructs the servant to say to Ahab, "Harness your chariot and go down before the rain stops you," effectively announcing the end of the drought (1 Kings 18:44). It is here—after such a powerful display by Yhwh and Elijah—that the narrative hinges on a critical four verse sequence containing the confrontation with Jezebel.

The sequence in 1 Kings 18:46-19:3 needs just four verses to swing from one extreme to another. Elijah fails to sustain his typically hyper-masculine gender performance, exposing its instability:

> But the hand of the lord was on Elijah; he girded up his loins and ran in front of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel. Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So may the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life like the life of one of them by this time tomorrow." Then he was afraid; he got up and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba, which belongs to Judah; he left his servant there. (1 Kings 18:46-19:3)

Still confidently feeling his manhood after Yhwh's fiery display and his own hyper-masculine slaughter, Elijah girds up his loins. Roland Boer explains that the Hebrew word for loins used in this instance is referring to the testicles which "are the seat of courage and strength."[80] Boer

[80] Roland Boer, "The Patriarch's Nuts: Concerning the Testicular Logic of Biblical Hebrew," *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 5, no. 2 (June 2011): 44.

further notes the importance of the material a man chooses for girding himself. Boer specifically highlights that Elijah wears a leather loincloth, adding a rugged quality to the prophet.[81] The testicles are where men find strength, but they must also be protected, because to have them crushed is to have one's manhood crushed; one's masculinity is intimately wrapped up in the projection and protection of his testicles.[82]

Elijah is ready for a confrontation. Ahab mounts up to return to Jezreel and the girded-up Elijah is out front, running ahead of Ahab and his men, eager to confront his nemesis, Queen Jezebel.[83] This overtly masculine display by Elijah is what makes the ensuing event so striking. After hearing what Elijah has done to her preferred prophets, Jezebel sends a messenger to warn Elijah that she will have him killed within a day's time (1 Kings 19:2). Having just progressed through such an overflowing display of masculinity the reader will expect Elijah to ready for a fight. Everything about the scene indicates that Yhwh's chosen prophet possesses great power and strength, including the power of the deity. Yet despite this powerful display, Elijah immediately flees for his life, far to the south of Judah, out of the reach of Jezebel. This drastic shift by the zealous he-prophet, when his life is threatened by a woman, is nothing less than a feminization of Elijah.

---

[81] Boer, 45.

[82] Boer, 44-45.

[83] Cogan, *1 Kings*, 157, 445. The Anchor Bible Commentary suggests Elijah's running ahead for Ahab's chariot indicates Elijah "took up the role of one of Ahab's outrunners, showing the respect due him as king." While it may be that this event alludes to the role of outrunners for royal entourages of the time, nothing in the narrative suggests Elijah understands this to be about showing respect to Ahab as king. It is Elijah, afterall, who instituted the drought and he has no fear in confronting Ahab in 1 Kings 18:17-18 to arrange the contest at Carmel. In fact, Elijah does nothing in word or action to acknowledge Ahab's rank when they meet at 1 Kings 18:17-18. Additionally, Elijah gives instructions to Ahab, which Ahab follows, at 1 Kings 18:41, 44. Furthermore, if Elijah understood his role as that of outrunner there would be no need for girding up the loins and having the hand of Yhwh come upon him for strength to run that distance; presumably outrunners perform their duties without such manly divine assistance. The text suggests that Elijah, having just defeated and killed the prophets of Baal, girds himself up with divine power to confront the last adversary of Yhwh, Jezebel.

Four hundred and fifty male prophets, nor twice-repeating groups of fifty soldiers, give Elijah any pause, but when confronted by the defiant, foreign Queen Jezebel the fragility of Elijah's hyper-masculine performance is revealed. Contrast this with Jehu's confrontation with Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:30-37. As noted above, Jehu is a general and eventual king leading a company of soldiers and Elijah is a lone prophet; any comparison of these two men's interactions with Jezebel must bear this in mind. Nevertheless, their differing outcomes when confronting Jezebel are significant. Although Jezebel does not leave the palace to confront either Elijah or Jehu, she hardly cowers from them either. She sends a messenger with a threat on Elijah's life and she stands defiant and resolute at the palace window when faced by Jehu (1 Kings 19:2, 2 Kings 9:30). When Jehu approaches the palace at Jezreel and confronts Jezebel in 2 Kings 9:30-32, he does not even acknowledge her presence. When Jezebel speaks to him from the palace window he does not speak to her but instead to her attending eunuchs. Jehu asks the eunuchs whose side they are on and instructs them to throw her from the window (1 Kings 19:1-2; 2 Kings 9:30-37).[84] The contrast is stark: Elijah flees in fear and Jehu brings Jezebel to her end while not even acknowledging her presence.

As Yhwh's chosen prophet and mouthpiece in the struggle against Baal worship, this feminization of Elijah dishonors Yhwh. Elijah's failure to uphold Yhwh's honor will have ramifications when he encounters Yhwh at Mt. Horeb. In examining the theophany at Mt. Horeb in 1 Kings 19 we must bring Elijah into comparative frame with Moses whom much of the Elijah narrative—including the theophany—alludes to.

Elijah and Moses:

[84] Guest, 58.

Although Moses is not directly present in the narratives of 1 and 2 Kings, there are significant literary allusions linking him to Elijah. There are at least eleven parallels of Elijah and Moses found in 1 Kings 17-20. Included in these are the forty day and night wilderness journey (1 Kings 19), the theophany on Horeb including Elijah's covering his face with his mantle (Exod. 33:12-23; 1 Kings 19), and the confrontation Elijah has with the worshipers of Baal (1 Kings 18).[85] The author(s) of the Elijah material clearly wants the reader to associate Elijah with the preeminent prophet, Moses. This association to Moses is not always a positive one for Elijah.

Mosaic allusions are made primarily, though not exclusively, to Exodus 32-34. The theophany at Mt. Horeb in 1 Kings 19 is usually understood to be narratively related to Moses's theophany in Exodus 33:12-23.[86] The people of Israel become idolatrous in both (Exodus 32:1-10; 1 Kings 18:20-21). Where Moses stops Yhwh from eliminating the people and starting from scratch again, and personally goes to Yhwh to "atone for the people" (Ex 32:32), Elijah lies to Yhwh, claiming to be the only one left devoted to the Israelite god (1 Kings 19:10, 14).[87] Elijah makes no attempt to defend the people even though many of them have also remained faithful to Yhwh.[88] Though Elijah's theophany scene is a clear allusion to Moses, there are striking differences. Where Moses asks to see Yhwh's glory and is protected by the deity in the cleft of rock (Ex 33:17-19), Elijah is invited to see Yhwh but "responds tentatively and covers his face"

---

[85] Alan J. Hauser and Russell Gregory, *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 168.

[86] Christina Marie Fetherolf, "Elijah's Mantle: A Sign of Prophecy Gone Awry," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42, no. 2 (2017): 202-03; Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 571.

[87] Hauser and Gregory, 145.

[88] Hauser and Gregory, 145.

(1 Kings 19:11-13).[89] Yhwh descends in a cloud in the Exodus account (Ex 19:16-20, 34:5). Rather than being found in nature's elements as in Exodus, the 1 Kings 19 theophany specifically states that Yhwh is not in the wind, earthquake, or fire but in the "sound of sheer silence" (1 Kings 19.11-12). These are important allusions directly associating Elijah's theophany to Moses's. Still, Elijah's theophany does not end successfully as Moses's does. At the close of Moses's theophany, he asks Yhwh to have mercy on the people and the deity responds with the Mosaic covenant (Ex 34:10). Eilberg-Schwartz argues Moses is able to achieve his exalted prophetic status because of his humility and complete submission to Yhwh.[90] Moses's plea for mercy on behalf of the Israelites and Yhwh's ultimate agreement can also be read as Moses successfully employing persuasive speech, an important characteristic of biblical hegemonic masculinity. Elijah neither humbles himself before the deity nor succeeds through persuasion. Elijah makes no attempt to defend the Israelites, repeats the same lie regarding himself and the people twice, and is directed by Yhwh to anoint Elisha to replace himself as prophet. Moses—because of his submission—is exalted, while Elijah is decommissioned as a result of his obstinacy. Elijah's theophany is meant for the reader to recognize its connection to Moses, but not positively. When Moses's submission is contrasted with Elijah's stubborn zeal, the theophany scene at Mt. Horeb is revealed to be highlighting a contrast between Moses and Elijah, not a similarity.

Both Elijah and Moses have a critical lack of faith in Yhwh that ultimately causes their demise. For Elijah this takes place when he flees from Jezebel (1 Kings 19:3). Up to this pivotal point Elijah has fully trusted that Yhwh will protect him and provide for him. Elijah is led to

[89] Hauser and Gregory, 146.

[90] Eilberg-Schwartz, 149.

water and to a widow who provides for him during the drought (1 Kings 17:3-16). Elijah does not fear facing Ahab and trusts Yhwh to defeat Baal in the contest at Carmel (1 Kings 18:17-39). But when Elijah is threatened by Jezebel, his trust in Yhwh disappears. Moses does not properly follow Yhwh's instructions in Numbers 20. The Israelites have no water and Moses is instructed to command for water to spring from a rock (Num 20:2-8). Instead, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff without commanding the rock (Num 20:9-11). This may seem like a minor difference, but Yhwh's response is blunt: "Because you did not trust in me, to show my holiness before the eyes of the Israelites, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land that I have given them" (Num 20:12). The transgression is so severe that Moses will not enter the promised land. Elijah faces a similar fate; he is replaced as Yhwh's prophet (1 Kings 19:16) and is taken by a whirlwind after crossing the Jordan river, out of the land of Israel (2 Kings 2:11).[91] For Elijah, it is his hyper-masculinity—and the feminization that occurs because of this rigidly zealous gender performance—that causes him to lose favor with Yhwh.

Conclusion:

Scholars are correct in their presentation of Elijah as a zealous, hyper-masculine, he-prophet; however, Elijah's masculinity is not as stable as has been presumed, and it is Elijah's

[91] Uffenheimer, 337; Shubert Spero, "They Are No Longer, for God has Taken Them," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 22, no.3 (1994): 224-226. Most reception history and interpretation understand this event as Elijah being taken directly to heaven and evading death. Uffenheimer writes, "Another purpose of the legend is to exalt Elijah, portraying him as superior even to Moses; for Moses died like an ordinary mortal, even though God Himself buried him (Deut. 34:5-6), while Elijah did not die but rose in a whirlwind." Despite this being the dominant interpretation, it is by no means the only possible reading. The Hebrew word (שָׁמַיִם) usually translated as heaven also means sky so we need not necessarily presume he was taken to heaven. Indeed, the sons of the prophets presume the whirlwind has "thrown him down on some mountain or into some valley" in 2 Kings 2:16. Spero notes, "It would, therefore, appear that Elijah is being taken from the world because his zealous temperament and the actions it prompts are not those that God prefers. Elijah is not necessarily taken to heaven alive; it is equally valid to interpret this scene as Elijah dying, as Moses does. Both Elijah and Moses die because they have become a problem for Yhwh or are no longer effect in the way Yhwh wishes them to be. In the case of Elijah, it is not only that he is too zealous in temperament, but also that his zealousness is due to his hyper-masculinity, a masculinity that is not as stable as has been presumed and which Jezebel's confrontation exposes.

zealous masculinity that causes him to become a problem for Yhwh. Elijah is first presented in the narrative as comfortable and confident in both his overtly strong masculinity and in his ability to channel the strength of Yhwh. He initiates and ends a drought, facilitates a successful contest pitting himself and Yhwh against Baal and Baal's prophets, which Elijah then single handedly slaughters. Given this successful display of strength, it is no wonder interpreters miss how the confrontation with Jezebel destabilizes Elijah's masculinity through feminization, and the implication this feminization has on Yhwh's power and honor. Commentators do recognize that Elijah flees from Jezebel and is utterly dejected, wishing for death when he lays down in the wilderness in 1 Kings 19:5. But that this flight from the foreign female queen has any effect on Elijah's gender has yet to be noted and fully appreciated. Critically, Elijah allows himself to be feminized by the wrong character, and when he should have humbled himself before the deity, his stubborn zeal returned to prevent him from showing necessary deference to Yhwh.

Both Elijah's feminization and his inability to show humility at Mt. Horeb are direct results of his gender performance. Elijah's sudden feminization by Jezebel is all the more dramatic because of the overtly hyper-masculine way Elijah is portrayed leading up to the scene. The rugged, individualist, superhuman Elijah is reduced to desperately wishing he were dead after fearfully running for his life from the person he should not have feared, the foreign patroness of Baal and Asherah whose prophets he has just defeated and slaughtered. Rather than learning from this experience, Elijah returns to his zealous masculinity when he is unable to admit wrongdoing and blatantly repeats lies to Yhwh. Right up to the end, Elijah is unable to change from his rigid and impulsive masculinity: Elijah must be reassured by an angel before he ceases slaughtering soldiers with divine fire. And finally, Elijah still insists on being alone leading up to his end, only relenting because of the dogged persistence of his replacement,

Elisha. Elijah is a hyper-masculine he-prophet; however, we miss important details of gender and its effects if we stop here. Elijah's masculinity is not as stable as it seems at first glance and—along with the gender performances of other characters he encounters—plays a crucial role in the struggle between Yhwh and Baal, and the portrayal of the royal dynasties of the northern kingdom of Israel.

Bibliography

Blenkinsopp, Joseph. *A History of Prophecy in Israel*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

Boer, Roland. "The Patriarch's Nuts: Concerning the Testicular Logic of Biblical Hebrew." *Journal of Men, Masculinities and Spirituality* 5, no. 2 (June 2011): 41-52.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997.

Carrigan, Tim, Bob Connell, and John Lee. "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity." *Theory and Society* 14, no. 5 (September 1985): 551-604.

Chapman, Cynthia R. *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004.

Clines, David J.A. "David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible." In *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Clines, David J.A. "He-Prophets: Masculinity as a Problem for the Hebrew Prophets and Their Interpreters." In *Sense and Sensitivity: Essays on Reading the Bible in Memory of Robert Carroll*, edited by Philip R. Davies and Alastair G. Hunter 311-328. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2002.

Clines, David J.A. "The Most High Male: Divine Masculinity in the Bible." In *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, edited by Ovidiu Creanga 61-82. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019.

Cogan, Mordechai. *1 Kings: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.

Connell, R.W. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed. Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005.

Cross, Frank Moore. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel*. 1st Harvard University Press pbk. ed. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997.

Eilberg-Schwartz, Howard. *God's Phallus: And Other Problems for Men and Monotheism*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

Encyclopaedia Judaica. 2nd ed. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. Gale eBooks accessed March 12, 2022. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/CX2587518817/GVRL?u=char69915&sid=bookmark-GVRL&xid=6d35e7de.

Fetherolf, Christina Marie. "Elijah's Mantle: A Sign of Prophecy Gone Awry." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42, no. 2 (2017): 199-212.

Goldingay, John. "Hosea 1-3, Genesis 1-4 and Masculist Interpretation." In *Feminist Companion to the Latter Prophets*, edited by Athalya Brenner-Idan and Carole R. Fontaine, 161-68. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1995.

Graybill, Rhiannon. *Are We Not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Graybill, Rhiannon. "Elisha's Body and the Queer Touch of Prophecy." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 49, no. 1 (2019): 32-40.

Guest, Deryn. "Modeling the Transgender Gaze: Performances of Masculinities in 2 Kings 9-10." In *Transgender, Intersex, and Biblical Interpretation*, edited by Teresa Hornsby and Deryn Guest, 45-80. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016.

Halberstam, Jack. *Female Masculinity*. 1998; repr., Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018.

Hauser, Alan J., Russell Gregory, and Alan J. Hauser. *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis,* Sheffield, England: The Almond press, 1990.

Hoffner, Jr., Harry A. "Symbols for Masculinity and Femininity: Their Use in Ancient Near Eastern Sympathetic Magic Rituals." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 85, no. 3 (September, 1966): 326-334.

Kittel, Rudolf, Karl Elliger, Wilhelm Rudolph, Hans Peter Rüger, and G. E. Weil. *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1997.

Lipka, Hilary. "Queen Jezebel's Masculinity." In *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, edited by Ovidiu Creanga 125-50. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019.

Spero, Shubert. "They Are No Longer, for God has Taken Them." *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 22, no.3 (1994): 221-27.

Uffenheimer, Benjamin. *Early Prophecy in Israel*. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1999.

Washington, Harold C. "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach." *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 5, no. 4 (1997): 324-63.

Wellhousen, Julius. *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*. Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1885.

Wilson, Stephen M. "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory: Past, Present, and Future." In *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*, edited by Ovidiu Creanga 19-40. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2019.

Wilson, Stephen M. *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Wyatt, Stephanie. "Jezebel, Elijah, and the Widow of Zarephath: A *Ménage à Trois* that Estranges the Holy and Makes the Holy Strange." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 36, no. 4 (2012): 435-58.