

PROPHETS MALE AND FEMALE

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PROPHETS MALE AND FEMALE

Gender and Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, the
Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East

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GENDER AND PROPHECY IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, AND THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Edited by

Jonathan Stökl and Corrine L. Carvalho

Society of Biblical Literature
Atlanta

PROPHETS MALE AND FEMALE
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Eastern Mediterranean, and the Ancient Near East

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To Martti Nissinen,
whose scholarship, leadership, and warmth
has benefited us as colleagues and friends

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992.
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AnOr	Analecta orientalia
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
AS	Assyriological Studies
ATD	Das Alte Testament Deutsch
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BA	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
BBB	Bonner biblische Beiträge
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, <i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Oxford: Clarendon, 1907.
BEATAJ	Beiträge zur Erforschung des Alten Testaments und des antiken Judentum
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibOr	Biblica et orientalia
BiSe	Biblical Seminar
BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BKAT	Biblischer Kommentar, Altes Testament
BM	Tablets in the collection of the British Museum
BMW	The Bible in the Modern World
<i>BiOr</i>	<i>Bibliotheca orientalis</i>

<i>BRev</i>	<i>Bible Review</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	Beiträge zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beiträge zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i> . Edited by Ignace J. Gelb et al. 21 vols. in 26. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956–2011.
CANE	<i>Civilizations of the Ancient Near East</i> . Edited by Jack Sasson. 4 vols. New York: Scribner, 1995.
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CHANE	Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CC	Continental Commentaries
<i>CDLI Bulletin</i>	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative Bulletin</i>
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CRRAI	Compte rendu, Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
CT	<i>Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum</i> . London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1896–.
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
DMOA	Documenta et monumenta orientis antiqui
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
DSSR	<i>The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader</i> . Edited by Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov. 6 vols. Leiden, 2004–2005
DSSSE	<i>The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition</i> . Edited by Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1997–1998.
ET	English translation
ETCSL	Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature
<i>EvT</i>	<i>Evangelische Theologie</i>
f.	feminine
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FCB	Feminist Companion to the Bible
FGH	<i>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> . Edited by Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964.
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments

GAG	Wolfram von Soden, with Werner R. Mayer, <i>Grundriss der akkadischen Grammatik</i> . 3rd ed. AnOr 33. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1995.
GAS	Gender and Archaeology Series
GBS	Guides to Biblical Studies
GCT	Gender, Culture, Theory
HALOT	Köhler, Ludwig, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm. <i>The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> . Translated and edited under the supervision of M. E. J. Richardson. 5 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000.
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBS	Herders biblische Studien
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
Heb.	Hebrew
HellSt	Hellenic Studies
HM	Historical Materialism
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i> . Edited by George A. Buttrick. 4 vols. Nashville: Abingdon, 1962.
IDBSup	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume</i> . Edited by Keith Crim. Nashville, 1976.
IG	<i>Inscriptiones graecae</i> . Editio minor. Berlin, 1924–
IGR	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes</i> . Ed. René Cagnat et al. 5 vols. Paris: Leroux, 1911–1927.
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JBL	<i>Journal for Biblical Literature</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JHNES	Johns Hopkins Near Eastern Studies
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>

JPSTC	Jewish Publication Society Torah Commentary
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JSHRZ	Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit
JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism in Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods Supplement Series
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
JQR	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
KAV	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur verschiedenen Inhalts
KJV	King James Version
KTU	<i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit</i> . Edited by Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and J. Sanmartín. AOAT 24. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1976.
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
m.	masculine
MARI	<i>Mari: Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires</i>
MC	Mesopotamian Civilizations
MDP	Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse
MSL	Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon. Edited by Benno Landsberger.
NABU	<i>Nouvelles assyriologiques breves et utilitaires</i>
NIB	<i>New Interpreter's Bible</i> . Edited by Leander E. Keck. 12 vols. plus index volume. Nashville: Abingdon, 1994–2004.
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
<i>Nin</i>	<i>Nin: Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
OBO	Orbis biblicus et orientalis
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
<i>Or</i>	<i>Orientalia</i>
OTL	Old Testament Library

OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985.
OTS	Old Testament Studies
OtSt	<i>Oudtestamentische Studiën</i>
PMS	Patristic Monograph Series
PNA	<i>The Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> . Edited by Simo Parpola et al. 3 vols. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1998–2011.
PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PrTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RB	<i>Revue biblique</i>
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RIME	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
RINAP	Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period
RSV	Revised Standard Version
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations
SBH	George Andrew Reisner, <i>Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Thontafeln griechischer Zeit</i> . Berlin: Spemann, 1896.
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLAIL	Society of Biblical Literature Ancient Israel and Its Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLRBS	Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLWAW	Society of Biblical Literature Writings from the Ancient World
SC	Sources Chrétiennes. Paris: Cerf, 1943–
SecCent	<i>Second Century</i>

SEG	Supplementum epigraphicum graecum
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SHCANE	Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East
<i>SJOT</i>	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
SOTSMS	Society for Old Testament Studies Monograph Series
StBL	Studies in Biblical Literature
<i>STDJ</i>	<i>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</i>
StP	Studia Pohl
StPatr	Studia patristica
<i>STT</i>	Oliver R. Gurney, Jacob Joel Finkelstein, and P. Hulin, eds. <i>The Sultantepe Tablets</i> . 2 vols. London: British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, 1957–1964.
StudOr	Studia Orientalia
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha
TCL	Textes cunéiformes. Musée du Louvre
<i>TDOT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> . Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry. Translated by John T. Willis, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and David E. Green. 15 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974–2006.
UC	siglum of the Petrie Museum, University College London
<i>UF</i>	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
<i>USQR</i>	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
VAS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler
VAT	Vorderasiatische Abteilung Tontafel. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin
VCSup	Supplements to Vigiliae christianae
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der deutschen Orientgesellschaft
<i>WW</i>	<i>Word and World</i>
<i>ZA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie</i>
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

INTRODUCTION

Corrine Carvalho and Jonathan Stökl

The essays for this volume come out of the Prophetic Texts in Their Ancient Context section of the Society of Biblical Literature in Boston (2009) and New Orleans (2010). This section studies prophetic texts from the Hebrew Bible and other ancient Near Eastern corpora within their respective ancient contexts. Over the course of two years, this section focused on the intersection of gender and prophecy. Because of the nature of the section, all of the essays rely on textual evidence of one sort or another in order to reconstruct the ancient contexts. Some essays supplement textual evidence with cross-cultural comparisons (Grabbe and Hamori) or approaches based in literary theory (Boer).

Presenters were instructed to consider gender broadly. They were invited to address not just female gender, but masculinity and sexual ambiguity. The result is a collection of essays that demonstrate how attention to gender dynamics in a variety of ancient contexts reveals other social and ideological dynamics at play in the ancient evidence. Attention to gender is not an optional category for understanding all the variety of texts in their ancient context—it is an essential element in these artifacts.

The volume is divided into two parts: prophecy in the ancient Near East and Greece, followed by prophecy in biblical texts. The essays in each set differ from those in the other in noticeable ways, with the Near Eastern essays more focused on historical reconstruction and the biblical essays providing literary analyses of the texts. This is due, in part, to the nature of the evidence available to each set of scholars but is also a result of the differences in the scholarly debates in the various academic disciplines.

Evidence for Israelite/Judean prophecy comes almost entirely from the biblical record, via long, complex texts that have undergone heavy editorial control. The explicit ideology of each text, which can only be partially corrected by epigraphic, annalistic, inscriptional evidence, must be explic-

itly engaged in one manner or another. The texts themselves are either long narratives within which prophetic activity is described or prophetic books that, while ostensibly containing collections of prophetic oracles, do so within a larger rhetorical framework. The biblical essays, then, more often utilize literary methods of analysis given the rhetorical elements in this ancient evidence.

The essays in the first part of the book, with the exception of Grabbe's, cover a very broad swath of evidence, both geographically and chronologically. While essays dealing with late antiquity do engage complex narrative texts, much of the other evidence comes from nonnarrative texts. While nonnarrative texts also employ rhetoric and reflect ideology, literary methods are not always the best means for revealing those forces. Thus the question raised by Mesopotamian references to the *assinus* is whether they functioned as prophets or whether their function was something altogether different and their prophetic activity incidental to their other religious role. Even with this wide variety of material, however, questions of status, authority, and agency appear repeatedly in these essays, and we cannot fully understand these questions without engaging how status always engaged gendered status as well.

The volume starts with the essay by Lester Grabbe because of the way that it sets out broader anthropological categories for thinking about this intersection. Grabbe notes that, in the wide variety of settings he surveyed, female prophets were in fact prophets who happened to be female. That is, female prophets performed the same prophetic roles as male prophets. But he goes on to note that female prophetic behavior could be circumscribed by other gendered expectations within their respective societies.

These observations about female prophets raise questions about how masculinity or transgendered identity might also circumscribe prophetic performance. In patriarchal cultures, the performance of gender raises questions about status, power, and agency, which are explicitly addressed by Martti Nissinen, Anselm Hagedorn, Antti Marjanen, Dale Launderville, and Roland Boer. While prophetic activity deemed as authentic conveyed elements of status and power, these scholars query whether the matrix of prophetic status mapped differently onto nonmale prophets than it did onto high-status males. Whereas Grabbe sees female prophets as prophets who happen to be female, Esther Hamori's essay presents literary evidence that the prophetic office may have had different consequences for female and male prophets. Hanna Tervanotko takes the depiction of Miriam as a starting point to inquire whether there may have been forms

of communication between the divine and human spheres that were more often practiced by women. Jonathan Stökl and Ilona Zsolnay test the evidence for gender ambiguity in ancient Near Eastern prophecy. The essays by Nissinen, Lauderville, and Corrine Carvalho address how prophetic performance of gender also addressed issues of divine status.

GENDERED PROPHECY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND GREECE

It is difficult to synthesize the results of these essays, since they cover such disparate locations and historical settings. Three of the essays focus on female prophets in the anthropological evidence (Grabbe), Greek literature (Hagedorn), and Montanist (Marjanen) settings. Two look at the gendered performances of the *assinu* (Stökl and Zsolnay). One provides a broader survey of gender and agency in both the ancient Near East and Greece (Nissinen). None of these essays focuses on masculinity per se, but Zsolnay and Stökl discuss (modern and ancient) expectations of gendered behavior. In spite of the disparate evidence, it is still possible to identify certain patterns related to female prophets.

Not all essays operate with the same terminology. Among the essays on ancient Near Eastern and Greek prophecy, the term *divination* is used to describe all forms of humans accessing divine information, be it through reading the gods' will in the stars, in a sheep's liver, in the flight of birds (all forms of technical divination), or through dreams and prophecy in which the divine will does not have to be interpreted into human speech (intuitive divination). The essays that focus on the biblical texts tend to use the word *divination* to refer to the use of technical manipulation as a means for prophetic interaction with the divine world.

First, unlike more technical forms of divination, ecstatic or charismatic forms of prophecy seems to have been open to women in most societies. To be sure, some cultures were more tolerant of female prophecy, and perhaps prophecy by people who did not fit into contemporary gender dichotomies. Ancient Greece had multiple cultic sites that featured female prophets (Hagedorn). In the ancient Near East, Mari was more tolerant of female prophets than West Semitic cultures such as Israel (Nissinen), but even the less-tolerant communities give evidence of some women who were deemed authentic prophets.

Second, if our evidence is to be trusted, the vast majority of Neo-Assyrian prophets were female. In Mari the numbers show a preference for male prophets, while the data in the Hebrew Bible mentions only five

female prophets. Some ancient cultures appear to have required female prophets to be celibate (e.g., the Pythia at Delphi, the Montanists, and possibly some in the Hebrew Bible).

Third, in general, female prophets did not enjoy the same ease of prestige that their male counterparts did. Especially noteworthy is the degree to which the professionalization of prophetic activity seemed to have progressively excluded women. Grabbe speaks about the kinds of restrictions that female prophets would have experienced. The restriction that they not have control over men seems especially at play in this arena.

Fourth, on a related note, the nonbiblical evidence of prophecy gives a fuller picture of various types of prophetic activity: seers, diviners, those possessed by spirits, and so on. As a result of this fuller picture, another limitation sometimes seen for women is their exclusion from prophetic activities requiring training or education, such as the arts of technical divination.

This last observation raises the issue of the relationship between the divine and human realms that is at the heart of (divinatory and) prophetic activities. As implied by Nissinen's article, the ability to read the gods' writing in the stars or a sheep's liver conferred a higher status to a technical diviner, who could reliably inquire of the gods. In contrast, prophecy and other forms of intuitive divination place the agency more on the divine. As a rule, communities do not object to a deity speaking through a woman or someone else of lower status. The question whether the oracles of Montanist female prophets came true suggests that for early Christians it was not enough to deny that these women were prophets because of their gender; instead, the authenticity of their call depended on divine agency revealed through the fulfillment of these oracles.

The question remains whether these general patterns also apply to other nonmale prophets. Stökl's essay raises important questions of terminology and classification for nonmale persons in ancient Mesopotamia. Were they simply acting out nonmale gender roles in the context of a cult, or is there evidence for a standard social role for such persons within their religious system? Stökl shows that there is not enough evidence to assert an official class of nonmale prophets. Zsolnay questions the consensus that *assinnus* are always nonmale performers suggesting instead that until the middle of the first millennium B.C.E. the *assinnus* should be understood as specialists who performed a martial role in the cult of warlike forms of Ištar. Only in late texts is the reference to ambiguous gender clear; there is no reason to read that evidence back into earlier texts.

In general, these essays demonstrate that the significance of the gender of a given prophet depends in large part how that gender functions within its native culture. Prophecy, as a religious phenomenon, was one vehicle through which women could have some public expression of their religious identity. This path was safeguarded by the fact that it was a deity who paved it.

THE BIBLICAL WORLD

Unlike the essays in the first part of this volume, the essays related to biblical prophecy deal with a far more focused collection of texts, mainly stemming from ancient Israel. Nissinen identifies Israel as less open to female prophets than many other ancient cultures, noting that only about 10 percent of the named prophets found in the biblical evidence were women. The biblical record asserts the nonparticipation of women as leaders in the official cult of Israel; for these texts there were no women priests of Yahweh in the national shrines. Although conclusions about women and the cult need to be cautious since Israelite literature was even more ideologically controlled than the evidence from Mesopotamia, there is no evidence to the contrary about the official cult.

Given the androcentric nature of the biblical literary record, it is noteworthy that positive portrayals of some female prophets remain. These records are the subject of essays by Tervanotko and Hamori. Both essays point to the fact that, although these biblical texts provide more detailed descriptions of individual female prophets in comparison to Mesopotamian texts, they nevertheless suggest that there were fuller traditions about female prophets that lie behind the textual record. Certainly the challenge raised about Moses' prophecy in Num 12 assumed that Miriam was known as a prophet, even though the title was not used in this text (Tervanotko). This evidence suggests that one factor contributing to the unequal representation of female prophets in the written record is the social factors related to writing itself, a topic explicitly addressed by Boer.

Hamori's essay is the only one in the volume to consider nonnormative female behavior as a mark of female prophets. Using broader anthropological parallels, as Grabbe does, her essay notes the prominence of separating female reproductive roles from prophetic ones. In some cases women's sexuality raised questions of purity; in others the role of mother was simply incompatible with the role of prophet. Hamori's cross-cultural survey asks readers to reconsider the reality that no woman in the Bible

who functioned as a prophet was, at the same time, said to have children. Biblical texts do not mention an explicit prohibition, but Hamori's essay suggests that the texts could simply presume that female prophets were either virgins, celibate, or postmenopausal.

In addition to these essays on female prophets, this volume also contains three essays that explore the intersection of masculinity and prophecy in the books of Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Launderville's essay analyzes the rhetorical purpose of likening the male elite with menstruating women in Ezek 36:17. Boer examines how the images of Ezekiel promote a phallic power embodied in a male scribal prophet. Carvalho uses categories of gender and queer theory to explore how the notations of Ezekiel and Jeremiah's singleness function within their books.

These essays on the exilic prophets show that masculinity was an essential element in understanding the gender dynamics of the prophetic phenomena. Given the high status of the male elite within Israelite society, an effective way to unsettle that status in relationship to Yahweh was to liken those men to women. Launderville's essay shows that the rhetorical details of Ezek 36:17 expected the reaction of disgust as a tool to change the behavior and attitudes of the male elite toward Yahweh. Boer and Carvalho note that, on the divine side of the coin, hypersexualizing male metaphors attached to the divine realm (from the messengers in Ezek 9 to the hypermale Yahweh in Ezek 16, 23, and Jer 20) undercut the ideology of male control that was the foundation of the patriarchal system.

Boer's essay reads Ezek 9 as a site of ideological struggle over the hegemony of a masculine scribal class. Uncovering assertions of male sexual power undergirding texts like Ezek 2, 9, and Jer 36, Boer concludes that assertions about the phallic power of writing simultaneously revealed the ruling elite's inability to control or contain such power. The result was a set of texts that were merely self-serving, a kind of rhetorical masturbatory practice.

By examining the singleness of Ezekiel and Jeremiah, Carvalho also seeks to uncover the ways in which these texts reveal how the exile ripped out the foundation of male privilege on which preexilic Israel was built. The book of Ezekiel used standard gender categories to depict Yahweh as actively involved in shaming the male elite. Jeremiah's singleness, on the other hand, undercuts Jeremiah's performance of masculinity, an image in continuity with a broader attempt found throughout other sections of the book to complicate gender norms.

In all of these essays on exilic prophets, masculinity was played out not only against the backdrop of Israelite social structures, but against its religious backdrop as well. These essays point out the way that gender was used as a rhetorical feature in these texts to advance certain ideologies and undercut others. All three essays show that in these texts gender was performed in a way that raised the status of the divine realm while simultaneously lowering the status of males who were experiencing exile.

OUTCOMES

The gendered performances of ancient prophets functioned with a variety of other performances of social roles. In order to explore the significance of gender in each case, then, awareness of this larger social matrix must be kept in mind. Grabbe concludes that female prophets are prophets who happened to be female, but the question remains in what ways gender was always a factor in the way the prophets acted, spoke, and were received by the societies in which they operate. The essays in this volume suggest three areas for further inquiry.

First, the texts about female prophets raise questions about the agency and authority of these women, questions inextricably linked to issues of social status within the gendered matrix of status of each culture. Female prophets seem to have been common both in Greece and in the Neo-Assyrian Empire for reasons that are still not entirely understood. While the texts suggest that in all ancient societies female prophetic activity was probably more widespread than the written evidence records, in most situations female and nonmale prophets were less common than male ones; the one obvious exception to this rule is the Neo-Assyrian Empire, which, according to the available evidence, seems to have preferred its prophets to be female. When the written record includes objections to female prophets, it was usually an issue of status and power relative to men. There are hints in some texts from Greece, however, that there was a tendency for some female prophets to be celibate (although purity language is rarely used in these cases), an issue that may have elevated their status by denying those activities that were most often associated with female gender performance.

Second, the performance of masculinity by prophets and other cult functionaries could be undermined in order to preserve the status of the divine realm vis-à-vis human power. Although in the cult of Ištar cult functionaries (*assinnus*) performed her martial attributes, for a long time

without reference to cross-dressing or nonmale gender performance by male cult functionaries, at a later date reference to such behavior is found in the textual evidence. In Israelite literature, male elites had their status rhetorically deflated, by confrontations with phallic angels, comparisons to menstruating women, and loss of personal agency by becoming Yahweh's mouthpiece, in order to maintain the status of their God. In this way, the feminization of males in the Israelite literature expressed the ancient male audience's awe of their god.

Third, gendered identities that do not match modernist dichotomies of male/female were certainly known in the ancient world outside prophecy. Such identities did not preclude someone from being viewed as an authentic prophet. In Israel and Judah gender-bending and sexual language are apparent in prophetic texts; in Mesopotamia nonstandard gender roles can be found in the textual record, but the evidence is ambiguous as to whether it also occurs in connection to prophecy (Stökl). The question remains whether these were persons already viewed as third (or fourth) gendered by their societies, or whether these were simply cult functionaries playing out set roles.

Lastly, the essays in this volume demonstrate that gender was an essential component of all life in ancient and modern societies and can therefore also be found in most prophetic activity. While female prophets did not prophesy differently than their male counterparts, the ways in which they were accepted, the roles they played in the cult, and their relationship to the divine agent all reveal hidden social structures that impinged on ancient religious expressions. Although more attention has been paid to female identity, the essays as a whole point out that every prophetic expression was a gendered expression, and that attention to those gender dynamics will continue to open up the ancient contexts of prophetic texts.