

WRESTLING WITH TEXTUAL VIOLENCE



The Bible in the Modern World, 4

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WRESTLING WITH TEXTUAL VIOLENCE

The Jephthah Narrative in
Antiquity and Modernity

Mikael Sjöberg



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To Lina

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PREFACE

Why devote so many years to academic wrestling with textual violence? Why this fascination with religious atrocity? Certainly, I would not have pursued this path had I not had my early experiences of interpretative struggles with the Bible in the pietistic northern Swedish region of Västerbotten, where I was born, or in the multicultural inter-religious environment of Kinshasa, in former Zaïre, where I spent two formative years as a 'missionary kid'. The writing of this book reflects a desire to deal somehow with that heritage.

The bell now tolls for this particular round of confrontation. I want to acknowledge my gratitude to a large number of people for helping me to stay on my feet, although the responsibility for any imperfections found in the text is of course mine only. First of all, I have had the benefit of no less than three advisers at the Department of Theology in Uppsala. Inger Ljung opened my eyes to the fascinating world of biblical studies as well as to the prosaic reality of university politics. She helped me to conceive the basic idea of the present study and since then she has continually given me moral and professional support. Lars Hartman helped me to move on when I was treading water halfway through. Offering exegetical expertise, confidence and curiosity, he has followed me closely even when the path led to unknown territory for both of us. Tirelessly reading version upon version with the same care, he has propelled me towards greater clarity. Likewise indefatigably, Hanna Stenström has scrutinized the project on the basis of her general feminist theoretical competence as well as by her specific insights in the areas of feminist exegesis and the ethics of biblical interpretation. Writing in this field herself, she has challenged me to dig deeper and, particularly at the crucial last stage of synthesis, she has generously played the role of a creative sparring partner.

Over these years, I have participated in various academic seminars mainly at Uppsala University. Above all I owe gratitude to the Old Testament seminar, led by Stig Norin and Inger Ljung; the now dormant Forum of Hermeneutics, led by Hanna Stenström; the theological seminar on Women's Studies in Religion, led by Eva Evers-Rosander; the seminar of Literature, led by Torsten Pettersson; and, finally, at the University of Stockholm, the social anthropology seminar led by Don Kulick.

Thanks to a generous grant from The Royal Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, I was able to spend three weeks in Sheffield at the Department of Biblical Studies in March 2003, where Cheryl Exum invited me to present a paper on Handel's *Jephtha*. The enthusiastic response I then received contributed significantly to affirming my own belief in the project. Thanks to her, Sarah Norman and Ailsa Parkin at Sheffield Phoenix Press, the thesis was transformed into a book. The response of David Gunn, who was the opponent at my dissertation, also encouraged me to that end and inspired me to think further on vital issues.

Mikael Mogren has been an immense support to me in actually reaching the goal. Mattias Martinsson and Eva Heggstad also made major contributions at the final stage by their refreshing views from outside. Of the many more friends and colleagues that have offered their assistance in various ways, I especially want to thank Jorunn Økland, Kari Syreeni, Lena Roos, Kjell Hognesius, Kristina Lockner, Lisa Mobrand, Maria Klasson-Sundin, Sören Dalevi, Cristina Grenholm, Malin Isaksson, Thomas Ekstrand, Marika Andrae, Karin Hallgren, Lars-Åke Skalin, Gerd Swensson, Bertil Albrektsson and Helena Riihiäho. I am indebted to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Uppsala for financing the project.

Finally, I wish to thank Lina Sjöberg, my beloved partner in life, without whom my development as a human being or as a scholar would be unthinkable. We have often been concerned that our professional paths have run too close to one another. Who can trace the origin of ideas, insights and influences in a dialogue such as ours? In particular, you deserve credit for stimulating my orientation towards *The Bible as Literature/The Bible in Literature* through your own exegetical work. Your skills as a writer and literary critic have aided me through many impasses. By pursuing your own dream despite its cost, you awakened and challenged my ambition. And when I needed it, you generously gave me the space to fulfil my creative process. Therefore, I dedicate this book to you.

Uppsala, April 2005

INTRODUCTION

In the second act of *Hamlet*, Lord Polonius attempts to divert the prince from his gloominess. He presents to Hamlet ‘the best actors in the world’, who can play both Seneca and Plautus. Hamlet in his turn diverts Polonius by invoking a biblical figure:

HAMLET: O Jephthah, Judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

LORD POLONIUS: What a treasure had he, my Lord?

HAMLET: Why,

‘One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well’.

LORD POLONIUS: [*Aside*] Still on my daughter.

HAMLET: Am I not i’ th’ right, old Jephthah?

LORD POLONIUS: If you call me Jephthah, my Lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAMLET: Nay, that follows not.

LORD POLONIUS: What follows, then, my Lord?

(Act 2, Scene II, lines 398-409)

Like Polonius, few modern readers of the play are acquainted with the biblical reference to Jephthah. Consequently, most directors today cut the above dialogue.¹ Yet the Jephthah motif has a history of immense popularity. From the Renaissance to the middle of the twentieth century, it inspired no less than 500 artistic treatments in the fine arts.² I suggest that the attraction of this biblical text has to do with the presentation of an extreme ethical and existential dilemma, in which Jephthah’s loyalty to the deity and to the people stands against the life of his daughter. The appeal of this narrative

1. Kenneth Branagh’s 1996 movie forms a rare exception.

2. Sypherd (1948) identifies more than 300 literary works—approximately 150 musical ones and less than 100 from the realm of the visual arts. The increasing interest in the motif in the Renaissance period is supposedly due to its similarities with the Greek tragedy, e.g. Aeschylus’s *Agamemnon*. The motif then frequently appeared in such diverse genres as the sixteenth-century drama (e.g. Buchanan and Christopherson), the musical oratorios of the Baroque (e.g. Carissimi and Handel) and in the poetry of the Romantic period (e.g. Byron and de Vigny). The attractiveness of this motif dwindled in the twentieth century, although it continued to appear, even in new genres such as the opera ballet (Saminsky).

can also be attributed to the thoroughly ambiguous manner in which it is told. The many gaps and inconsistencies invite readers, not only to interpretation, but also to extrapolation and even to rewriting.

The brief dialogue between Polonius and Hamlet demonstrates that it is not clear what follows from the biblical reference. Apparently, it concerns the relationship between a father and a daughter. More specifically, Hamlet's identification of Polonius as an 'old Jephthah' seems to imply some kind of criticism. Like Jephthah, Polonius uses his daughter as a pawn in the game for power. Like Jephthah's anonymous daughter, Ophelia dies as a consequence of her father's unwitting speech. In the context of the play, the reference could thus serve both as an indication of Hamlet's 'lunacy' and as a sign of his ability to see through the illusions of life. To make matters more complicated for the interpreter, the allusion is not exclusively to the biblical text but also to an English ballad that recounts the story.³ The dialogue thereby brings to the fore a number of issues of relevance for the present study: gender, interpretation and the role of the Bible in culture.

The biblical narrative of Jephthah constitutes a potential stumbling block for readers.⁴ On a broader hermeneutic level, it raises questions as to how to cope with violence in a canonical text. More specifically, the following interpretative problems present themselves: Why is Jephthah the only Israelite leader in the Hebrew Bible to sacrifice his daughter? What is the role of the deity in this act? Does the text accept female infanticide? To what end does the narrator comment on the sexual status of the daughter? What do the seemingly contradictory characterizations of Jephthah as well as of the daughter signify? And how do the disparate elements of the narrative fit together?

I am not alone in my consideration of these things. Early Jewish and Christian commentators demonstrate a need to draw a moral from this narrative, either by condemnation or by appraisal.⁵ *Genesis Rabba* (60.4), on the one hand, deems Jephthah to be an example of religious ignorance through comparison with, among others, King Saul.⁶ The Letter to the

3. Fienberg 1991.

4. In previous works, I have dealt with the narrative from the perspective of the psychology of religion (Sjöberg 1998) and discussed the implications of different interpretative strategies, e.g., in the context of church politics (Sjöberg 1999).

5. Both religious traditions contain criticism as well as praise of Jephthah's deeds. The tendency in the first centuries CE is that the Jewish tradition is more critical than the Christian. See e.g. Kramer (1999) for the former, Thompson (2001) for the latter and Gunn (2005) for both traditions.

6. Four men swore improper vows according to *Gen. Rab.*: Eliezer, Caleb, Saul and Jephthah. The first three received fitting responses; only Jephthah answered in an 'unfitting manner'. Thus, *Gen. Rab.* vents critique of both Jephthah and the deity. For a further discussion, see Valler (1999).

Hebrews (11.32), on the other hand, presents Jephthah as a model believer through inclusion among a long series of 'heroes of faith', such as Abraham and David.

Phyllis Tribble puts the ethically ambiguous character of the narrative on the modern exegetical agenda by including it in her seminal work *Texts of Terror* (1984). Through the juxtaposition of Jephthah's daughter with Hagar, Tamar and the anonymous concubine of Gibeah, Tribble identifies and establishes a common theme within the corpus, namely biblical women's subjection to a male dominion, of which infanticide appears a logical, although extreme, consequence.⁷ Tribble's opus itself constituted an act of commemoration of these female figures and a call to repentance for an academic discipline that had so far shown little interest in the plight of women.⁸

The many interpretations of the narrative in the fine arts represent another approach than that of theological discourse: invention rather than judgment. By rewriting the narrative, new logical connections between the events may be created, the events may be perceived from different points of view and the characters may be invented or reshaped. Some of the literary ambiguities of the narrative are thereby dissolved. The ethical ambiguities, however, are often accentuated in order to develop dramatic complexity in the new works.

Ethics, Canons and the Real World

As indicated above, this study deals with some hermeneutical problems raised by the Jephthah narrative. Before turning to these specific problems, I should say a word about the contexts within which the present inquiry is situated. The first of these contexts is the most specific one: ethical criticism within the realm of biblical studies. This type of interpretative approach has a long history in the pre-critical readings of religious traditions.⁹ In modern scholarship, ethical issues may surface in the *Sachkritik* of historical-criticism at the turn of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Most decisively, Elisabeth Schüssler

7. After Tribble (1984), Bal (1988b) specifically focused on the violence committed on the women of Judges. A number of feminist studies, e.g. those by Törnkvist (1998) and Sherwood (1996), are devoted to the metaphorical language of violence in prophets such as Hosea.

8. Tribble 1984: 3.

9. The two early Jewish texts treated in the present study (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and *Jewish Antiquities*) both feature strong denunciations of the crucial events of the Jephthah cycle.

10. Räisänen (2000: 21) mentions Wernle (1904) and Holtzmann (1911) as evidence that *Sachkritik* is nothing new in biblical studies. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000: 37) correctly remarks that ethical criticism includes much more than the traditional *Sachkritik*.

Fiorenza challenged exegetes to turn in this direction through her 1987 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address: 'The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship'.¹¹ Schüssler Fiorenza here argues for a paradigm shift within biblical studies, so that the ethos as well as the practice of the scholar should ideally be described in ethical-political terms.¹² Her appeal has not gone unheeded.¹³ Daniel Patte affirms the need for a change and accounts for his own progress towards the new paradigm,¹⁴ whereas Heikki Räisänen welcomes 'moral criticism of the Bible', but contests the existence of a new paradigm.¹⁵ Most recently, John J. Collins has delivered a practical example of this approach by dealing with 'The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence' in light of the September 11 attacks.¹⁶

The works mentioned above indicate that the ethics of interpretation has become a prominent issue on the international exegetical scene. Krister Stendahl envisioned that biblical scholarship might serve as a kind of 'public health department in theology'.¹⁷ Others go further and propose that biblical studies ought to serve as a 'science of public information' that reaches beyond the academy.¹⁸ In line with the latter, I welcome the notion that biblical studies now stand more clearly in the service of the public. This means that exegetes ought not to hesitate in confronting the most repulsive parts of our cultural heritage. Rather than repressing these parts as barbaric or primitive, we ought to observe their continuity with the present. How do they still affect us and what strategies might we use to cope with them?

11. Schüssler Fiorenza 1988.

12. Within literary criticism, Booth (1988: 19) also called for a new and more sophisticated ethical criticism: 'It is practiced everywhere, often surreptitiously, often guiltily, and often badly, partly because it is the most difficult of all critical modes, but partly because we have so little serious talk about why it is important, what purpose it serves, and how it might be done well.' Further examples of the ethical turn in literary criticism are found in Palmer (1992) and Parker (1994).

13. Schüssler Fiorenza (2000: 29) complains that, before Räisänen (2000), the responses to her SBL address mainly came from the margins.

14. Patte 1995.

15. Räisänen officially responds to Schüssler Fiorenza through his 1999 SBL presidential address (Räisänen 2000a). Hanna Stenström (2002 and 2005) structures the, at times, fierce debate between Räisänen and Schüssler Fiorenza and attempts to break the deadlock. Räisänen develops his ideals of ethical criticism above all in two works (Räisänen 2000a and 2000b) and before that he has given a practical example thereof (Räisänen 1997).

16. Collins 2003. The article was first delivered as the 2002 SBL presidential address.

17. Stendahl 1984: 4 and Schüssler Fiorenza 2000: 31-32.

18. Petzke (1975: 2-19) coins the expression and Räisänen (2000b: 104-106) describes it as a growing trend in exegesis.

In a similar vein, Jacques Derrida makes a case for the political aspect of the critical task. Crediting feminist scholars with demonstrating phallogocentric assumptions in literary texts, he argues for the necessity of submitting the most 'powerful' texts to analysis:

Taking account of these paradoxes, some of the most violent, most 'reactionary', most odious or diabolical texts keep, in my view, an interest which I will never give up, in particular a political interest from which no intimidation, no dogmatism, no simplification should turn us away.¹⁹

This leads to a second more general context of relevance for this study, the struggle over literary 'classics' in departments of literature and beyond.²⁰ Although by no means a constant or well-defined entity, these are texts with a history of interpretation. For different reasons, they have been safeguarded as especially significant and therefore they have also been promoted as compulsory reading in schools and universities.²¹ According to David Tracy, no one who approaches a classic text can escape 'the reality of tradition'.²² During the last decades, it has been questioned whether this body of texts, also labelled as the 'Western Canon', represents the essence of Western civilization or whether these texts serve as an instrument of repression.²³ How, for example, can a novel such as Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*, with its justification of gender-related violence and its grossly misogynist rape scenes, gain and defend its status as a classic?²⁴ Aesthetics here stands against ethics. Controversies of this kind demonstrate well that literature has to do with politics and with power.²⁵

The ethical quality of the biblical canons has also been contested, by exegetes (as shown above) as well as by laypeople. One example of the latter stems from the completion of the last official translation of the Hebrew Bible into Swedish, published in the Swedish Bible, 2000. Journalists 'revealed' its

19. Derrida 1992: 59.

20. Finkelberg and Stroumsa (2003: 1) define the issue as one of the most debated ones at present.

21. According to Bal (2000), the 'unreflected self-evident repetition is the defining feature of canonicity', e.g. in the education system.

22. Tracy 1981: 119.

23. Proponents of the former position include Bloom (1994) and Altieri (1983) and those of the latter include Lawrence (1992) and Bal (2000).

24. The pioneering author Kate Millet (1977: 314-35) demonstrates with devastating clarity the combination of sexuality and violence in Mailer's works. With regard to race, Booth (1988: 3-22) gives an account of the offence Paul Moses caused through his 'ethical' protest 25 years ago against having to teach *Huckleberry Finn* at the University of Chicago.

25. This contention is by no means an exclusively American issue, although in recent times that is where the debate has been most fierce.

alleged glorification of violence in general and its exclusion and debasement of women in particular.²⁶ In the same vein, taxpayers complained in letters to the press that state funding was used for the project. Thereby the underlying notion that the Hebrew Bible is also a literary 'classic' with relevance beyond religious communities was contested.²⁷

Literary and religious canons differ in many ways.²⁸ Yet the boundaries between the two are by no means absolute. The former contains texts that engage in direct dialogue with the latter,²⁹ whereas the latter harbours works appreciated for their literary qualities.³⁰ The Hebrew Bible is unique in that it can be at least partially assigned to both these categories. Precisely this 'double canonicity' of the biblical texts makes the act of reading a potential challenge to religious as well as to non-religious readers, since the texts can neither be reduced to mere religion nor to mere literature.³¹ What, then, does a reader do when he or she is morally provoked during the act of reading, when his or her tools of interpretation seem inadequate or insufficient?³² Such hermeneutical struggles with the Western 'classical' heritage, of which

26. Among these were Moberg (2000). In Chapter 5, I discuss the implications of the call for censure with regard to biblical texts.

27. According to the explicit governmental instructions to the Swedish Bible Commission, the new translation ought to answer a 'broad cultural need' and thus potentially be used by someone who 'seeks historical knowledge or literary aesthetic values' (Swedish Bible 2000: 7). The translation was in fact published in the Reports of the (Swedish) Government Commissions (SOU series).

28. The term 'canon' (from the Greek *kanonikos*, 'one who comes up to the standard') has only been applied to the literary canon for the past 25 years (Alter 2000: 1). With regard to their formations, the religious canon is fixed (although not absolutely), whereas the literary one is constantly changing. Moreover, the status of the former is officially sanctioned as normative for a specific community of believers, whereas the latter merely conveys aesthetic value for a community of readers that may even deny its own existence (Bal 2000).

29. Bal (2000) mentions Milton's *Paradise Lost* as an example of a 'religious text'.

30. Alter (2000: 21-61) speaks of the double canonicity of the Hebrew Bible and argues that Job, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs and Esther were accepted into the religious canon due to their 'literary power and sheer popularity' (27) despite their lack of orthodoxy with regard to doctrine.

31. Zenger (1996) makes an exegetical attempt to deal with ethically provocative texts.

32. Iser (1978: 202-203) describes the 'blank' in literary texts as a 'paradigmatic structure' that guides the reader's activity. However, in my view he thereby underestimates the role of the reader in general, and, more specifically, in situations where interpretation meets difficulties. Using the terminology of Iser, Pettersson (1999: 30) proposes a more technical phrasing of the issue: 'What do real readers do when a literary work offers them a role as implicit readers that they will not accept?' He delivers no less than six plausible reading strategies for situations of 'struggle against dislike and weariness'. Unfortunately, he gives no examples of how these strategies can be applied.

the Hebrew Bible is a special case, thus constitute a general background for the present study.

The third context of relevance for this study is the broadest possible one: the real world in which we live. Male violence against women and children constitutes a painfully central phenomenon around the globe as well as in the Hebrew Bible. Every year male battering results in thousands of deaths and the issue is repeatedly addressed by organizations such as the United Nations, Amnesty International and the Lutheran World Federation.³³ Thus, the violent theme of the Jephthah narrative cannot be discarded as a unique or a peculiar exception, neither in the world of the biblical texts nor in our present-day experience.

The above reasoning assumes that there exists some kind of relation between the Bible and the empirical world. To state that the Bible in general has had a vast impact on Western society with regard to religion, culture and politics is hardly controversial.³⁴ Yet few attempts have been made to delineate more precisely the nature of this impact, which Heikki Räisänen bemoans.³⁵ He calls for broader, yet more sophisticated, studies in this regard; studies that are not simply concerned with the formation of Christian confessional traditions and that avoid drawing simplistic conclusions about causal relations in history. In his conclusion, with which I agree, he identifies it as crucial for the legitimacy of the discipline that exegetes devote some real energy to this issue.³⁶ What difference has the Bible actually made, for good and for bad, in society at large?

Among feminist exegetes, I dare say that no one would contest that the Bible has been used in the service of oppression.³⁷ In fact, the first concrete

33. In the last decade, the General Assembly of the UN has passed a large number of resolutions aimed at the elimination of violence against women. See the website for the High Commissioner of Human Rights, www.unhcr.ch. Amnesty International arranges campaigns to stop violence against women; see their online news bulletin: www.amnesty.org/campaign/. The LWF document, entitled 'Churches Say "No" to Violence against Women: Action Plan for the Churches' (2002), demonstrates how theoretical reflection and concrete activism combine in the handling of this issue. In a Swedish context, the Women's Shelter Movement has to a large extent contributed to putting the issue on the political agenda.

34. The Bible and Culture Collective (1995: 1) calls it a 'truism'.

35. Räisänen (1992: 305-15) finds that theologians have misused Gadamer's term *Wirkungsgeschichte* by reducing it to the realm of church history or interpretative history. According to him, Dobschütz (1914) and Sivan (1973) are among the very few who have attempted to address this issue. Räisänen points out that these works lack important distinctions, e.g., between effect and usage. The latter two also suffer from an apologetic tendency, in that the harmful effects of the Bible are omitted.

36. Räisänen (1992: 324) concludes that otherwise, 'we have greatly exaggerated the importance of Scripture'.

37. One may, however, disagree on the liberating potential of the biblical texts.

step towards a feminist exegesis, namely, *The Women's Bible* (1895, 1898) was started in direct response to such repressive usages, when the pioneer, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, was excluded by reference to the Bible from participating in the work for human rights.³⁸ More recently, Carole R. Fontaine has discussed the possible functions of the Bible in pastoral contexts when domestic violence is at issue.³⁹ The case of feminist exegetes would probably become stronger if more such attempts were made empirically to substantiate claims of the biblical texts' destructive or possibly liberating effects or usages in society.⁴⁰ Which texts have been particularly harmful and how has the harm been achieved? Answering these kinds of question would also be in line with the ideal of exegesis as a 'public health department'.⁴¹

The Task and the Material

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the exegetical debate about the ethical and political dimensions of biblical interpretation with special regard to feminism. Making a case study of the Jephthah narrative, where gender and ethics are in focus, and discussing some general implications of that study fulfil that aim.

The case study is presented as a comparative analysis of six different versions of the Jephthah narrative: the biblical text of Judges 10.6–12.7, two Jewish first-century rewritings (Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 39–40 and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 5.255–270), a musical oratorio of the late Baroque period (Handel's *Jephtha*, 1751) and two examples of twentieth-century fiction (E.L. Grant Watson's novel *A Mighty Man of Valour*, 1939, and Amos Oz's short story 'Upon This Evil Earth' from the collection *Where the Jackals Howl*, 1981).

After identifying four main points of ambiguity in the biblical narrative, I investigate the alterations of the narrative in the extra-biblical texts, with

Whereas Schüssler Fiorenza (1990: 8) argues that the Bible, despite its androcentrism, may be used as a 'Book of Women-Church', Fuchs (2000: 12-13) unconditionally rejects the corpus as 'a political speech-act that justifies the political subordination of women'.

38. Ljung 1997: 8.

39. Fontaine 1997.

40. Obviously, I do not regard the relation between biblical violence and real violence as a mono-causal one. The 'effects' of the Bible should of course not be understood in isolation from other factors.

41. Feminist forerunners to this kind of study include Bal (1991), Bach (1997) and Exum (1996). The anthology of Exum and Moore (1998) features two promising contributions on the general function of the biblical texts, i.e., Y.S. Feldman (159-89) on the Aqedah's significance for Israel's national identity and Carroll (46-69) on the Bible as a bestseller, an icon and a fetish. Räisänen (1992: 322-23) proposes a number of urgent topics in this regard.

specific regard to gender. From the results of this comparative analysis, I synthesize a number of more generally applicable interpretative strategies. I then assess these strategies according to a feminist standard. Finally, I relate the present study to Schüssler Fiorenza's and Patte's ethical programmes in a critical discussion.

The present study contains three main parts. In the Introduction, I present the broader contexts in which the study may be relevant. In Chapters 1 to 4, I carry out the comparative analysis of the Jephthah narrative in six versions. Since the extra-biblical texts might be unknown to most readers, I present introductions to the literary and historical contexts from which they have originated. In Chapter 5, finally, I return to a more general level in order to discuss the implications of the case study for the ethical and political dimensions of biblical studies.

All the extra-biblical material of this investigation represents rewritings or re-narrations of the biblical narrative.⁴² Three criteria have been decisive in my selection of texts.⁴³ The most important one—relevance—is rather obvious. The material has been chosen because of its richness with regard to the specific interest of this study, that is, to gender.

The aim of the second criterion—variety—is to find material that is as divergent as possible.⁴⁴ In relation to the previous criterion, this is the reason I use texts that diminish the daughter as well as some that glorify her. Furthermore, it motivates my use of texts from both religious and artistic contexts, from different periods (first, eighteenth and twentieth centuries) and from different genres or even art forms (the 'rewritten Bible', the musical oratorio and fiction). This means that I am not primarily concerned with making a representative choice. Nor should the selection of material be regarded as an attempt to produce a historical survey of how this narrative has been treated in the past.

A natural question with regard to the criterion of variety is why there are no women or non-Westerners among the authors of the chosen works. To my regret, such works have either not yet been written or are not accessible to a broader public. Two prose works by women in the twentieth century do make an explicit connection to the Jephthah narrative.⁴⁵ However, in these

42. Exegetes such as Thompson (2001) often treat the works of Pseudo-Philo and Josephus as if they were theological treatises, in which the views of the narrator or even of one of the characters (i.e., God) are understood as equal to those of the author. That, however, ignores the nuances in the narrative or at least reduces them. In the present study, Pseudo-Philo's and Josephus's works are treated as narratives.

43. The selection of material will be discussed further at the beginning of Chapters 1 to 4.

44. The principle of variety also guides qualitative approaches within the realm of the behavioral sciences. See e.g. Trost 1997.

45. Ragen 1989 and von le Fort 1976.

works the biblical motif is transferred to modern times, which makes a detailed comparison of the narratives difficult or irrelevant.⁴⁶

The third criterion—impact—is subordinate to the other two. It motivates particularly the choice of Handel's oratorio. That work is still widely played and appears at present to be the most significant artistic treatment of this narrative. Within the realm of fiction, no composition has gained an equivalent status. With the exception of Amos Oz, only authors of low prominence have treated the motif. Of the two early Jewish texts, only Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* has had a wide impact.⁴⁷

Perspectives and Tools

Feminism constitutes the over-arching theoretical perspective of the present study. Like Schüssler Fiorenza, I regard feminism as both 'a theory and practice of justice that seeks not just to understand but to change relations of marginalization and domination'.⁴⁸ In the particular theological context to which I belong, which is hardly unique, feminist theology is not defined by its 'subject matter (women) but by its basic assumption—women are subordinated; and by its overarching goal—to promote equality between women and men'.⁴⁹ It should come as no surprise, then, that feminism includes studies of female as well as of male identities and that it counts both women and men among its practitioners.⁵⁰ Consequently, I am sceptical about the usage of related labels, such as 'gender studies', 'men's studies' or 'queer studies', as a means of marking discontinuity with the feminist movement from which they have historically arisen.⁵¹

46. Although these works by female authors do not fit in the context of the present study, I discuss them in a forthcoming article in *Biblical Interpretation*.

47. Pseudo-Philo's impact lies above all in inspiring Pierre Abélard's lament on the same theme. See Alexiou and Dronke 1971.

48. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 7.

49. Eriksson 1995: 12. In this context, analyses of the relation between gender and power are fundamental.

50. Økland (2003b) finds it neither ironic nor unpredictable that feminist studies deal with the construction of masculinity, but regards it rather as 'a logical consequence of the initially feminist insight that texts are gendered'. Hearn and Lattu (2002: 3) more bluntly state, 'the study of men and masculinities has always been part of Women's studies'.

51. Why should men studying gender relations form a separate reservoir and not learn from the feminist theoretical developments in the past thirty years? Within biblical studies, Clines (1995 and 1998) gives examples of such tendencies. I find the contentions over academic labels unfortunate yet illustrative of the fact that the production of knowledge is connected to power.

Using feminism as the general perspective,⁵² 'gender' serves as the main analytical tool. In a comparative analysis, this means that I am above all interested in alterations that have implications for 'gender'. The reason why the bulk of this analysis concerns characterization is that this is where gender becomes particularly obvious. Together with mainstream feminist theory, I assume that 'gender' is socially and culturally constructed.⁵³ More specifically, I define it, following Joan Scott, as 'a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes' and as 'a primary way of signifying relationships of power'.⁵⁴ Like Scott, I conceive of gender as a unifying term that includes a number of different aspects, such as cultural symbols, normative concepts, social institutions and subjective identity.⁵⁵ Since I am dealing with religious and cultural texts, my main focus lies, however, on the symbolic aspect of gender.⁵⁶

As a methodological tool for the present study, narratology serves the purposes of locating ambiguities in the biblical text and of comparing the different versions of the Jephthah narrative with each other.⁵⁷ Thus, I use it

52. The works of Butler (1990 and 1993) have proved fruitful at an initial phase of the present study, although I do not specifically use her definition of gender as an analytical tool. To begin with, her theory of gender construction could be seen as analogous to the 'purist' narratologist view of character (see below), in the sense that both gender and character feature as the effects of actions and that both lack any essence or core. One could perhaps say that Butler regards the individual as a textual structure, whose plot and character are determined by the larger context. Thereby she eliminates the void between 'fiction' and 'reality', which I find to be an argument in support of my choice to study the Jephthah narrative. Furthermore, Butler's notion of repetition can be applied to the material in two ways. First, the many artistic treatments of the narrative amount to a historical process of iteration, and thereby of change. Secondly, the narrative is also frequently repeated and altered in every individual act of reading/watching/listening. The performativity of a work lies in the extent to which receivers can repeat the norms of the work as their own. For a survey of how the concept of the performative utterance has changed from Austin to Butler, see Culler (2000).

53. Purvis 1996: 124-25. See also Eriksson (1995: 17-18) and Stenström (1999: 43).

54. Scott 1988: 42.

55. Scott 1988: 43-44. Økland (2003a: 128) makes a connection between Scott's inclusive usage of the term 'gender' and the Scandinavian term 'køn/kjønn'. The present study is an example of such an inclusive usage of the term.

56. I do not use the feminist theoretical distinction between sex and gender, which e.g. Butler (1990) has convincingly criticized and which Økland (2003a) has shown to be problematical with regard to ancient material.

57. Mezei (1996: 2) speaks of a 'feminist narratology', whereas I distinguish between narratology as the method and feminism as the overarching perspective. Bal (1997: 3) defines narratology as a theory, although in my view she uses it as a method. Using narratology as a method, I will not dwell on issues related to narratology as a discipline proper, such as the refinement of its concepts.

as an ‘instrument for making descriptions’.⁵⁸ Although the material of this study is not strictly literary, my usage of narratology corresponds to the second of Gerald Prince’s three general definitions of that label—to the study of a narrative in a literary medium (Gérard Genette), where the focus lies on the relations between the story, the narrative and the act of narrating.⁵⁹ The application of narratology to a new medium is furthermore in line with Mieke Bal’s suggested widening of its scope and usability.⁶⁰

The major benefit of narratology lies in the fact that the interpretation of a text becomes easy to discuss. Since there is no simple way to identify meaning in texts, it is in my view important that the basis of interpretation appears as clearly as possible. If one can establish a manner in which to describe the fundamental structure of a text, one has a better chance of assessing ‘the reader’s share—and responsibility’ in interpretation.⁶¹ It follows from this perception of narratology as a method that I do not share the theoretical presuppositions of structuralism.⁶²

My practical use of narratology is necessarily eclectic. Genette supplies most of the analytical terminology concerning narrative. Bal provides certain definitions with regard to story (i.e., ‘event’ and ‘actor’) and some analytical criteria for characterization, although the selection of criteria is

58. Bal 1998: 11.

59. According to Prince (1987: 65), the first usage of the label ‘narratology’ is as a ‘structuralist-inspired’ endeavour to explore the ‘nature, form and functioning of narrative’, i.e., the universal features or conventions of narrative regardless of its medium. The third usage that he identifies, ‘the study of given (sets of) narratives in terms of models elaborated by so-called NARRATIVICS (Genot)’, is rare. Many other definitions of narratology flourish. Todorov (1969: 10) coined the term: ‘a science that does not yet exist, let us say “narratology”, the science of the narrative’. Bal (1997: 3) defines narratology as ‘the theory of narratives, narrative texts, images, spectacles, events; cultural artefacts that “tell a story”’. Hrushowski (1980: 6) rhetorically asks: ‘But what is narratology? Is it a logical division of Poetics? Does it constitute a clearly-defined discipline with a specific object of study? Or is it a methodology?’ Onega and Landa (1996) describe narratology as an umbrella term for a multitude of approaches to the study of narrative, which Tolmie’s (1999: 1) definition also fits.

60. Bal is a forerunner in applying narratology to other than literary texts—above all, to the visual arts (Bal 1991). She has also systematically argued for such a development (Bal 1990a).

61. Bal (1997: 11) makes the former an absolute prerequisite of the latter.

62. Of many possible points of contention, I mention here only two: the positivistic claim to objectivity and the notion of the text as an altogether independent entity. Hekman (1990: 30-39) and Anderson (1998: 31-60) among others have presented thorough feminist criticism of the former point. With regard to the latter, it is an exegetical truism that texts have contexts, i.e., the context of the senders (the redactors), the contexts of the receivers (the listeners/readers/interpreters) as well as the literary contexts (in my case Judges and/or the Deuteronomistic work). Thus, my focus on the text as such is a pragmatic decision, not an ontological one.

mine. In the analysis of the story, I use, for example, Vladimir Propp and Claude Brémond in order to discuss the logic of events, and Algirdas Julien Greimas in order to discuss the function of the actors.

A Major Shift in Biblical Studies

Having presented above the background, purpose and procedure of the present study, I should also note that this work takes place within the disciplinary framework of Old Testament Exegesis.⁶³ As such, it represents several of the re-orientations and expansions of that discipline that have occurred in recent times. For a start, it is part of the movement to read the Bible *as literature*. Exegetes with this interest concentrate on the final form of the biblical text and treat it as a work of art, namely, as a world-in-itself. This means that questions of structure and composition of a text as such stands in focus. In this type of study, there is no wish to reach beyond the texts, in order to, for example, reconstruct the history of Israel or to uncover the intention of the author/redactor. To paraphrase Howard Abrams, the purpose is above all to study the poetic function of texts, not their expressive or referential functions.⁶⁴

Using Roman Jakobson's model of communication, Sender–Message–Receiver, the discussed development within biblical studies can be described as a shift of emphasis, from sender to message.⁶⁵ Studies of the Bible as literature began to appear more frequently in the early 1980s. Introductory surveys such as Robert Alter and Frank Kermode's *The Literary Guide to the Bible* contributed to establish and popularize this mode of exegetical criticism. Shimon Bar-Efrat, Meir Sternberg and Alter wrote specific poetics for the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁶ Above all, literary readings of specific biblical books or

63. I prefer to speak of the corpus of texts that we study as the Hebrew Bible. Yet, the discipline is still defined according to the specifically Christian label of this corpus, the 'Old Testament', at the faculty of theology in Uppsala as well as in most other schools of divinity.

64. Abrams (1958) makes a much-used distinction between different types of literary criticism: (1) mimetic types, which regard the text as reflective of the world outside the text; (2) expressive types, which are author-centred; (3) objective types, which are text-centred; (4) pragmatic types, which are reader-centred. According to Powell (1992: 14), historical-critical studies of the Bible have been exclusively directed towards the first two modes of criticism. The Bible as literature approach is in line with the third of these modes. As such, it pursues a line of study that the historical-critics have largely ignored.

65. Jakobson 1960. In my view, the antagonism sometimes exhibited between different modes of criticism is unfortunate and unnecessary. Why should not all three elements of the communicative process be legitimate objects of study?

66. Bar-Efrat 1989; Alter 1981; Sternberg 1985; Berlin 1994.

passages were produced *en masse*,⁶⁷ although isolated impulses toward this type of exegesis came much earlier.⁶⁸ In a Swedish context, this field of research has only recently begun to gain momentum.⁶⁹

With regard to the selection of later material, the present study points towards three different scholarly fields. Thus, the first-century texts of Pseudo-Philo and Josephus could, in terms of language and date, just as well have been studied within Jewish Studies or within New Testament Exegesis. Furthermore, the fiction of Grant Watson and Oz would customarily have been pursued in departments of Literature, under the heading *The Bible in Literature*.⁷⁰ Finally, and most significantly, the combination of such apparently disparate types of cultural texts, including even a musical oratorio, indicates that the present work is part of a rapprochement between biblical and cultural studies.⁷¹ This emerging field is characterized precisely by the

67. This is demonstrated in Powell's compilation of studies with this orientation (1992: 157-253). The work meritoriously introduces modern literary criticism and even critically discusses its benefits and problems within biblical studies. Yet, it is incomplete with regard to general literary theory, lacking for instance the works of Gerard Genette.

68. Two of these shall be mentioned here. Hermann Gunkel (1901) explicitly touches upon modern literary issues such as characterization and mode of narration. Yet this line of inquiry was pursued in another direction, which led to the development of form criticism. The difference between German *Literarkritik* and modern literary criticism has been pointed out by e.g. Clines and Exum (1993: 11). Furthermore, Auerbach (1957) delivers a significant external impulse to the opening of this field by comparing the biblical texts with Homer's *Odyssey* and valuing their aesthetic qualities highly. Yet if we look for the cause for this development within biblical studies, it is necessary to acknowledge the preceding development within literary criticism more than thirty years earlier. The dominant focus on the author's intention was challenged already in the 1940s through the advent of the New Critics. For a detailed survey of the literary study of the Hebrew Bible, see Morgan and Barton (1988: 203-27).

69. Klint's (2001) work on the prose of Pär Lagerqvist and the gospel genre is the first New Testament thesis in the field. Among scholars of the Hebrew Bible, Lina Sjöberg features, in a series of articles (L. Sjöberg 2001a, 2001b, 2001c) and through her forthcoming thesis (2007) as a unique participant. In addition, two broad anthologies have been presented in this interdisciplinary area, Klint and Syreeni (2001) and Bråkenhielm and Pettersson (2001). Most recent in the field of literature is Jonas Andersson's (2004) investigation of the myth of Cain and Abel in three Swedish novels. The present work differs from those mentioned through its feminist perspective and from earlier feminist works on biblical interpretation (e.g. Stenström 1999 and Grenholm 1996) by its inclusion of artistic material.

70. For a survey of studies on biblical themes in modern literature, see Jeffrey 1992: 927-60.

71. Bal was a forerunner in this field and established new lines of dialogue, primarily with feminist theory, psychoanalysis and structuralism, through her biblical trilogy (Bal 1987; 1988a; 1988b). Her general impact on North American exegesis has been recognized by e.g. Jobling (1991: 1-10) and Boyarin (1990: 31-42). However, as demonstrated e.g. by Exum (1996) and Exum and Moore (1998), as well as in the general orientation of

crossing of the boundaries between modern and ancient culture, by a keen interest in the ideological appropriations of the Bible by different communities and by an ongoing reflection on the ideological character of the scholar's own interpretation.⁷² In terms of Jacobson's model of communication, this indicates one more shift to the right, towards the receiver. Yet, in biblical cultural criticism, as well as in the present work, the object of study is not, as in reader-response criticism, restricted to a hypothetical (ideal, implicit etc.) reader, but refers to the works of concrete and historically documented readers, such as Josephus and his *Jewish Antiquities*.

The interest in the reception of biblical texts is by no means new to the discipline of biblical studies. Under the heading of Reception History, exegetes have primarily dealt with the history of interpretation, *Auslegungsgeschichte*, in its pre-critical as well as its modern form. Yet, in my view, the above-described development towards a biblical cultural criticism seems not to be a radical break with that tradition, but rather a logical continuation of it.⁷³

The present book could thus be described as an example of a simultaneous study of the Bible as Literature, of the Bible in Literature and of the Bible in Culture. The focus lies both on the text itself and on its reception, or, to be more precise, on the relation between the biblical narrative itself and its religious and cultural adaptations. With regard to genre, the material is not restricted to literature *per se*; yet the analysis is held together in that all texts are treated as literature, that is, as narrative texts. This practice corresponds to the approach developed above to consider the Hebrew Bible within the context of the Western 'classical' heritage.

A Male Feminist

The 'male feminist' is a contested academic creature. Twenty years ago, he was considered an anomaly, for example by Stephen Heath, who states 'men's relation to feminism is an impossible one' and that 'a male position...brings

a number of journals, such as *Semeia*, *Biblical Interpretation* and *Biblicon*, this development of biblical cultural studies did not gain momentum until the later half of the 1990s. For a survey of the formation of this field, see the introduction to Exum and Moore (1998: 19-35).

72. Exum and Moore 1998: 35.

73. Klint (2000: 87-93 and 2001: 31-33) suggests the label 'Reception Criticism' for in-depth studies of specific works of reception and their relation to the biblical material. He proposes that this task should above all be descriptive and analytical. In line with Räisänen (1992: 309) and the biblical cultural criticism presented by Exum and Moore (1998), it seems commendable, although difficult, for these kinds of studies not to stop at description, but to continue with a theological criticism of the results.

with it all the implications of domination and appropriation'.⁷⁴ Since then, the tendency in anthologies on this issue has become less pessimistic.⁷⁵ In biblical studies, however, Esther Fuchs has showed that the issue still remains a provocative one.⁷⁶ I therefore find it imperative to reflect briefly on the social position from which I write.

When I identify myself as a 'feminist', I do so above all in recognition of the academic tradition that I have chosen to pursue. Feminist scholars of the first as well as of the second generation have given me my fundamental education in biblical studies and have served as my supervisors while I have been writing this book.⁷⁷ As mentioned above, to me, feminism is more than an academic perspective. I am convinced that this world would be a better place, not least for my six-year-old daughter, my two-year-old son, my wife/colleague and myself as a father/academic, if abusive male power structures were exposed and deconstructed.⁷⁸ Thanks to the tradition of feminist theological scholarship at Uppsala, I have been able to participate in this work towards change.

Good intentions will not, however, outweigh political structures. I wish neither to ignore the significance of feminism for my work nor to disregard the specificity of my gender.⁷⁹ My position could be described as peripheral in three ways. In the seminar for Old Testament Exegesis at Uppsala, feminist perspectives remain rare, and, in the different feminist seminars in which I participate, I often feature as the male as well as the exegetical exception. On the international yet predominantly Anglo-American feminist exegetical scene, my position as a Swedish scholar is a rather marginal one. With regard to power, I am, as a white, heterosexual, middle-class male, in a privileged position, but I am also, as a fairly young, un-established and recently graduated doctor of theology, in a non-privileged position. Thus, my male position is as heterogeneous as some female ones may be, although in different ways.

74. Heath 1987: 1-32. Boone (1990: 12) criticizes the polemical manner in which 'Men in Feminism' was set up as an 'issue' through conference boards and anthologies.

75. Wahlström 2002.

76. Fuchs 2003.

77. Inger Ljung, the first woman in Scandinavia to write a thesis in the discipline of Old Testament Exegesis (1978) and who also wrote one of the earliest Swedish exegetical feminist works (1989), supervised my undergraduate thesis on another 'text of terror', Judges 19 (Sjöberg 1996), and guided me through the first half of my doctoral studies. During the second half of my work, I received supervision from Hanna Stenström, who in 1999 defended the first Swedish feminist thesis in New Testament Exegesis.

78. I identify with the view of Boone and Cadden (1990: 3): 'For us, feminism is a matter of vision and revision, a mode of critical perception that has introduced us to new ways of interacting with our worlds and our lives, our literatures and our cultures.'

79. Boone (1990: 12) describes the position of the male critic as a balancing act, where both these aspects need to be accounted for.

I agree with, among others, Fuchs and Boone that there is reason to be suspicious when male academic authorities, such as Jacques Derrida or Jonathan Culler in the field of literature or David Clines and David Jobling in that of exegesis, suddenly jump on the 'feminist theory bandwagon'.⁸⁰ Such a suspicion might be due to their powerful positions and subsequent theoretical alliances rather than to their possible personal commitments. Apparently, it is the males' sometimes grandiose or paternalistic claims that bother feminists. Schüssler Fiorenza's criticism of Patte and Räisänen, with regard to their ethics of interpretation, demonstrates that even enthusiastic calls for co-operation can be deeply problematical.⁸¹ In contrast, I will happily abstain from any effort to define, correct or evaluate the general mode of feminist exegetical practice or theory. My intention is simply to 'do feminism' by using 'gender' as an analytical category in my own investigation, and to engage in dialogue with the forerunners in this field.

I do not purport to speak for anyone else.⁸² From the paradoxical position of the outsider/insider and the privileged/non-privileged, I write on feminist issues because they concern me. Although it is my aspiration to contribute to the feminist body of knowledge through the present study, it is the critical reader who must judge whether or not I have achieved this purpose.

Previous Work on Jephthah

Before embarking on the analysis proper, a survey of previous research on the Jephthah narrative is in order. In the twentieth century, the few historical-critical scholars who had studied the Jephthah narrative concentrated on single elements or themes,⁸³ such as the vow,⁸⁴ the Ammonite negotiation⁸⁵

80. These men have been questioned by feminists because of, for example, their attempt to incorporate feminism within post-structuralism (Derrida), the theoretical prescription for 'reading as a woman reading as a woman' (Culler), the failure to credit previous feminist scholars for specific interpretations (Clines) and because of their ambition to correct feminist criticism methodologically (Jobling). See, for the criticism of the former two, Boone (1990: 17), and for the latter two, Fuchs (2000: 107-10).

81. I elaborate on Schüssler Fiorenza's criticism in Chapter 5, under 'Programmes'.

82. Indebted to Spivak, Patte (1995: 33, n. 21) identifies three strategies for male scholars ('Speak for', 'Listen to' and 'Speak with'), which I discuss in Chapter 5, under 'Programmes'.

83. This was not the case in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when exegetes attempted to rationalize Jephthah's deeds. For an overview of the works from that period, see Reinke (1851).

84. Cartledge 1992 and Berlinerblau 1996.

85. Good (1985: 385-400) discusses the juridical concept of war formulated in this negotiation. Van Seters (1972: 182-97) and Gunn (1974: 513-18) disagree on the existence of a literary form, 'the battle report', in the Hebrew Bible.

or the shibboleth episode.⁸⁶ In one of the more comprehensive studies, David Marcus focused exclusively on whether or not the daughter would have been sacrificed in ancient Israel.⁸⁷ Assuming that Jephthah and his daughter were historical persons, he even went so far as to ask about Jephthah's, not the redactor's, intention in making the vow.⁸⁸ Reaching no decisive conclusion towards the end, since 'the evidence is so ambiguous', he abandoned his historical paradigm and reverted to making hypothetical statements about the text in its capacity as a narrative, by saying, for example, that 'the narrator is a brilliant stylist' and that Jephthah's vow rather than the fate of the daughter is the 'chief element of the story'.⁸⁹ Thereby, he signalled the shortcomings of his approach and indirectly pre-announced the necessity for a narrative analysis of the text.

Whereas historical-critical studies concentrate on specific aspects of the Jephthah cycle, those approaching the text from the perspective of narrative take the entire book of Judges into account. At least five comprehensive readings of the book have been offered, of which Robert Polzin's is the first example.⁹⁰ These works show, more or less successfully, that the unquestionably disparate book of Judges can be read as literature. Yet their focus lies above all on the overall frame of the book and on how the parts fit into the whole, which is of minor interest to the present study.

With regard to the interpretative history of the narrative, Wilbur Owen Sypher has produced a large survey of its reception in the arts, comprising no less than 500 works.⁹¹ The study is a useful catalogue that contains ele-

86. Ellington (1990) discusses the translation of shibboleth and Sibboleth.

87. Marcus 1986. Steinberg (1999: 114-35) discusses the sacrifice in terms of its social function.

88. Marcus 1986: 11.

89. Marcus 1986: 50.

90. Polzin (1980) reads the entire Deuteronomistic History as a dialogic text in Bakhtin's terms. Webb (1987) suggests that the fundamental issue of the book is God's non-completion of the promise (to the patriarchs) to give Israel the land. Klein (1988) proposes that irony is a constitutive and integral element of the book. O'Connell (1996) argues that the work has a specific rhetoric purpose: to charge its readers to support a Judahite king appointed by the deity. Amit (1999) reconstructs two underlying editorial principles of the book, i.e., the lack of central leadership and the absence of signs. Andersson (2001) argues that the book of Judges may not be called a narrative in the qualified (narratological) sense and criticizes these five exegetical readings for harmonizing the text. For a full account of my critique of Andersson, see Sjöberg (2002). The unity of the book of Judges has been advocated by, among others, Lilley (1967) and Exum (1990b).

91. Sypher (1948: 251) lists just four examples from 'Jerusalem and the Far East', including Pseudo-Philo, but not Josephus. It would of course be worthwhile to establish the worldwide distribution of the motif, although such an undertaking goes beyond the scope of the present thesis.

mentary descriptions of the works identified. For my purpose, the significance of Sypherd's opus lies predominantly in the gathering of this vast material. John L. Thompson surveys how the Jephthah narrative is commented on primarily in the Christian tradition.⁹² He takes issue with the feminist exegetical notion that biblical women are ignored or even further devalued in the history of interpretation.⁹³ Perhaps to the surprise of many, he finds that some of the ethical concerns of modern feminists are in fact shared with the pre-critical readers.⁹⁴ The most comprehensive investigation so far is made by David M. Gunn, who covers the narrative's history of interpretation in Jewish and Christian tradition, in the history of scholarship, as well as in the arts.⁹⁵

Two eclectic studies of the Jewish interpretative tradition have been made. Phyllis Silverman Kramer focuses on three crucial scenes in the narrative (the greeting, the lamentation and the sacrifice) and superficially accounts for their treatment in rabbinic exegesis and in artwork.⁹⁶ Entirely descriptive, her study concludes that Jewish exegetes throughout history charge Jephthah and the high priest with grave error and that the daughter is the victim of these two men's 'arrogance and obduracy'.⁹⁷ Shulamit Valler concentrates on two midrashim, *Genesis Rabba* and *Tanhuma*, and demonstrates through a close reading that these sources blacken Jephthah's character and portray him as someone who repeatedly makes the situation worse, although he is given opportunities to solve it.⁹⁸ Valler thereby illuminates a general tendency in these Jewish sources, namely that theological points are made through narrative transformation of the biblical material, in this case with regard to the aspect of characterization.⁹⁹

92. Thompson (2001: 100-78) devotes one chapter to Jephthah's daughter. The others concern Hagar, Tamar and the Levite's wife.

93. Thompson (2001: 3) refers to Tribble (1984) as an example of a study whose purpose is to serve as a memorial for these female literary figures, whereas his intention is to 'chronicle how the Christian tradition...has wrestled with some of the Bible's most opaque and offensive stories' (12).

94. Thompson 2001: 253. Four basic approaches are described (171-74): (1) identifying Jephthah's daughter as a martyr; (2) allegorical-ascetical readings, where the daughter is seen as a model of unselfish piety and used for the recruitment of consecrated ecclesiastical virginity; (3) typological-christological readings, where both Jephthah and the daughter feature as types of Christ; and (4) casuistic analyses, where Jephthah's actions are excused or explained through external factors.

95. Gunn 2005.

96. Kramer 1999: 67-91.

97. Kramer 1999: 88-89.

98. Valler 1999: 48-65.

99. Hedner Zetterholm (2002) makes an in-depth study of another case in rabbinic literature: of Laban, where characterization proves crucial from a theological point of view.

Feminist exegetes in particular have studied the Jephthah narrative as a whole in its biblical version. Thus, Tribble structures the text as a drama, in other words as a unified piece of art, through her rhetorical critical close reading of its final form, and thereby prepares the way for later narrative approaches.¹⁰⁰ Bal makes a thematic interdisciplinary analysis of gender-bound violence in Judges, to which the fate of Jephthah's daughter is crucial.¹⁰¹ Drawing from fields as vastly different as narratology, psychoanalysis and anthropology, she argues that the intense violence of the book has to do with a radical historical change with regard to the institution of marriage.¹⁰² For Bal, narrative analysis does not mean that the text is treated primarily as an aesthetic object, independent of its contexts.¹⁰³ Cheryl Exum reads the narrative as a tragedy and compares the fate of Jephthah with that of Saul.¹⁰⁴ She characterizes her approach as 'inductive' and avoids narratological terminology, although she does in fact discuss the narrative features of the text, such as 'narrative pace' and 'character'.¹⁰⁵ According to Exum, the tragedy of this narrative lies primarily in the ambiguity of the events themselves and in the silence of God.¹⁰⁶ Exum puts further emphasis on gender in a later work, where she focuses on Jephthah's daughter and juxtaposes her and Michal.¹⁰⁷ The importance of these scholars for the present study lies above all in establishing the Jephthah narrative as a central text for feminist inquiry and in their use of narrative approaches for that purpose.

A number of less comprehensive feminist readings have also been produced.¹⁰⁸ Among these, Esther Fuchs's suggestion about the function of

100. Tribble 1984: 93-116. Properly speaking, the first explicitly feminist attempt to deal with the text was made by Stanton (1974).

101. Bal 1988b.

102. Bal 1988b: 5.

103. Bal (1988b: 3) states that she intends to avoid both the 'realistic fallacy' (i.e. of regarding the text as a window onto 'reality') and the aesthetic one (i.e. of reducing the text to pure fiction). Rather, she intends to 'show how the literary and linguistic choices made in the text represent a reality that they both hide and display'. In my view, however, the relation between the historical and literary aspect in her practice of interpretation is not self-evident, i.e., the question remains as to how she manages to draw purportedly historical conclusions from a largely narrative analysis.

104. Exum 1992: 45-69.

105. Exum 1992: 13, 51, 56.

106. Exum 1992: 46.

107. Jephthah's daughter and Michal are treated in the first chapter of Exum (1996: 16-41). The text relies on the earlier investigation made by Exum (1993), although the emphasis has shifted. Exum (1997) has written a thematic work on the treatment of women in Judges, which includes a chapter on Jephthah's daughter (36-43).

108. Day (1989) made a historical reconstruction of the commemoration of the daughter (11.40) as a women's life-cycle ritual through comparison with the legends of Iphigenia and Kore. Gerstein (1989) also concentrates on the commemoration ritual.

ambiguity is of relevance here. According to her, the ambiguity in the narrative serves as apology and justification for Jephthah.¹⁰⁹ In addition, Anne Michele Tapp demonstrates how Bal's narratology can be used to make comparisons between texts. She juxtaposes Judg. 11.30-39, Gen. 19.1-11 and Judg. 19.22-26, and concludes on the basis of their similarities that they all propagate a distinct ideology: the expendability of virgin daughters.¹¹⁰

With regard to the Jewish material of this study, the number of explicitly feminist works is smaller. Cheryl Anne Brown compares Pseudo-Philo's and Josephus's portrayals of four biblical women—Deborah, Jephthah's daughter, Hannah, and the Witch of Endor.¹¹¹ In contrast to the present study, she deals with the issue of characterization from a largely historical point of departure—her interest is focused on the author's background and purpose, on the audience and on comparing these texts with other contemporary Jewish and Hellenistic ones.¹¹² Like me, Cynthia Baker uses narratological categories to show how Pseudo-Philo transforms the biblical narrative of the sacrifice.¹¹³ She treats Seila's lament (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 40.4-7) in detail and discusses how conceptions of gender also colour the modern translations of this poem.¹¹⁴

Exegetical scholars have only recently begun to deal with biblical themes in musical oratorios. A common denominator of these works is an avowed interest in the issue of characterization, although little actual analysis has yet been attempted.¹¹⁵ Previous musicologist treatment of Handel's *Jephtha* is

Like Bal (1988b), she relates narratology to anthropology. However, Gerstein's conclusions (189) are vague and speculative to the point that she considers whether or not the sacrifice was actually beneficial to the daughter, *as a woman*!

109. Fuchs 1989. The article was reprinted in a revised form in Fuchs (2000).

110. Tapp 1989.

111. Brown 1992.

112. Brown 1992: 29.

113. Baker 1989.

114. Concerning narrative analyses of the Jewish material, I know of no in-depth studies. Murphy (1993) presents a narrative commentary of the *Biblical Antiquities* as a whole. Although he purportedly bases the analysis on the concepts of Chatman, his usage of these tools is brief and hardly systematic. His treatment of the Jephthah narrative has the character of a mere retelling or a summary of the text. L.H. Feldman (1998a and 1998b) has recently published two ambitious volumes on Josephus's biblical portraits, of which the latter contains one chapter on Jephthah (177-92). As was the case with Brown, Feldman deals with the issue of characterization from a purely historical approach, by comparing Jephthah's features with a specific set of established Hellenistic 'virtues'. Alexiou and Dronke (1971) investigate in detail the relationship between Seila's lament in Pseudo-Philo, similar themes in the Greek tradition and Abélard's *Planctus*. Although their purpose is strictly historical, they make significant observations on the narrative in passing.

115. Elder (2001) describes the metamorphoses of the heroine Judith in oratorio and

scarce. In his handbook on Handel, Winton Dean bemoans the librettist's changes of the story, whereas he lauds the musical work's characterization.¹¹⁶ Kenneth Nott defends the libretto and argues that it is perfectly consistent with the ideals of eighteenth-century England.¹¹⁷ Friedhelm Krummacher focuses on the structure of the music and, more specifically, on how the arias contribute to the characterization of, above all, Jephtha and Iphis.¹¹⁸ Oliver Parland offers a psychoanalytical reading of the work, in which he discusses the tension between the music and the libretto.¹¹⁹

With regard to the two texts by twentieth-century authors, the amount of research differs greatly. Apart from a few biographic surveys, the scholarly interest in E.L. Grant Watson's works is concentrated on his Australian novels, whereas none of his novels with biblical motifs have yet been examined.¹²⁰ Amos Oz, by contrast, belongs among more prominent modern Hebrew authors. The works that discuss his use of the Bible and his portrayal of women are most relevant to the present investigation.¹²¹

This survey has demonstrated how previous feminist, narrative and historical-critical studies have pointed, in different ways, to the ambiguities of the Jephthah cycle. The works mentioned focus either on specific parts or aspects of the narrative, such as the sacrifice (Marcus), or treat it as part of a larger theme, such as gender-bound violence (Bal), or as part of the book of Judges as a whole (Polzin). The present study differs in its first chapter from these others by investigating the Jephthah cycle in its entirety (10.6–12.7). To a larger extent than other feminist studies, it attempts moreover to address the construction of male as well as of female gender.¹²²

Comparisons between the biblical narrative and that of Pseudo-Philo or Josephus have to some extent already commenced. Thus, Brown and Feldman

opera. Above all, the article amounts to a presentation of a vast amount of highly interesting material, which includes the deuterocanonical book, librettos, specific performances and how these were received. Vander Stichele (2001) examines how Flaubert, Massenet and Strauss develop the gospel story of Herodias and Salome. Leneman (2002) proposes that music can serve to fill the gaps with regard to characterization and she outlines how such an analysis could be done. Exum (1996: 212–16) compares Handel's oratorio *Samson* with Saint-Saëns's opera *Samson et Delilah*.

116. Dean 1959: 589–617.

117. Nott 1996.

118. Krummacher 1986.

119. Parland 1999.

120. For surveys, see Steele (1990: 17–24) and Green (1990: 25–38). Haynes (1999) discusses his Australian novels.

121. See especially Yudkin 1978, Balaban 1993, Fuchs 1984 and Aschkenasy 1988 and 2001.

122. In the analysis of the biblical text, the male character occupies the largest space. This is due to the nature of the material, not due to a specific interest in masculinity.

make no use of narrative tools, despite the fact that they explicitly discuss literary categories such as characterization, whereas Baker and Bal do suggest the usefulness of narratology for this end.¹²³ Yet, the potential of the method has hardly been fully exploited yet, and certainly not in an accessible way.¹²⁴ Sypherd, Thompson and Gunn survey the treatment of the narrative in the arts and in the Christian tradition. However, the present study is the first attempt to offer an in-depth examination of as many as six different rewritings of the same story. The works of Handel, Grant Watson and Oz have never been studied in any exegetical context before.

123. Bal (1991) demonstrates how narratology can be used as a means of comparison between texts, using the Joseph narrative in three versions.

124. Jobling (1991: 7) has criticized Bal for inaccessibility. This is not simply a pedagogic problem, but also one of scholarly consistency, since Bal (1986) has vehemently accused others of harbouring hidden agendas. Part of the problem can be explained by the fact that she does not lay bare her own theoretical platform explicitly enough (e.g. the role of psychoanalysis).

1

JUDGES 10.6–12.7

Judges 10.6–12.7 is the point of departure for this study. Without it, none of the other texts would have appeared. Therefore, it behoves me to present a thorough analysis of the biblical text's narrative structure. In such an analysis, the distinction between 'story' and 'narrative' is fundamental.¹ The story can be described as the content as such, whereas the narrative is the concrete form that the particular story takes.

The Story of Judges 10.6–12.7

The analysis of the story centres on the identification of events and their interrelationships. With Bal, I define an 'event' as 'the transition from one state to another state' and to delimit the term further, I use the three criteria of change, choice and confrontation.² The result is a particularly narrow definition of an 'event'. In fact it resembles the category of events that Seymour Chatman labels 'kernels', i.e., events that are fundamental to the

1. Unfortunately, there exists a plethora of divergent definitions of these fundamental concepts. To mention a few, the Russian formalists distinguished between *fabula* and *sjuzet*; Chatman (1978) between *story* and *discourse*; whereas Bal (1997) uses the triad *fabula*, *story* and *text*. Although no consensus has been reached, Genette's terminology is one of the most established ones. Following Genette (1980: 27), I employ 'story' for the 'signified content', and 'narrative' for the 'signifier, statement, discourse or the...text itself'. In other words, the narrative is the particular concrete form of a story that might be recounted in many different ways, e.g., with regard to chronology or perspective. To a much lesser extent, I use Genette's third term, 'narrating', for 'the producing of narrative action', i.e., the situation from which the narrative evolves.

2. Bal 1997: 182-87. In my view, the first criterion, change, is synonymous with the definition itself, i.e., with transition. The second criterion, choice, is a loan from Barthes (1977), who distinguishes between functional and non-functional events. The former implies a choice, which determines the actions that follow. The third criterion, confrontation, is a loan from Hendricks (1973), who states that every functional event of the story must contain two actors and one action.

logic of the plot.³ Actors are, furthermore, defined as ‘agents that perform actions’.⁴

The events of the story are presented below by means of a series of narrative propositions in a logical order. With one exception, the Ammonite attack (no. 3), this is also the chronological order of the text.

1. Israel rejects Yhwh (10.6).
2. Yhwh rejects Israel (10.7).
3. The Ammonites attack Israel (10.9; 11.4).
4. Israel returns to Yhwh (10.15-16a).
5. Yhwh returns to Israel (10.16b).
6. The brothers expel Jephthah from his home (11.2).
7. The elders of Gilead negotiate with Jephthah about the leadership of Gilead (11.6, 9, 11).
8. Yhwh strengthens Jephthah through the Spirit (11.29).
9. Jephthah swears a vow to Yhwh that, if he returns victoriously from the war, he will sacrifice whatever meets him (11.30-31).
10. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites (11.32-33).
11. Jephthah’s daughter meets Jephthah upon his return (11.34).
12. Jephthah’s daughter exhorts Jephthah to fulfil the vow (11.36).
13. Jephthah’s daughter negotiates with Jephthah for a respite (11.36-38a).
14. Jephthah’s daughter departs into the mountains with her friends (11.38b).
15. Jephthah’s daughter returns from the mountains (11.39a).
16. Jephthah sacrifices his daughter (11.39).
17. The Ephraimites threaten to kill Jephthah (12.1).
18. Jephthah defeats the Ephraimites (12.4-6).

A few clarifications need to be made. First, it seems as if the Ammonite attack is recounted twice (10.9; 11.4). This peculiarity can be explained in terms of syntax. After the interruption of background information of 11.1-3, repeti-

3. Chatman 1969: 3, 14-19. Other events are categorized as ‘satellites’, which entail no choice. Their function is instead to expand, amplify, maintain or delay the former events. Barthes (1966: 9-10) makes a similar distinction between ‘kernels’ and ‘catalysts’. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 15) supports the idea that an event implies change. A problem with Bal’s definition, in my opinion, lies in the difficulty in establishing more precisely what change actually occurs. This is most evident in the case of speech-acts, which are of crucial importance in the Jephthah cycle. The benefit of Bal’s definition is that it supplies a tool to sort out decisive events from less important ones, which suffices to justify its usage here.

4. Bal 1997: 5.

tion is necessary in order to return to the chain of events.⁵ Secondly, different options are given about whom the Ammonites actually attack: the tribes of Judah, Benjamin and Ephraim (10.9) or all of Israel (11.4). This issue will be discussed below. Thirdly, Yhwh's return to Israel (no. 5) is an entirely emotional event; there is a shift from a negative to a positive attitude. Whereas the people's return is immediately demonstrated through a change of behaviour, the concrete effect of the divine return is delayed (until no. 10).

With regard to a number of actions, it can also be debated whether or not they amount to events in the qualified sense. Speech-acts constitute a specific problem in this regard, since it is impossible to evaluate their effect decisively.⁶ My guiding principle has been that only speech-acts that directly seem to affect the course of the story are regarded as proper events. The impact of the daughter's first speech-act (no. 12) is admittedly unintelligible, although I find it too central to ignore.⁷ Her second speech-act (no. 13) is more obviously successful, since it delays the sacrifice. The negotiation between Jephthah and the Ammonite king does not, by contrast, result in any visible change with regard to the story. Rather, it serves to explain the ensuing war.

It could also be debated whether the Ephraimite episode contains one or two events—only the military defeat (12.4a) or both the defeat and the massacre (12.5-6). In my reading, the account of the massacre is one detailed aspect of a larger event, namely, the civil war between Gilead and Ephraim. The massacre entails no further change as regards the story.⁸ Finally, the death and burial of Jephthah is omitted from this list of events, although it obviously means a change, because it does not indicate any confrontation and definitely not a choice.

One Story?

The definition of story above postulates the existence of a logical relationship between the events that constitute the story. The nature of these rela-

5. Through the introductory *wayhi* in 11.4, the chain of events from 10.17 is resumed. If, however, chs. 11 and 12 are read in isolation, 11.4 should be counted as a separate event.

6. This issue is at the centre of Derrida's critique of Austin's speech-act theory. Austin (1956) takes pains to differentiate between 'true' and 'false' speech-acts and argues that speech-acts delivered in jest or on stage ought not to be counted. Derrida (1988), by contrast, argues that it is precisely the 'iterability' or 'citationality' of these utterances that shows how the language system works.

7. I discuss the agency of the daughter and of Jephthah at this point of the narrative in relation to their speeches below, in 'Characterization in Judges 10.6–12.7'.

8. This interpretation presupposes that Jephthah remains the subject of the action in vv. 5-6. Since Jephthah mobilizes the Gileadite men in 12.4a, nothing indicates that he would not be diegetically present in 12.5-6.

tionships can be described in different ways. If the events of the cycle are ordered according to the identity of its actors, a long series emerges. Yhwh and Israel appear as actors in the first five events and Jephthah in the thirteen that follow (nos. 6-18). With two exceptions (nos. 9-10), Jephthah interacts with different actors in every event in nos. 6-11. In nos. 12-16, he interacts with his daughter and in nos. 17-18 with the Ephraimites. What is the connection between these different series? Do they form different 'story-lines' within the same story or should they be described as different stories altogether?⁹

The first series is a variation of the paradigmatic Deuteronomistic theme of the book of Judges, most clearly stated in 2.11-23.¹⁰ It contains five basic events: Israel's and Yhwh's reciprocal rejection of each other and, as a consequence, the attack by a foreign people and, finally, Israel's and Yhwh's somewhat asymmetrical return to each other. The ambiguity of this last event (no. 5) indicates that this story-line is not completely resolved, but rather begs for a continuation. At this point the cycle deviates from the pattern in Judges 2.¹¹

The second series is constructed as an episodic biography of Judge Jephthah. Four events contribute to its intrigue: Jephthah's expulsion from home (no. 6), the Ammonite attack (no. 3), Jephthah's vow (no. 9) and the Ephraimite threat (no. 17). The tension created by these events is partially or completely resolved by the events that follow. The expulsion is matched by the negotiation about the leadership (no. 7), the Ammonite attack by the victory (no. 10), the vow by the sacrifice (no. 16), and, finally, the Ephraimite threat by their defeat (no. 18).

In terms of logical coherence, the victory over the Ammonites appears to be the central event of the story as a whole. With regard to the first series, Israel's rejection is matched by their conversion, and Yhwh's rejection is matched by the deity's partial (emotive) return. The Ammonite attack, however, has no explicit counterpart within this series. Thus, the events of the first series point beyond themselves. The rehabilitation of the people is merely hinted at through Yhwh's change of attitude, but it is not fulfilled until the victory has been won.

9. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 16) suggests the term 'story-line' for an intermediary unit between macro-sequences and the story that is structured like a story but is restricted to one set of individuals. O'Connell (1996: 171-78) describes the 'plot-structure' of the narrative as consisting of four different plots. He posits the Ammonite war as the main plot, which purportedly creates coherence, but he also suppresses the tensions between the other plots.

10. Soggin 1981: 42, 202.

11. One event from the paradigmatic pattern in ch. 2, outlined by Soggin (1981: 43), is omitted in the cycle, i.e., Yhwh's calling of a judge. This variation explains the weakened connection between the two story-lines.

With regard to the second series, all the events are related to the victory in one way or another. The negotiation about leadership aims to facilitate the victory, and the vow also functions as a means by which Jephthah may achieve this goal. The daughter's greeting of her father is a direct consequence of the victory. Her exhortation to Jephthah is motivated by his victory and the ensuing sacrifice stands as the ultimate consequence of that same victory. Her negotiation with Jephthah and her mourning in the mountains imply only a delay in the fulfilment of that consequence. The initial expulsion and the final threat both complicate Jephthah's chances to attain and maintain victory. The former event creates a concrete obstacle to its achievement and the latter represents an attempt to challenge its legitimacy. The concluding threat and defeat of the Ephraimites could be regarded as both a consequence and a repetition of the first victory.

Although I find that all these events are related to the victory, some are more loosely connected to it than others. To begin with, the events that feature the daughter (nos. 12-16) form a first epilogue to the Ammonite war.¹² In my view, these five events hardly suffice to make up even a minimal story, since they are only the consequences of earlier events.¹³ The Ammonite attack, the oath and the victory are all necessary to make intelligible the events relating to the daughter. Moreover, the main series of events would become incomplete without events featuring the daughter. In my reading, the dynamic of the story as a whole lies in the fact that the logically central event, that is, the victory, is not its climax. At the same time, the consequence of fulfilling the goal of the story is its main complication.

The events related to the Ephraimites (nos. 17-18) stand as a second epilogue to the war. Unlike the events related to the daughter, these are not directly prefigured. Instead, they could be regarded as a re-enactment or as a re-presentation of the Ammonite war. Thus, rather than being an indispensable part of the main story, these events could in fact be regarded as a minimal, independent story, in which the Ephraimite threat raises a new possibility. The brief civil war is the process and Jephthah's defeat of the Ephraimites is the result. Thematically, however, there are strong links between the Ephraimite events and the rest of the cycle. These events can

12. Tapp (1989: 165-66) and Gerstein (1989: 179-81) provide lists of these events (11.29-40) that vary from mine, although we all use Bal's criteria (change, choice and confrontation). Tapp's shorter list is partly one of micro-sequences rather than of events, whereas Gerstein's more detailed one includes redundancies. For example, I describe the daughter's negotiation with Jephthah as one event (no. 13), whereas Tapp regards the negotiation along with the daughter's departure as one event (her no. 4) and Gerstein divides the negotiation in two parts, i.e., the request and the grant. These differences illustrate the difficulty of demarcating exactly where an event begins and ends.

13. See below, 'A Standard Story?', where the story contains three phases: potentiality, process and outcome.

be described as the finale in an escalated series of verbal and physical confrontations, three of which end in bloodshed (the Ammonite war, the sacrifice of the daughter and the Ephraimite war).¹⁴

In my view, the integrated reading suggested above does justice to all the elements of the cycle.¹⁵ Three features of the narrative support further the unity of the events related to Yhwh (nos. 1-5) and those related to Jephthah (nos. 6-18). First, and most importantly, the Ammonite attack triggers the course of events in both series. Secondly, the deity acts in both, although in the latter indirectly through the Spirit. Thirdly, there are parallels between the dialogues between Israel and Yhwh on the one hand, and Jephthah and the elders of Gilead on the other.¹⁶

The issue of the internal unity of the narrative is also connected to the issue of its relationship to the larger text, namely, the book of *Judges* or to Deuteronomistic corpus. Although the level of literary integration and coherence is, to say the least, uneven, there are several arguments for reading the Jephthah cycle as a part of the larger book.¹⁷ To begin with, the Jephthah

14. See below, 'A Series of Confrontations'.

15. There are mainly two narrative arguments that could be used to support a reading of the story-lines as separate entities. Both concern the identity of its main actors. To begin with, the characterization of the divine party differs greatly. (See below, 'Characterization'). Although remarkable, it constitutes no decisive support for reading the two parts as separate story-lines, since characters cannot be assumed to be stable entities. Secondly, an even more fundamental ambiguity concerning the human counterpart to Yhwh is demonstrated through the oscillation between references to individual tribes (10.8–9, 18; 11.5; 12.4-6) and references to all of Israel (10.6, 10; 11.4, 12-28; 12.7). Stylistically, however, this could be described as a case of metonymy, where the part (Gilead) represents the whole (Israel). Although tradition history and the actual history of Israel lie beyond the present task, historically, these tensions are explained through the process of redaction. See e.g. Boling 1975.

16. In both cases, Israel/Gilead prays after being rejected by Yhwh/Jephthah. Furthermore, the latter party has initial reservations regarding this prayer. There is a difference in that the confession of Israel in the introduction has no counterpart in the episode that follows. Several commentators have noticed the analogy between the episodes. While Polzin (1980: 178) describes the similarity in terms of structure or theme, Webb (1987: 53-54) and Gunn and Fewell (1993: 114) describe it in psychological terms.

17. Andersson (2001) polemically argues against the possibility of reading the individual stories of *Judges* in light of the book as a whole. Due to the tensions between the macro- and the micro-levels of the text, he labels the work an incoherent product (151). Although I agree with Andersson that too strong an emphasis on the macro-level of the narrative might lead to harmonization (e.g. Klein 1988 and Webb 1987), Andersson's one-sided preference for the micro-level of the narrative is just as unfortunate. If the relationship between the different levels of the narrative is one of complexity and incoherence, the mere subordination of one level to the other amounts to simplification.

cycle exists as part of a larger literary work, and it can be isolated only through scholarly induction. Furthermore, it is not possible to establish the beginning of the cycle with absolute certainty. In fact, to include the introduction (10.6-18) in the cycle presupposes a comparison with the other stories of the book of Judges. Thirdly, there are markers in the text of the cycle, which point to other parts of the book. The most obvious of these is the verb 'to do again, repeat' (10.6, *חָסַר*). Other examples are the similarity between Judg. 10.6-16 and 2.11-23, the comparison of Jephthah with other judges in the postscript (12.7), the use of specific epithets, and the names of places and tribes, which are hardly intelligible if this cycle is considered in isolation.

My conclusion to the discussion about the relationship between the different strands of the story, that is, about parts contra whole, is that all elements can be fitted together. Simultaneously, tensions and incoherencies abound. Some parts of the story, the prologue and the epilogues, might even be broken off and read as minimal, separate stories.

The Actors

The tension between the different story-lines in the cycle is significantly reduced if one considers not only the identity, but also the function, of its actors. According to Greimas's model, the individual actors can be fitted into one of six classes of actors (actants), with different relationships to the goal of the story: subject, object, sender, receiver, helper and opponent.¹⁸ This model facilitates the reading of the cycle as an integrated whole. In this section, I will also discuss briefly how changes in the relationships between the actors affect the story.

There are several reasons to consider Jephthah as the subject of the story. He has relationships with all the other actors, except with his daughter's companions, and he dominates the story, both in terms of the number of appearances and in terms of the impact of his actions.¹⁹ If Jephthah is the subject, Yhwh's main function is that of the sender (*destinateur*). As such, the God of Israel is the power that ultimately allows Jephthah to reach the object, or the goal, of the story, which is to win military victory over the Ammonites. Occasionally Yhwh also functions as helper, namely, the giver of incidental aid. The people of Israel function as the main receiver (*destinataire*), although Jephthah himself can at times be counted as such an actant, for example when the Spirit descends on him. Jephthah's other helpers are the Gileadite elders and his own daughter. His opponents are the Ammonites and the Ephraimites.²⁰

18. A class of actors with the same relationship to the goal of the story is called an actant (Greimas 1973: 161-62).

19. See below, 'Characterization'.

20. A peculiarity in the interaction between Jephthah and the helper actant is the

It is of course possible for readers to put every actor in the position of subject, that is, at the centre of the web of relationships. The choice of a centre is a matter of perspective, which has consequences for the function of the other actors. A hypothetical postcolonial critic would perhaps read against the grain and regard the Ammonites as the subject of the story. This would turn Israel and Jephthah into opponents and possibly make Chemosh the *destinateur*. Many feminist exegetes have understood the daughter to be the subject of the story. The object could then be the establishment of the yearly women's rite, with the female companions and Jephthah as helpers. If one reads the cycle from the perspective of the Deuteronomistic corpus or from that of the entire canon, the people of Israel or Yhwh ought to be put in the position of the subject. The object of the story would then be formulated in more abstract terms, possibly as the spiritual restoration of the covenantal relationship between the two parties, with Jephthah in the function of helper.

What consequences do changes in the relationships between actors have for the story? The improved relationships between God and Israel are the prerequisite for the appearance of Jephthah. He is in fact introduced as the immediate answer to the question posed by the elders (10.18). Correspondingly, the improved relationships between Jephthah and the representatives of the people presuppose the intense, although monologic, interaction between Jephthah and God. As the head of the people, Jephthah replaces the people in the position as God's counterpart, which they held in the introduction.

Contrary to what Jephthah says (11.35), there is no evidence that the fulfilment of the vow changes the outcome of the story. In fact, it changes neither the relationship between Jephthah and God, nor that between Jephthah and the people of Gilead. Thus, the absolute ending of the relationship between Jephthah and his daughter through the sacrifice preserves the status quo of the other relationships. It could also be argued that these other relationships are in fact strengthened through the sacrificial event, since Jephthah thereby gives proof of his loyalty, both to God and to the people.

A Standard Story?

In structuralist thinking, a story is a series of events organized according to a certain pattern. According to the pioneer Vladimir Propp, every story ('narrative' in his terminology) could be reduced to thirty-one functions,

hostility on the part of Jephthah. The actors of this category are bound by vows (the elders, God, the daughter) and have explicit accusations directed against them (the elders and the daughter). The relationship between the subject and his or her helpers is thus marked by suspicion.

which always appear in the same chronological order.²¹ Claude Brémond constructed a more logically orientated model with only three functions: possibility, process and result.²² Contrary to the model of Propp, each of Brémond's functions may point in two directions—towards actualization or towards non-actualization, towards success or towards failure. Thus, the micro- or macro-sequences as well as the story as a whole can be described in terms of improvement or deterioration. In order to further the understanding of the logic of the story, I offer here a comparison of the cycle with Brémond's model.

The introduction (10.6-18) contains both deterioration and improvement. Neither of these opposite movements includes all three of Brémond's phases. From the initial process of deterioration, the statement of a possibility is omitted. It begins with the crucial event, the breach of the covenant, and continues with an account of the result, the Ammonite oppression/attack. The process of improvement that follows lingers precisely on the formulation of a possible reconciliation through repeated confession. Only the human part (repentance) of the central event is explicitly accounted for, while the outcome is not even suggested in this section. Since there is no explicit description of either the original or the final state of the relationship between the people and Yhwh, it is not possible to say whether or not an original state of peace between the actors has been restored in the end.

The complexity of the Jephthah story-line (11.1–12.7) becomes evident once more through the events that follows the victory.²³ The sacrifice concludes the successful Ammonite war. At the same time, it eliminates Jephthah's chances of being part of a larger story through his descendants. This must certainly count as a serious deterioration in a Deuteronomistic context, which includes legislation for the plight of the brother-in-law in order to ensure that a deceased man may have descendants (Deut. 25.5-10).

The Ephraimite threat clearly indicates deterioration. But the final defeat of the Ephraimites is double-edged. It can be seen as beneficial for Jephthah in two ways: first, as a restaging of the victory against the Ammonites and, secondly, as a successful variation of the expulsion-event (since in the end he exterminates the resistance to which he did not object in the beginning). The event could also be seen as harmful to Jephthah. The massacre of 42,000 Ephraimites is an unfathomable repetition of the sacrifice of his

21. Propp 1968: 26-63.

22. 'L'éventualité, le passage à l'acte, le résultat' (Brémond 1973: 311).

23. It seems that the assessment of the previous events is rather obvious. Initial deterioration through the expulsion is followed by improvement through the offer and acceptance of leadership. I interpret the oath as a renewed deterioration since it creates an obligation for the actor, and thereby limits his or her range of options. The victory over the Ammonites indicates a further improvement for Jephthah.

daughter.²⁴ Through both the sacrifice and the massacre, Jephthah kills members of his own people, of his family and of a neighbouring clan respectively. Jephthah thus manages to maintain his position as the leader of the people, although at the cost of reducing the very foundation of his power.

Brémond suggests three ways of combining elementary sequences into more complex ones: enchainment, embedding and joining.²⁵ All three suggestions can be used to describe the structure of the Jephthah cycle. First, the interaction between God and Israel in the introduction sets the stage for the appearance of Jephthah in 11.1. The latter story-line can be described as 'enchained' to the former. Secondly, the events of the Jephthah story-line can be regarded as a specification of the final, rather vague, event of the introduction (no. 5, God's return to Israel). The story of Jephthah would then be embedded in the larger Deuteronomistic narrative of God and Israel. As regards the third option, joining, it is clear that the same series of events has different implications for different actors, most obviously so for Jephthah and his daughter.

The Jephthah cycle belongs in my view to the category of 'ambiguous plots', which Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan finds impossible to classify in the terminology of Brémond.²⁶ The difficulty in assessing the last events of the cycle also makes it difficult to assess the cycle in its entirety. It ends neither in complete success nor in complete failure. Moreover, the relationship between the two major parts of the cycle, what I have called the Yhwh story-line and the Jephthah story-line, is multifaceted. Thus, the cycle deviates from the standard story in that the outcome is dimmed and in that the two story-lines can be isolated. Partly due to the difficulty in applying Brémond's theory to this ancient narrative, I have located another site of ambiguity, namely the ending.

A Series of Confrontations

There are several ways to describe the logic of the story. The ordering principle in the discussion above has been the identity and the function of the actors. Another possibility is to explore the unity of the story through a

24. O'Connell (1996: 189) makes the same observation and Exum (1992: 53) argues that the parallel between the two events is strengthened by the usage of a verb of slaughter (טָחַן), which has sacrificial connotations.

25. Enchainment (*l'enchaînement*) means that the result (function 3) of one sequence amounts to the prerequisites (function 1) of the next one. Embedding (*l'enclavement*) means that one sequence is inserted into another sequence as an elaboration of the former's function. Joining (*l'accolement*) means that the same events can indicate deterioration for one actor and improvement for another (Brémond 1966: 60-62).

26. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 27.

thematic reading.²⁷ In that vein, I will propose a reading of the story as a series of verbal and physical confrontations.

The introduction is dominated by the conflict between Israel and Yhwh. It originates from the people's worship of other gods (10.6). It escalates through Yhwh's surrender of the people into the hands of their enemies, whose gods they have begun to worship (10.7). This leads to a secondary conflict between Israel and the Ammonites; the latter party functions as the instrument of divine punishment (10.8-9). The major part of the episode is constituted by the one-sided verbal dispute between the people of Israel and their God; God accuses and the people confess. The effect of the controversy is uncertain. The repentance of the people is manifested through the physical abolishment of foreign gods. With regard to Yhwh, the change concerns an emotive state ('God was impatient'). Thus, the confession of the people appears to be a failed speech-act, since it does not affect what in a Deuteronomistic literary context would be a conventional response from the deity.

In what follows, Jephthah is involved in six consecutive confrontations. First, his brothers pronounce the judgment that he shall be devoid of his inheritance as well as the explanatory accusation that he has the wrong parentage. The severity of this verbal clash is confirmed by the physical expulsion from his father's house (no. 6). However, in the light of what happens in the next episode, this sentence upon Jephthah must also count as a failure. In the second confrontation—the negotiation with the elders of Gilead (no. 8)—Jephthah plays the part of the accuser. The dispute is brought to an end as both parties take vows and Jephthah is made the leader of the people. The war (no. 11) is preceded by two verbal confrontations. First, the negotiation with the Ammonite king is a non-event that can be read as an attempt to legitimize the war by referring to past events. Secondly, Jephthah's fatal vow can be seen as a means by which to secure God's assistance in the war. The fifth encounter occurs between Jephthah and his daughter. His initial accusation against her is met by arguments in favour of the sacrifice. At her request, he also grants her a respite of two months. This dialogue is followed by mourning and sacrifice. In the sixth confrontation, finally, Jephthah meets the Ephraimite threat by again retelling his version of 'history' and by the massacre that constitutes the shibboleth incident. In this case, the distinction between words and actions collapses completely.

Apart from the introduction, a pattern can be established according to which the verbal aspect precedes the physical one. All verbal conflicts include an accusation from one of the parties and also an element of performative speech. This blurs the distinction between words and actions and underlines the fact that the two are integrated aspects of the same process.

27. Bal (1997: 194) also proposes that time or space can be used as ordering principles for the story (her 'fabula'). These options are not fruitful enough to be included here.

Moreover, there is an escalation in the severity of the physical confrontations. The confession and repentance of the people, the curse and expulsion executed by the brothers, the negotiation between Jephthah and the elders, all concern kinship, whether religious, literal or military, between two parties. The Ammonite war, the sacrificial vow and its fulfilment, the Ephraimite threat and the shibboleth massacre (12.5) are all a matter of life and death. The lethal power of speech can thus be established as an integrated and elaborated theme of the story. In the previous discussion, where the focus lay on the identity and function of the actors, the final two events were rather loosely connected to the centre of the story. According to this reading, the theme is intensified rather than weakened by these events.

The Time of Judges 10.6–12.7

The category of time covers three aspects of the relationship between the story and the narrative: order, rhythm and frequency.

Order

In the terminology of Genette, discrepancies between the order of events in the story and in the narrative are labelled anachronies.²⁸ The two most important types of anachrony are *prolepsis*, ‘any narrative manoeuvre that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later’ and *analepsis*, ‘any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment’.²⁹ These terms are preferable to the traditional designations of the phenomena (anticipation/foreshadowing and retrospection/flashback, respectively) since they lack psychological or cinematic connotations. Therefore Genette’s terms will be used here.³⁰

In the Jephthah cycle, analepsis is the dominating figure of speech. In my reading, it serves two main functions.³¹ The first is to explain gaps in the

28. Genette 1980: 40.

29. Genette 1980: 40.

30. The anachronies in the cycle are with one exception (the expulsion) presented as direct discourse. Bal (1997: 87) argues that in such cases, where the act of speaking is part of the chronological story, there is no question of anachrony in the technical sense. Genette (1980) makes no such distinctions. Instead, when an anachrony is filtered through the speech of a character, it is called a subjective anachrony. Although I find Bal’s observation correct, I believe that by not including the subjective anachronies in the analysis I would fail to do justice to the material.

31. Bal (1997: 82) suggests the following functions of analepsis: to mark emphasis, to suggest optional interpretations of the same event, to achieve psychological or aesthetic effects, or to make subtle differentiations between the anticipation and the realization of an event.

narrative in order to provide necessary background information. This is the case when the actor Jephthah is introduced (11.1-3).³² To begin with, the introductory (10.6-18) lack of a presentation of the one who will execute the divine rehabilitation is attended to.³³ Secondly, reasons are given for the future actions of Jephthah, for example, the description of him as a 'mighty man'. Thus, analepsis assists the reader in understanding both what has recently taken place and what is about to happen in the narrative.

A second function of analepsis is to mark emphasis, which is most clearly demonstrated in the introduction (10.10-15) and to some extent also in the sacrificial event (11.35-36). The former analepsis is directed towards the Israelite worship of foreign deities (10.6-8), while the latter is directed towards the vow (11.29-30). In both these episodes, two actors recount the same event and the obviously subordinate parties (Israel and the daughter) confirm the version of the superior ones (Yhwh and Jephthah). However, in accordance with the hermeneutics of suspicion, this almost identical iteration of the superior party's version might paradoxically create the opposite effect, namely, one of questioning.³⁴

There are also examples of analepsis in which two actors present contradictory versions of the same event.³⁵ The Ammonite war is justified twice in that way—beforehand, in the negotiation with the Ammonite king (11.14-28), and afterwards, in the dispute with the Ephraimites (12.1-4). The former analepsis stretches far beyond the range of the cycle to the Israelite exodus; the latter is directed to the account of the war in the cycle (11.29-33). The rendering of the enemy's words presents a possible interpretation of the course of events.³⁶ Yet they serve above all as a cue for an elaborate attempt to legitimize the war. Although the enemy's version contrasts with that of Jephthah, the function of these analepses is to emphasize the 'winner's' version.

32. 11.1 and 10.8 are the only narrator-bound analepses in the cycle. The other occurrences are presented in the form of direct speech by one of the characters.

33. This is a deviation from the paradigm text of Judg. 2.11-23.

34. The fact that the superior party is described as weak and injured blurs the balance of power between the two parties, e.g. God's statement 'You have forsaken me' (10.13) and Jephthah's 'You have brought me low' (11.35).

35. The analepsis of 11.7 forms a special case. Jephthah complements, not contradicts, the version of the brothers, by supplying a personal motive, hatred, for their act. Moreover, in this passage Jephthah takes the subordinated position. The enhancement of the voice of Jephthah, which indirectly legitimizes the future actions of the actor, appears to be the function of this analepsis.

36. Yet an alternative option is thereby presented. It could be discussed whether the remaining effect is uncertainty with regard to the status of Jephthah's narrative proposals.

Two more general functions of analepsis can be found in the cycle. The first of these aims is to create a sense of reference, to connect the specific narrative to a larger one.³⁷ This is most clearly the case with the introduction of Jephthah (11.1-3) and the Ammonite negotiation (11.14-28), both of which stretch beyond the limits of the Jephthah cycle into Jephthah's childhood and into the narrative of Israel.³⁸ The second general function is to unite disparate elements of the narrative. This pertains to all cases of analepsis in this episodic narrative, but it is especially relevant to the Ephraimite dispute (12.1-3). With regard to the story, this event and the following civil war are merely loosely connected to the central event of the cycle, the Ammonite war.

There are only two deviations from chronology that are directed forwards (prolepsis): the vow (11.30-31) and the speech of the daughter (11.36).³⁹ Both concern the sacrifice. According to my reading, two main functions are fulfilled. First, an element of uncertainty is introduced into an otherwise stereotypical narrative, one that conforms to the Deuteronomistic paradigm of apostasy, punishment, conversion and reconciliation (Judg. 2.11-23). Tension is thus created between the fate of Israel (redemption) and that of Jephthah and his daughter (death), to the point where the latter overshadows the former. Secondly, the prolepsis partly replaces the account of the actual event, namely, the sacrifice. While the vow is rather explicit ('the forthcomer that comes forth... I will offer as a burnt-offering', 11.30-31), the account of the actual event is more indirect ('He did to her his vow which he had sworn', 11.39). According to my reading, the almost complete omission of the sacrifice is made possible precisely by the repeated reference to it by prolepsis.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the order of the narrative. First, the extensive use of analepsis suggests that historiography is a main issue in the cycle. Moreover, the repeated retellings of the same event within and beyond the limits of the cycle create an impression of (hi)story as an uncompleted process. The version of Yhwh/Jephthah is thus emphasized both by the too identical reiterations of it (by Israel/Jephthah's daughter) and by the direct contestations of it (by Ammon/Ephraim). Secondly, in a narrative so much orientated towards the past, the rare cases of prolepsis create tension between the story and the narrative. The analysis of the story pointed towards the Ammonite war as the logically central event, whereas the analysis of the order indicates so far that the sacrifice is the climax of the narrative.

37. U. Olsson (1988: 176) identifies these functions of analepsis.

38. In the terminology of Genette, these are labelled external and heterodiegetic.

39. It could be discussed whether the latter example (the daughter's exhortation to the father 'Do with me in accordance to what came out of your mouth') actually amounts to prolepsis or whether it is merely a vague hint.

Rhythm

Rhythm concerns the relationship between the time of the story and the time of the narrative, that is, between the time that passes in the story-world and the time it takes to recount the same story.⁴⁰ The notion of story-time has caused narratologists much trouble since there is no exact way of measuring it. It is in fact not even clear what exactly is to be measured, the telling, the writing or the reading.⁴¹ That problem will not be an issue in this analysis. The concept of rhythm is used here as a further means by which to discuss how the narrative achieves its emphasis.

Genette schematizes four fundamental movements of narrative time.⁴² In the *ellipsis*, the time of the story is infinitely greater than that of the narrative—something is omitted from the narrative, which can be deduced to have occurred in the story. In the *summary*, the time of the story greatly exceeds that of the narrative; what takes many years in the time of the story is recounted in a few lines in the time of the narrative. In the *scene*, the time of the story roughly equals that of the narrative. The purest form of scene is the quoted dialogue. In the *pause*, finally, the time of narrative is infinitely greater than that of the story, for example in the case of descriptions.

The rhythm of the Jephthah cycle is mainly characterized by an oscillation between the scene and the summary. A basic, although by no means comprehensive, rule is that deceleration of narrative speed signals importance.⁴³ Special attention should therefore be paid to what occurs in the scene. According to my reading, two basic types of scenes crystallize. In the first, a mere fragment of a scene is presented through monologue, for example by the brothers' expulsion and judgment of Jephthah (11.2).⁴⁴ Such fragments mark vital turning-points in the narrative. The second type is the larger scene, of which two appear to be of special relevance. They will therefore be treated more closely: the Ammonite negotiation (11.12-27) and the return to Mizpah (11.34-38).⁴⁵

40. Genette (1980) uses the term 'duration', whereas Genette (1988) changes it to 'speed'. I prefer Bal's term 'rhythm' (1997: 99-111) since it lacks the mathematical connotations of Genette's terms.

41. Genette 1988: 33-34; Bal 1997: 99-101; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 51-52.

42. Genette 1980: 95.

43. The achievement of emphasis is a recurrent theme in the analysis of the time of the narrative. It can be much debated to what extent form may determine meaning, e.g., whether elaboration or briefness signals emphasis. My position is that form always contributes to meaning, although one must be careful with such rules and always also consider the context.

44. Other examples are the Gileadite elders' question (10.18) and Jephthah's vow (11.30-31).

45. The two other major scenes are the dialogue between Yhwh and Israel (10.10-15) and Jephthah's negotiation with the Gileadite elders (11.6-10). The final two scenes

The negotiation scene is highly emphasized through its length and its location at the very centre of the narrative. Moreover, it is also the mimetically purest, since most of it consists of direct discourse. A paradoxical effect is created by the fact that the emphasis of this scene does not lie on the present narrative but on its literary prehistory. This indicates that the greatest achievement in the narrative is not the singular act of defeating the Ammonites, but rather the discursive act of making Gilead's/Israel's right to the land ideologically legitimate.

The return to Mizpah is the most elaborated scene in the entire cycle. Emotions are not only expressed verbally but dramatized through action: the daughter dances and plays the tambourine, Jephthah tears his clothes. At the same time, the narrator's presence is made explicit through repeated comments, which makes the scene less pure in form. The scene centres on the struggle to come to terms with the vow or, in other words, whether the narrative is a comedy or a tragedy (in the Greek sense of the word). The ambiguity of the following summary (11.39) leads me to the conclusion that what is at stake in the scene is, again, not the act of sacrifice *per se*, but how to handle it ideologically. The sudden acceleration of narrative speed at a point where anticipation is realized produces an effect of shock or irony.⁴⁶

The circumlocation of the account of the sacrifice might even be considered as a partial ellipsis. This interpretation is strengthened by the repeated ellipsis of the sacrifice in Jephthah's recapitulation of the war to the Ephraimites (12.1-3). Thus, the combination of an elaborated scene and an unexpected semi-ellipsis heightens the centrality of this sequence in the narrative which, with regard to the story, merely counts as a by-product of the war. Moreover, the rare occurrence of pause in the narrative points in the same direction. While the main character of Jephthah is described through a singular pause (11.1), the narrative pauses three times in the sacrificial episode in order to comment on the daughter and her fate (11.34b, 39c, 40). Thus, the rhythm of the narrative signals a shift in emphasis from the victory over the Ammonites to its ultimate consequence (the sacrifice) and to the attempt to make the war legitimate (the negotiation).

Frequency

Frequency is the last of Genette's terms related to the temporal aspect of the narrative. It concerns the relationship between how many times an event appears in the story and how many times it is recounted in the narrative. Genette distinguishes between three basic types of relationship.⁴⁷ In the

involving the Ephraimites, the dispute (12.1-3) and the massacre (12.5-6) can be described as intermediate forms.

46. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 56.

47. Genette 1980: 114-17.

singulative narrative, the relationship is symmetrical: what happens *n* times is narrated *n* times. The idea of the *repeating* narrative is obvious: what happens once is narrated *n* times. Finally, the *iterative* narrative is characterized by the opposite relation: what happens *n* times is narrated once.

Two observations about the frequency of the Jephthah narrative can be made. First, that *repeating* narrative is a recurrent element and, as has been stated above in the analysis of 'Order', it functions as a staging for the power struggle over who decides the true account of events.⁴⁸ Secondly, *iterative* narrative functions as an *inclusio*. In the introduction, the verb 'to do again' (ךָסִי) signals that both the summary (10.6-8) and the scene of the dialogue (10.10-15) should be regarded as detailed accounts of what the Israelites had done many times before; it points backwards to the narrative that precedes the Jephthah cycle in the book of Judges. In the concluding shibboleth scene, one of the 42,000 deaths is described in minute detail. The beginning depicts iterated apostasy; the end iterated killings. This gives the narrative a more general character and, thereby, a firmer connection to the macro-level of the book of Judges.

The Mood of Judges 10.6–12.7

The category of mood concerns the regulation of narrative information, in other words how the events of the story are perceived. Genette postulates two aspects of mood, distance and perspective, of which I will treat the former briefly and the latter more thoroughly.⁴⁹

With regard to distance, Plato has already presented two basic modes. *Diegesis* means that the poet makes no attempt to conceal the fact that he or she is speaking, which indicates a great distance. *Mimesis* means that the poet does speak as if he or she were someone else, for example one of the characters, which indicates a short distance. Henry James addresses the same difference through the transposed terms of *telling* and *showing*. These modes can be described as two poles between which all narratives move. Pure *mimesis* is inconceivable. Yet, the illusion of *mimesis* can be achieved through a surplus of detailed narrative information and through the obscured presence of the narrator. A 'connotator of mimesis' in this text is, for example, the detailed account of the shibboleth test.⁵⁰ In the Jephthah cycle, the

48. The account of Israel's sin (10.6-8) is repeated by Yhwh and Israel (10.10-15); the account of Jephthah's expulsion (11.2) is repeated by Jephthah (11.7); the account of Jephthah's oath (11.30-31) is repeated by Jephthah and his daughter (11.35-36); and the account of the Ammonite war is repeated by the Ephraimites and by Jephthah (12.1-3).

49. Genette 1980: 162-63.

50. Genette 1980: 165.

prevalence of scenes rendered through direct speech points towards *mimesis*. Yet the fact that the details are few and the narrator suddenly becomes visible through comments and summaries breaks that illusion.

The second aspect of mood—perspective—is somewhat more controversial within narratology. It is generally agreed that Genette's term 'focalization' is preferable to older terms such as 'point of view' or 'vision'.⁵¹ The reason is that it may include not only visual aspects of perception, but cognitive, emotive and ideological aspects as well.⁵² More important, the concept makes it possible to distinguish analytically between the one who sees and the one who speaks in the narrative.⁵³ What has been debated most strongly is the scope and position of the concept within the entire theory of narratology. Since this has consequences for my use of the concept, I will briefly outline the points of contention.

Genette distinguishes between three types of focalization: *zero focalization* is the view of an omniscient narrator; *internal focalization* is the restricted view of one of the characters; *external focalization* is the even more limited view of someone watching a character from outside.⁵⁴ Bal criticizes Genette's typology because it is based on two different criteria: zero focalization and internal focalization refer to the position of the perceiver, while external focalization refers to the position of the perceived object.⁵⁵ Bal speaks only of *character-bound focalization* and *external focalization*, thus making the position of the perceiver decisive.⁵⁶

I find Bal's criticism of Genette epistemologically significant in that narration always occurs from a certain perspective. The view of an omniscient narrator might be distant or diffuse, but it is nevertheless a view. Less fortunate is the fact that Bal employs the term focalizer at two narrative levels, both for the narrator and for the characters. Moreover, by turning the character into an agent of focalization, she treats the character as a perceiving being and thereby as a 'human' being.⁵⁷ As against Bal, I agree with Genette that it is always the narrator who is the subject of focalization. Even when focalization is internal, it is the narrator who takes up the perspective of one of the characters. A similar objection, from the point of view of its obscurity,

51. Genette (1980: 189) introduced it.

52. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 71.

53. Bal 1997: 143.

54. Genette 1980: 189.

55. For the controversy about focalization, see e.g. the three articles in *Poetics Today* (Bal 1981a and b; Bronzwaer 1981), Genette's (1988: 72–77) extensive reply to Bal and Rimmon-Kenan's (1983: 139 n. 6) assessment of Bal's critique of Genette.

56. Bal 1997: 146, 148.

57. See my discussion of the 'purist' and the 'realist' view on character under the section 'Characterization', below. I find that the transformation of character into an agent of focalization runs counter to Bal's generally 'purist' position.

can be raised against Bal's derivative concept of the *object of focalization*.⁵⁸ For Genette, it is always the narrative that is focalized. For Bal, however, the term can be used both for characters, focalized by the narrator, and for things that the characters perceive, focalized by the characters. Thus, they use focalization at different levels of analysis.⁵⁹ I will use the term *external focalization* when the narrative is focalized from outside, with omniscient or with restricted knowledge,⁶⁰ and the term *internal focalization* when it is focalized from the perspective of one of the characters. As I use the term, 'focalizer' is restricted to the narrator.

The general *external focalization* of the Jephthah narrative is manifested through the aspects of space, time, cognition and emotion.⁶¹ With regard to the first aspect, two examples of its typical lack of limitations will be given. The panoramic vision of the Ammonite war (11.29, 32-33) indicates a highly elevated position, and the account of the fate of the Ephraimite refugees at the fords of Jordan (12.5-6) signals that things happening at different places are focalized simultaneously. As regards time, the analepsis to the youth of Jephthah (11.1-3) shows that focalization is not restricted to the present. In terms of cognition, the suspense of the narrative is augmented precisely in that, preceding Jephthah's oath (11.30-31), the narrator-focalizer betrays an infinitely greater knowledge about what is happening than the character involved possesses. Finally, like the majority of narratives in the Hebrew Bible, the narrative of the Jephthah cycle is focalized from an emotionally neutral or uninvolved external position. This is perhaps best demonstrated in the laconic and very brief account of an intensely emotional situation, the sacrifice of the daughter (11.39).

58. Bal 1997: 149-57.

59. According to Bal (1997), focalization is the medium through which the story is transformed into a narrative (in her terminology, from 'fabula' to 'story'). For Genette (1980), focalization is a function of the narrator, i.e., he applies it at the level of the text in Bal's terminology. I do not find that these views are mutually exclusive, which is also the view of Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 85). On the one hand, focalization is fundamental to the formation of the story. On the other hand, it is always ultimately determined by the narrator and thus linked to the text. As long as one bears that in mind, it appears to me to be a matter of taste whether focalization is treated at the level of the story or at that of the text (in Bal's sense).

60. Omniscient and restricted focalization could be regarded as subcategories of external focalization. Such a distinction, however, is not relevant to the present study.

61. Although focalization does not alternate, there are several examples where the mere distinction between speaker and focalizer proves interesting. In the introduction (10.6-15), three consecutive speakers (the narrator, Yhwh, Israel) articulate the same vision of the people's apostasy. The norm set by the narrator is confirmed by the deity and repeated by the people. In the speeches of Jephthah's enemies (the Ammonite king, 11.3, and the Ephraimites, 12.1), different perceptions of history are verbalized, yet no shifts in focalization occur. Thus, the right to speak does not automatically imply the right to perceive.

Only in one scene in the narrative can it be discussed whether a shift from external to internal focalization occurs, and that is in the encounter between Jephthah and his daughter (11.34). Possible arguments in favour of such a shift include, for example, the use of a verb of perception (ראה) and the deictic particle *hinneh*. The narrator lets the reader see visually what Jephthah sees: the daughter's appearance with tambourines and dances. However, the verb comes too late (at the beginning of v. 35) to signal the shift technically, and generally, the function of the particle is to mark what follows as important, not specifically to indicate a change of perspective.⁶² Moreover, the sight of the daughter with her festive attributes is hardly unique to Jephthah, but shared by all others present. As regards the cognitive aspect of focalization, the narrator's comment on the status of the daughter as Jephthah's chief social asset is definitely in line with the interests of Jephthah. It can, however, be questioned whether this necessarily makes it an 'internal' view. Emotionally, it is Jephthah's reaction of grief that is focalized by his tearing his clothes.

My conclusion to this issue is that no decisive shift of focalization occurs. The episode is narrated from a position outside the characters. Yet I find that the narration is by no means detached; rather it cognitively as well as emotionally sides with Jephthah. Thus, even though Jephthah's view is not reported from 'inside', it is clearly expressed from a privileged position. No other actor is allowed to affect the narrative in a similar way. As a result, I find that, in this case, the narratological distinction between internal and external focalization proves to be irrelevant for my purpose. Through this dichotomy, there is a risk that a recurrent feature of narrative in the Hebrew Bible, namely, the practice of describing mental states through their outward manifestations, becomes neglected or distorted.⁶³

What consequences do these ambiguities of focalization have for the understanding of the encounter between Jephthah and his daughter? In my view, it is the combination of the external and yet biased focalization that makes possible the paradoxical portrayal of Jephthah as a victim. The narrative is told in such a way that, although Jephthah's interest dominates the account, his responsibility for the course of events appears to be non-existent.⁶⁴ Later, when the daughter's speech (vv. 36-37) is introduced, the

62. In this regard, I disagree with Bal (1988b: 62) and Fuchs (1989: 37) who in this passage interpret *hinneh* as an indicator of a shift to internal focalization. Nevertheless, I agree with Tapp (1989: 170) that the focalization of the story invites the reader to identify with its male protagonist.

63. This deficiency of the theory might be explained by the fact that it was developed using modern rather than ancient texts as the point of departure.

64. The tensions between action, vision and speech are elaborated below in the section on 'Characterization'.

narrative signals no shift of interest. Thus, the daughter's lack of protest and continued attendance to her father's needs, for which she has been 'accused' or 'praised' by commentators, is entirely consistent with the perspective of the narrative.⁶⁵ Her feelings or views about the situation are not rendered simply because the narrator does not focalize her, neither externally nor internally. Moreover, the sudden digression from the otherwise distant and detached focalization enhances further the centrality of this episode in the narrative.

The Voice of Judges 10.6–12.7

The category of voice is related to the narrator.⁶⁶ The material of this investigation does not require a thorough description of all four options of Genette's standard narrator-typology.⁶⁷ It suffices to say that most of the Jephthah cycle features a narrator who is placed above the story-world (*extradiegetic*) as well as one who is absent (*heterodiegetic*). This is the narrator on whom I will concentrate in the discussion below.

Occasionally, Jephthah appears as a narrator at the same level as the narrated events (*intradiegetic*), who himself participates in the story-world (*homodiegetic*), most notably in his negotiation with the Ammonite king (11.15–27).⁶⁸ In my view, this embedded narrative has a three-fold function.⁶⁹ To begin with, it serves as a chronological explanation or as a way to legitimize the present situation ideologically. Secondly, it shifts the centre of the narrative from war to ideology. Finally, it also contributes to the characterization of Jephthah as a speaker, which will be discussed in-depth below.

It can be demonstrated by using Chatman's criteria, that the most common biblical narrator (the *extradiegetic/homodiegetic* one) is by no means imperceptible.⁷⁰ Most obvious are the occurrences of temporal *summary* (10.8; 12.7), which shows that the narrator has made a selection with regard to which parts of the story are worthy of narration. Another clear marker of the narrator's presence is the provision of prior knowledge in the *identi-*

65. Fuchs (1989: 39) and Exum (1992: 67) both discuss the daughter's agency.

66. Genette 1980: 212–62.

67. The variable *level* (*extradiegetic/intradiegetic*) is used hierarchically to structure the text, whereas the variable *relation* (*homodiegetic/heterodiegetic*) indicates whether or not the narrator participates in the narrative (Genette 1980: 248).

68. On three other occasions, Yhwh and Jephthah recount fragments of the story already told by the narrator, i.e., in 10.11–14; 11.7; 12.2–3.

69. Genette (1980: 233) lists three: explicative, thematic or other.

70. Three of Chatman's (1978: 220–52) six criteria for measuring degrees of perceptibility are fulfilled in the text of the cycle, i.e. nos. 2, 3, 6 of the following list: (1) description of setting; (2) identification of character; (3) temporal summary; (4) definition of character; (5) reports on what the characters did not think or say; (6) commentary.

fication of characters. Jephthah is thus ambiguously presented through the epithets 'a mighty man' and 'son of a prostitute', his daughter more unequivocally as her father's 'only child' (11.34).

The most common indicator of the narrator's presence in the text is *commentary*. The introductory description of the people's behaviour in morally absolute terms (as 'evil') indicates a negative, although implicit, judgment by the narrator (10.6). This is in fact a stereotypical comment, which secures the position of the narrator and strengthens the iterative character of the narrative.⁷¹ Furthermore, the repetitious elaborations on the status of the daughter ('he had no one beside her, neither sons nor daughters', 11.34b; 'she had not known a man', 11.39) comment explicitly on her relationship to men and, in the latter case, on her sexual status. In addition, the concluding verse of the sacrificial episode (11.40) underlines the supposed impact of this very event. Finally, through the narrator's account of the Ephraimite proverb (12.4) an attempt is made to explain the conflict between the two tribes.

What function does the perceived narrator serve? Genette proposes five different ones, of which I identify three or possibly four in this narrative. The first function is obviously to *narrate* the story. The second is that of *directing*, which means that the narrator provides meta-narrative remarks about the internal organization of the text, in other words providing a form of discursive stage directions. The third function, *attestation*, implies that the emotive, moral or intellectual relationship between the narrator and the narrative becomes visible, for example by the indication of the source of information. The fourth function is *communication*, by which the narrator directly addresses his or her audience.⁷² Finally, the function of the narrator is deemed *ideological* if 'the narrator's interventions, direct or indirect, ... take the more didactic form of authorized commentary on the action'.⁷³

The account of the annual mourning rites (11.40) is perhaps the best example in the text of where a comment from the narrator can serve several functions.⁷⁴ To begin with, it stands as a pseudo-historical reference to a tradition developed after the narrated events, in other words it functions as *attestation* of the truthfulness of these events. It could also be argued that the statement has a *directing* function. The narrator's sudden and unique shift to a temporally more distanced position alerts the reader to what was recently narrated and indicates that it must be regarded as especially relevant. More

71. It also occurs in Judg. 2.11; 3.7, 12; 4.1; 6.1; 13.1.

72. I find no example of this function in the cycle. Implicitly, however, there is a communicative quality in all of Genette's functions.

73. Genette 1980: 256.

74. Genette (1980: 255, 257) himself does not regard it possible to make absolute distinctions between these functions.

specifically, it indicates that it was not the victory of Jephthah, but the sacrifice of his daughter that was worthy of commemoration. Finally, from the perspective of gender, the account of how a sacrificed virgin is honoured—the celebration of female self-effacement—serves *ideological* functions as well.

In most cases, the narrator fulfils both *narrative* and *ideological* functions. The introductory identifications of Jephthah and of his daughter contribute, on the one hand, to the characterization of these actors and indicate, on the other, a more general gender ideology, according to which masculinity is defined in terms of strength and femininity in terms of value, as a male possession. The narrative function of the comments on the daughter is to create suspense and to postpone the climax; they also function ideologically as an attempt to explain the nature of the tragedy (as a case of *male* loss). The retrospective report of the derogatory Ephraimite saying (12.4) challenges the previous narrative with regard to the origin of the concluding conflict. At the same time, it is an expression of anti-Gileadite ideology.

In the analysis of the story, I discussed whether the cycle should be read as a separate narrative or whether it should be read in its larger context, as part of the book of Judges or of the Deuteronomistic history.⁷⁵ Ideological aspects were emphasized in the former alternative; narrative ones in the latter. The analysis of the narrator above has demonstrated that narrative and ideological aspects function simultaneously in the text. The ideological aspect will appear clearer to the reader who situates the Jephthah cycle in its Deuteronomistic context. If one reads Judg. 10.6–12.7 in isolation, the explicit ideological comments are too few to make it possible to deduce a complete profile of the narrator in this respect. Yet it will not be possible to neglect the ideological aspect entirely without a severe reduction of meaning. The cluster of remarks by the narrator about the daughter in the sacrificial episode indicates that, with regard to the narrative, this is the most important episode, and the one where the readers or listeners need guidance if they are to understand it correctly. More specifically, the narrator shows the greatest interest in the issues of family relationships, sexuality and fertility.⁷⁶

75. See the section, 'The Story of Judges 10.6–12.7', above.

76. The question of the narrator's bias is connected to the issue of his or her reliability. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 103), Sternberg (1985: 51) and Tolmie (1999: 21) have stated that an extradiegetic heterodiegetic narrator, which for the most part is a fitting description for the biblical narrator, is the most reliable type. I regard that conclusion as mechanical and simplistic. Gunn (1990: 64) is to the point when he criticizes Sternberg for hiding his own ideological position behind seemingly neutral terms such as 'poetics', 'omniscient' or 'reliable'. Amit (1992: 204–205) elucidates the apologetic implications of Sternberg's theory when she finds consideration of pious readers an argument for an axiomatic reliability of the narrator. In the above analysis of the mood of the narrative, I have shown that the narrator always has a perspective, although it can be more or less

Characterization in Judges 10.6–12.7

Narratology lacks a systematic and coherent theory about character.⁷⁷ This deficiency is demonstrated through the controversies about two basic issues: the relationship between characters in the text and people in the real world, and the relationship between characters and actions in narrative texts.⁷⁸ These issues could be rephrased as broader questions of central importance for this study: (1) What is the ontological status of a character? (2) How does characterization work? Since characterization forms a substantial part of my analysis, I will deal with these two theoretical issues only briefly here.

Characters—People or Structures?

Marvin Mudrick formulated, as early as 1961, a distinction between the ‘purist’ and the ‘realist’ view about character. According to the former, characters are mere textual products, which cannot be meaningfully understood as distinct from their literary context. According to the latter, characters do acquire some independence that makes it relevant to discuss them in isolation from their context.⁷⁹ Bal, an advocate of the ‘purist’ approach, warns that the reader’s desire for coherence might result in neglect of actual discrepancies in characterization.⁸⁰ According to her, this tendency has been particularly obvious in the ideologically biased interpretation of female characters by biblical scholars.⁸¹ David Gunn and Danna Fewell argue in favour of the ‘realist’ view on practical grounds.⁸² As long as one’s claims are modest and based on explicit features of the text, they see no danger in psychologizing biblical characters. According to Rimmon-Kenan, both positions, taken in isolation, run the risk of reducing the specificity of the literary character.⁸³ Instead, she argues for an understanding of character that incorporates both the ‘purist’ and the ‘realist’ positions.

I agree with Rimmon-Kenan that ‘both and’ is better than ‘either or’. With regard to the ‘purist’ view, a too far-reaching reduction may result in

limited. I therefore conclude that the issue is not whether we should trust the narrator, but how we should understand the narrative that is told.

77. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 29), Bal (1997: 115) and Skalin (1991: 303) address the issue.

78. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 31–36. Recently, Tolmie (1999: 39) repeated this analysis of the debate.

79. Mudrick 1961: 202–18.

80. More precisely, Bal (1997: 116) is concerned that the ‘interchange between story and fabula’ is overruled.

81. Bal 1997: 115–16 and Tribble 1978: 139 n. 1. The prime example of this is the treatment of Eve in Gen. 2–3.

82. Gunn and Fewell 1993: 49–50 and, similarly, Fokkelman 1999: 68.

83. Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 33.

sterile interpretations that amount to little more than categorizations. With regard to the 'realist' view, characters are obviously not people of flesh and blood. At the same time, the resemblance between the two is the reason for reading for many people. Hjalmar Sundén convincingly demonstrates that this is definitely the case for religious readers of religious texts.⁸⁴ The ability to take up roles offered by the text, to treat its characters implicitly as people, constitutes a fundamental part of the religious experience.

Reading for identification, although shunned by critics, may also be important for readers of 'classical' texts. In the example from Shakespeare quoted in the Introduction, a literary character (Hamlet) assesses the ethics of another character (Polonius) by identifying him with a third one (Jephthah). Historical readings of the Jephthah narrative in the arts and in theological discourse show that the evaluation of the character Jephthah is often the key to the understanding of this particular narrative.⁸⁵ These facts determine the weight given to characterization in this study, although it does not follow that I accept the 'realist' view. Speculating about the psyche of characters, disconnected from the narrative, hardly belongs to literary analysis, although it may be fruitful in other fields.⁸⁶ In contrast to the ordinary reader or the artist, the professional must base his or her interpretation on evidence that is accessible to others.

To Be or to Do

The position taken in the realist-contra-purist debate has consequences for the second theoretical issue, namely, how characterization works. Chatman, as a representative of the realist stance, defines character as a paradigm of relatively stable features, which may or may not be unfolded by the actions in the narrative.⁸⁷ For him, actions are subordinate to character. Propp and Greimas, as representatives of the purist view, define character as a function of narrative. For them, characters are effects of, and therefore clearly subordinate to, action. In the case of the Jephthah cycle, however, the issue is not whether character or action comes first. Rather, the problem is how to evaluate the central actions of the narrative, particularly the vow and the sacrifice; do these make Jephthah a hero or a villain?

That characterization can work both directly (Chatman) and indirectly (Propp, Greimas) is a recurring theme among narratologists and writers of biblical poetics.⁸⁸ It seems reasonable to me to describe the relationship between character and action in terms of interdependence, as Rimmon-

84. Sundén 1959.

85. See Introduction, 'Previous Work on Jephthah'.

86. Wikström (1997) gives proof of that in the area of Psychology of Religion.

87. Chatman 1978: 119.

88. E.g. Rimmon-Kenan 1983; Alter 1981; Bar-Efrat 1989; Berlin 1994; Tolmie 1999.

Kenan does.⁸⁹ To establish an absolute hierarchy of what carries most weight seems to be a dead-end.⁹⁰ Such a procedure may cloud the fact that, ultimately, the reader's assessment is decisive. I find useful Sternberg's description of characterization as a process of filling in the gaps that occurs within the reader.⁹¹ Moreover, his emphasis on the tension between indirect and direct characterization, between epithets and action, is a variation of Rimmon-Kenan's notion of interdependence, and will contribute to my reading of Jephthah as a character.⁹² Thus, it will be demonstrated that epithets point proleptically towards the plot and they are, in return, complicated by the very same plot.

Bal qualifies the use of the term 'character' in a way that reduces the tension between being and doing. This is achieved through the analytical distinction between actor and character, where the former is an element of the story (the 'fabula' in Bal's terminology) while the latter belongs to the narrative (the 'story' in Bal's terminology). An actor is anyone or anything, for example a dog or a machine, which stands in a relationship to the goal of the story. A character is the effect that is created by an actor provided with specific features.⁹³ The advantage of this distinction is that it provides the opportunity to speak about all textual figures in terms of their function, without reducing characters to mere function. Uncertainty remains regarding the transition from actor to character. This is, however, a minor problem. In my view, too much energy has been invested in the elaboration of intricate or banal systems of classification of character.⁹⁴ More importantly in my view, Bal supplies a number of criteria for the construction of character, which I use selectively.⁹⁵

89. Rimmon-Kenan (1983: 35-36) cites James (1963: 80): 'What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?' According to Rimmon-Kenan, two factors are especially important to understand this relation: first, the type of narrative and, secondly, the reader's choice of focus.

90. Alter (1981: 116) values inner speech, whereas Bar-Efrat (1989: 65) values narratorial epithets as the most reliable source of information about character.

91. Sternberg 1985: 322. However, I disagree with his view that the composition of the Bible is 'fool-proof', i.e., that there is only a single way to read the text correctly.

92. Sternberg 1985: 326.

93. Bal 1997: 114-15. In the same context, Bal defines the terms more technically, i.e., an actor is a 'structural position' and a character is a 'complex semantic unit'.

94. Concentration on whether Jephthah's daughter, for example, should be labelled a type, actor or character might in fact inhibit a more nuanced understanding of that textual figure. Tolmie (1999: 53-59) gives a brief overview of different sets of classification, such as 'flat' and 'round' characters as well as 'protagonist', 'card' and 'ficelle'.

95. Bal suggests two different, although partly overlapping, sets of criteria. I will use four criteria—repetition, accumulation, relations to other characters, and transformations—from her list for the general construction of character (Bal 1997: 126) and one criterion—qualification—from her specific list pertaining to the 'hero' (Bal 1997: 132).

The criteria of *distribution* and *relations* are used to pin down the importance of the character in the text. Whereas the former has to do with the number of appearances of the character, the latter concerns the character's position in the web of relationships. The criterion of *qualification* involves direct characterization, namely, epithets and attributes uttered either by the narrator or by other actors. Because of linguistic ambiguities, I treat these items in detail. The criterion of *independence* focuses on the character's acts and on the degree to which the character takes the initiative (if distinguishable). I use the criterion of *transformation* in a summary fashion in order to survey the development of a character throughout the course of the narrative. In addition to these criteria, I discuss the *speech* of the characters separately, since otherwise this aspect runs the risk of being neglected.⁹⁶

Finally, it is fundamental for my analysis to consider the interplay between these different aspects of characterization. Like Chatman, I proceed by gathering features. Unlike Chatman, however, my purpose is not to establish a coherent picture, but to see how a character functions within the whole of the narrative. From the gallery of actors in this text, I will discuss Jephthah, the daughter and Yhwh.⁹⁷

Jephthah

There are good reasons for calling Judg. 10.6–12.7 the Jephthah cycle. The actor with that name pervades the text, both quantitatively and qualitatively.⁹⁸ He is also the centre of the relational web of the narrative, related directly to all the other actors, except the daughter's companions.

The name Jephthah (יפתח) means 'he opens' and its significance to the narrative is not self-evident. It may be an abbreviation of the formulaic phrase 'God opens' (the womb), from which one could infer that Jephthah is sacred to Yhwh, that he serves as an instrument of the divine.⁹⁹ In line with the biblical convention of signalling the central feature of the character by his or her name, Jephthah's name may point to his fatal opening of his mouth through the vow particularly and more generally to his extensive pre-

96. Alter (1981: 116) argues for the importance of speech for biblical narrative.

97. The collective actors (the Israelites, the brothers of Jephthah, the elders of Gilead, the Ammonites, the women of Israel, the Ephraimites) and the king of Ammon will not be discussed in terms of characterization since they appear in single separate episodes and since their functions are unequivocal. See 'The Story of Judges 10.6–12.7'.

98. Although the actor does not appear in the introduction of ch. 10, his appearances are evenly distributed in all but four verses in chs. 11 and 12. Judg. 11.4 is a repetition of 10.17. Judg. 11.40 is a narrator's comment on the annual rite of celebration/mourning. The Gileadites are the subject of 12.5–6. Jephthah is neither specifically included nor excluded from this group.

99. Klein (1988: 94) chooses this line of interpretation and finds Jephthah's later breaking of the principles of the covenant ironic in the light of his name.

occupation with speech.¹⁰⁰ This uncertainty with regard to the subject of the name does in fact mirror a central ambiguity of the narrative, namely, whether Yhwh uses Jephthah or whether Jephthah uses Yhwh to win the victory.¹⁰¹

The 'mighty man'. The narrator initially presents Jephthah by an epithet that I translate as 'mighty man' (גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל).¹⁰² The root גִּבַּר relates to strength or superiority¹⁰³ and may also carry sexual connotations. This is made explicit in Judg. 5.30, where גִּבַּר is juxtaposed to its female counterpart, 'womb' (רֶחֶם).¹⁰⁴ Clines and Brown-Driver-Briggs use the dichotomies of male–female and human–divine to explain the term negatively: 'man as distinct from woman or from God' and 'man as strong, distinguished from women, children, and non-combatants, whom he is to defend'. Drawing from the logic of separation between the sexes, these definitions show strong similarities to modern concepts of gender. To what degree they correctly represent the world implied by the book of Judges is more uncertain.¹⁰⁵ The qualifier חַיִּל means either power or wealth, and is most often used as a military term for 'army'.¹⁰⁶

The idiom גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל occurs frequently in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰⁷ In the plural, it appears as a technical term for a warrior.¹⁰⁸ In the singular, it is used only for eight men, of which the following six are found in the texts of the Deu-

100. According to Exum (1992: 48), the parallel is not far-fetched, although different verbs are used (פָּתַח and פָּצָה).

101. See above 'The Actors' and below 'Changed by Others'.

102. The King James version coins the longer epithet, a 'mighty man of valour'. Other translations emphasize the personal aspect through suggestions such as 'hero of might' (Bal 1988b: 22), 'brave man' (Koehler and Baumgartner) or 'mighty man of valour/strength' (Brown-Driver-Briggs, and Clines), the professional aspect through 'knight' (Boling 1975: 197) or 'warrior' (Clines), or both aspects, through the use of 'tapferer, tüchtiger Krieger' (Gesenius). The translation 'mighty man' includes the two crucial aspects of strength and of masculinity, whereas it lacks at the same time the unnecessary connotations of bravery.

103. Kosmala 1977: 901.

104. I agree with Silva's (1994) criticism of the exaggerated emphasis on etymology and the following 'illegitimate totality transfer', i.e. the thought that a word on every occasion carries all its meanings. In this case, however, etymology is supported by usage and is therefore relevant.

105. This dilemma brings light to the problem of a-historicism in the lexical genre. If we limit the corpus to Deuteronomistic writings, the prohibition against cross-dressing (Deut. 22.5) supports the idea of keeping the sexes apart.

106. There is only one example of an explicitly sexual usage, Prov. 31.1, where the king is polemically exhorted not to give his חַיִּל to women.

107. It occurs forty-one times in the Hebrew Bible.

108. It can also denote priests (1 Chron. 9.13), or gatekeepers (1 Chron. 26.6).

teronomistic history: the judges Gideon and Jephthah, the kings David and Jeroboam, the warrior Naaman and, finally, Kish, the father of King Saul.¹⁰⁹ To be called a 'mighty man' means that one is part of an exclusive category of men in the Deuteronomistic corpus.¹¹⁰ This does not prevent great diversity in religious matters. David stands out as the great king in the historiography of Israel, whereas Jeroboam is labelled an evil king, explicitly contrasted to David.¹¹¹ Naaman is a model convert, while Gideon ends up as an apostate by leading his people into 'unfaithfulness' (זנה).¹¹² As for Jephthah, he is the only Israelite man in the Hebrew Bible to sacrifice his child.

I suggest that the epithet גִּבּוֹר הָיִל is used for men whose life's purpose demands extraordinary strength or skills. Probably these features are also connected to masculinity. The heterogeneity of this group of men indicates that the epithet does not unequivocally signal high moral or religious standards. Earlier scholars have ignored this ambiguity and presented an idealized view of the 'mighty man' as an ancient 'gentleman'.¹¹³

The epithet 'mighty man' is both confirmed and contradicted by Jephthah's actions. His instalment as the leader of the Gileadites and the ensuing wars definitely enhance Jephthah's authority as a successful warrior.¹¹⁴ But the sacrificial episode complicates the picture. To begin with, the performance of the burnt-offering hardly requires the extraordinary strength of a man of this category. The sacrifice can be seen as the exercise of his rights as a father, sanctioned by Deuteronomistic law, to determine his daughter's fate.¹¹⁵ It could also, however, be regarded as the abandonment of this right to Yhwh. According to both these lines of interpretation, the sacrifice effects a revision of the image of the 'mighty man' and turns him into an ordinary man. Yet another possibility is to interpret the deed as an expression of the opposition between male and female, which serves to confirm the 'mighty man' as non-female. My conclusion is that the sacrifice has little to do with Jephthah's profession as a warrior, but that it distances him from femininity.

109. The economically powerful Boaz (Ruth 2.1), and the warrior Zadoq (1 Chron. 12.29), are the only two occurrences outside the Deuteronomistic corpus.

110. Kish's and Boaz's roles are indirect, to beget future kings (Saul and David). Naaman is presented as the military instrument of Yhwh, despite the fact that he is an Aramean (2 Kgs 5.1). The story, however, concerns the healing of his leprosy through the prophet Elisha. Thus, the prominent feature of that story is Naaman's belief in Yhwh, not his military skills. Jeroboam stands in opposition to the oppressive king Rehoboam.

111. 1 Kgs 14.8.

112. Judg. 8.27.

113. Claasens (1996: 108).

114. According to my reading, the narrator's epithet 'mighty man' in the introduction is matched by the self-descriptive 'man of strife' in Jephthah's final speech.

115. Deut. 21.10-17; 22.13-30.

The son of a 'prostitute'/'other woman'. The narrator also presents Jephthah as the son of a 'prostitute' (אִשֶּׁה זֹנֶה). The expression implies 'sexual misconduct', either in the form of fornication or of prostitution.¹¹⁶ Yet the precise meaning of the term remains obscure, largely due to the lack of proper sociological knowledge of the institutions of marriage and prostitution.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, biblical scholars have a tendency to label זֹנֶה-activities somewhat differently, depending on the gender of the subject, i.e., men fornicate whereas women practise prostitution.¹¹⁸ Such androcentrism begs the question why female sexuality is deemed slightly more 'illicit' than male sexuality.¹¹⁹ With regard to its use, the term is for the most part metaphorical, denoting unfaithfulness to the covenant on the part of Israel.¹²⁰

In the immediate context of *Judg.* 11.1-3, the brothers designate Jephthah by a parallel phrase as the son of an אִשֶּׁה אַחֶרֶת ('other/second woman').¹²¹

116. Hall 1996: 1123.

117. The meaning of the term זֹנֶה is discussed by e.g. Bird (1989: 78) and Törnkvist (1998b: 95). Bal (1988: 85, 87) sketches a diachronic development of the term, from an original reference to a 'patrilocal wife', where the woman stays in her father's house, to unfaithfulness in general, to specifically sexual unfaithfulness, and, ultimately, to professional prostitution. However, the historical evidence to support the hypothesis is meagre. Bal is dependent on Koehler and Baumgartner, who, according to Bal, 'unfortunately' do not provide a source for their translation of the archaic meaning of the root. It is also a bit surprising that Bal, in many ways a postmodern thinker, in this case tries to solve the problem by way of tracing the 'original' meaning. What the term meant in distant past is not relevant to its meaning in a Deuteronomistic literary context.

118. According to Clines, women engage in 'prostitution', and men in 'fornication' and, according to Koehler and Baumgartner, the first meaning of the verb, 'to commit fornication', is reserved for the wife or for the betrothed woman while the second meaning, 'to be unfaithful in a relationship to God', is not gender-specific. The English terms 'fornication' and 'prostitution' partly overlap, although the latter denotes a more deliberate and business-like act.

119. Törnkvist (1998: 96) makes an important point in her discussion of the term: 'When using terminology related to sexuality and sexual behaviour, the question of gender becomes crucial. We have to ask: who is naming whom, and whose perspective, fears and fantasies are given precedence in our texts and translations?'

120. See Hall 1996. Within the Deuteronomistic history, *Deut.* 22.21 is the only unequivocal example of a literal usage. *Judg.* 19.2 is a contested passage, both text critically and contextually. Was she unfaithful (זֹנֶה) or angry (LXX) or did she reject her husband (זָנָה)? (See Törnqvist 1998: 107-14.) The other occurrences in the Deuteronomistic History are all metaphorical (*Deut.* 31.16; *Judg.* 2.7; 8.27, 33).

121. An important difference from a narratological point of view is that the two idioms are uttered at different levels of the narrative, i.e., by the narrator and the fellow characters respectively. The voice of the former carries a higher degree of 'authentication authority' (Skalin 1991: 151-52) than the latter. Given this difference in narrative status, however, it still behoves me to say that the latter term in some way functions as a qualifier of the former. To my knowledge, no commentary has elaborated on this connection.

The meaning of *אָהֶר* has to do with otherness, with special regard to ethnicity.¹²² Inger Ljung shows that the Deuteronomistic notion of the foreign woman is strongly negative.¹²³ Marriages with foreigners are prohibited (Deut. 7.1-6), intermarriage is given as the cause of Israel's apostasy (Judg. 3.5-8), and the fall of the Northern Kingdom is described as provoked by women of foreign origin, such as Jezebel (2 Kgs 17). From the context in Judg. 11.2, it seems equally possible that the *אִשֶּׁה אֲחֵרָה* could be understood as an additional wife, and this would connect the term to the category of class.¹²⁴ Although the narrative indicates a causal relationship between the mother's status and Jephthah's disinheritance,¹²⁵ it does not automatically follow that the 'foreign/additional wife' is sexually legitimate, as Clines supposes.¹²⁶

Thus, the controversies discussed above provide evidence for the ambiguity of the terms used to describe Jephthah's mother. I find the traditional translations of *אִשֶּׁה זֹנָה* as 'prostitute', 'harlot' and 'whore' deficient, since they only capture one of its aspects, namely, sexual professionalism.¹²⁷ It seems to me that too little attention has been paid to the understanding of the second term *אִשֶּׁה אֲחֵרָה* and to how it is related to the first term. In my reading, the religious/moral/sexual marginalization indicated by the former term is deepened by the ethnic and socio-economic aspects of the latter one. In a Deuteronomistic context, Jephthah, as his mother's son, is defined as the result of some kind of unlawful female sexuality. Because of her, he is denied his rights of inheritance and is born/written into an ethnically and socially inferior position.

The only obvious link between the epithet 'son of a prostitute' and the events of the story is the sacrifice. At the beginning of the narrative, it is implied that Jephthah's mother is the cause of his rejection. In the sacrificial episode, Jephthah's daughter is blamed for the renewed rejection, which

122. Arnold 1996: 360. Clines proposes that *אָהֶר* can denote a contrast (another, other, different) or a similarity (another, other, additional), and he places Judg. 11.2 in the first category. This is supported by Brown-Driver-Briggs, who suggest 'strange, alien' and Erlandsson (1977: 218), who suggests 'foreign'.

123. Ljung 1989: 49-73.

124. Schneider (2000: 164) makes a suggestion in this direction but does not develop it further.

125. The usage of the particle *ki* indicates such a relation.

126. Under the heading of *אִשֶּׁה*, quoting Judg. 11.2 as an example, Clines defines a woman in the Hebrew Bible as 'usually wife. Legitimate sexual partner of a man, and mother of his children.' However, the legislation of the Deuteronomist mentioned above deems inter-ethnic marriages illegitimate. Moreover, there is at least one other example in Judges of a secondary wife (the *פִּילֶגֶשׁ* of 19.2) who is connected to *זֹנָה*-activities. Ljung (1989: 51) also mentions Deut. 22.13-21 and Num 5.5-31 as examples of how wives are connected to unfaithfulness.

127. I refrain from offering a translation of my own, since admittedly no single English term would capture the whole range of the Hebrew.

never occurs. It appears as if contact with the opposite sex implies great risk in terms of social prestige for Jephthah. This might explain why Jephthah in his speech inverts the power structure between himself and his daughter. The gender-related tension is not dissolved by the sacrifice, however. Rather, the sacrifice simultaneously means contact with the woman and her extinction. In anthropological terms, Jephthah defends his honour by keeping his word.¹²⁸ At the same time, he destroys his primary asset, the basis of his honour. This signals the interdependence between the man and the woman. Thus, the killing of the daughter implies both intensification and deconstruction of Jephthah's masculinity.

The Gileadite judge. Ethnic designations by the narrator frame Jephthah's appearance in the cycle. In the opening (11.1), Jephthah is described as both a Gileadite and as the son of Gilead. One possible effect of this emphasis on ethnicity could be that his uncertain ancestry on the maternal side—as the son of the 'other woman', he could be a foreigner—is compensated for by unequivocal ancestry on the paternal side. The epithet 'Gilead' is, however, ambiguous. It refers both to a concrete textual figure with a wife, sons and a house¹²⁹ and to a geographic territory.¹³⁰ The unknown status of the father cannot therefore outweigh the inferior one of the mother. Rather, the tension between Jephthah's identity as a Gileadite and as the son of an 'other' woman is reflected throughout the entire cycle and establishes relationships to what is foreign as a major theme. The theme is foreshadowed already in the introduction, where differences in religious practice function as markers of identity. Israel's sin consists of not being different enough in comparison to the other nations. In the expulsion scene, Jephthah is defined as non-Gileadite. In the instalment scene that follows, he is conversely defined as the head of the Gileadite community. The identification with the Gileadites is dramatized in the negotiation scene, where Jephthah literally represents his people. In relation to the Ammonite enemy, however, Jephthah oscillates between emphasizing otherness and similarity.

The issue of belonging/alienation becomes acute in the shibboleth episode, where the Ephraimites accuse Jephthah of exercising the power of exclusion and, indirectly, they define the Gileadites as a people of dubious identity (as 'half Ephraim, half Manasseh').¹³¹ It is significant that the defini-

128. Douglas 1966.

129. Gilead is the subject of a single, but crucial, action, the siring of Jephthah. In that sense, he plays the same role as the majority of anonymous women in the Hebrew Bible, i.e., the role of the reproducer. See Ljung 1989: 15, 50.

130. It is not unlikely that in this immediate context the name is a personification of a district and that Jephthah's father is thus unknown, according to Burney (1920: 308), Boling (1975: 197) and Gunn and Fewell (1993: 114).

131. This unflattering description of the people is left uncorrected by the narrator.

tive act of exclusion (the massacre) takes place at the fords, i.e., at the frontier. At the beginning of the narrative, members of the Gileadite community, the brothers, exclude an individual, Jephthah. At its end, the community as a whole excludes another collective, the Ephraimites, as revenge for the accusation of ethnic ambiguity. A seemingly arbitrary linguistic sign is used to mark identity and to distinguish not only between tribes but even between the living and the dead.

The epilogue (12.7) mentions Jephthah's place of burial and eventually connects him to the territory of Gilead. It follows the pattern of the so-called 'minor judges', and the narrative is surrounded on both sides by accounts of such figures.¹³² Jephthah's rule of six years is the shortest of all the judges.¹³³ He receives neither praise, like Shamgar, nor condemnation, like Abimelech, and it is not said that his rule resulted in peace for the land as Deborah's did. In quantitative terms, the account of Jephthah is one of the longest ones, after those of Gideon and Samson. Based on the epilogue, the Gileadite Jephthah's era appears somewhat mediocre, although that may hardly count as evidence for any more far-reaching criticism.

One of Tob's 'empty men'. Two more names in the introductory verses require comment. The first is the name of the destination of the expulsion, Tob. Semiotically, it could be regarded as ironic that the place of Jephthah's exile is called the 'good land'.¹³⁴ However, the significance of this homonym should not be exaggerated.¹³⁵ Whether Tob is part of Gilead or whether it is enemy territory is not of crucial importance for my interpretation. In both cases, Jephthah is pushed to the periphery and, therefore, weakened as a Gileadite. In a narrative that centres on the issue of belonging (e.g. in the persuasion scene, 11.4-11), that is a significant start.

The second epithet that deserves comment is the name of Jephthah's new peer group in Tob, the 'empty men' (אנשים ריקים). The root ריק is related to the idea of emptying and in the Deuteronomistic corpus it occurs only three times with reference to men.¹³⁶ In the literary context of 2 Sam. 6.20,

The people respond with revenge, i.e., protection of their own identity through extinction of the other side.

132. Boling 1975: 214 and Klein 1988: 98.

133. In comparison, Othniel, Deborah and Gideon ruled for forty years, Ehud for eighty years and Samson for twenty years.

134. According to Bal (1988b: 199), Tob is a 'good land' in the sense that it represents a transitional space.

135. Boling's (1975: 197) proposal that the name was deliberately chosen (by the redactor?) because of its nuance of covenantal 'amity' seems most unlikely.

136. Only six of fourteen occurrences of the nominative/adjective ריק are attested in the Deuteronomistic corpus. It is used twice in a concrete sense, with reference to empty

the social aspect of the term is emphasized and it has a clearly derogatory nuance. Michal's speech implies that, through his exposure before his servants' female slaves, David has dishonoured Israel's monarchy. To act like 'one of the empty' (אֶחָד הָרִיקִים) here means to be 'empty' of royal dignity, in other words, to debase oneself.

In the narrative of Abimelech (Judg. 9), the idiom designates the men hired by the usurper to kill his rivals to the throne.¹³⁷ The specific information that all seventy brothers, except one, were killed 'on the same stone' (9.5) indicates some kind of execution. The 'emptiness' of Abimelech's men could thus most obviously be interpreted in economic (seventy shekels), moral (assassination of seventy men) or ethnic (lack of tribal loyalty) terms. In the narrative of Jephthah (Judg. 11.3), the activities of the 'empty men' are described more neutrally. They 'gathered around' (לָקַט) Jephthah and 'went out' (יָצָה) with him; it is unknown for what purpose or with what result. Neither is Jephthah's relationship to this group of men further specified.

There are other similarities between Abimelech and Jephthah than their dealings with 'empty men'. Most striking is their family situation: both are sons of socially inferior women¹³⁸ and both engage in conflict with their brothers. The two characters could be described as outsiders who manoeuvre their way to become the leader of their people. But while Abimelech uses force to attain leadership, Jephthah has to be persuaded to take on the burden of duty. Once in office, however, Jephthah exceeds his predecessor in brutality when it comes to quelling the opposition.¹³⁹

Dramatic encounters with women are important in the conclusion of both narratives. Abimelech is fatally injured by the woman of Thebes (9.53) and demands a *coup de grâce* from his servant in order to avoid the supposedly dishonourable obituary of being 'killed by a woman' (9.54). Jephthah expresses a similar fear of degradation in his confrontation with his daughter (11.35), although he is not the one to be killed. A difference consists in the narrator's explicit evaluation of the characters. Abimelech's massacre in his brothers is labelled as 'evil' (9.56–57, רָע), while Jephthah's reign receives no value judgment in the epilogue (12.7).

vessels (Judg. 7.16; 2 Kgs 4.3), and once metaphorically, with reference to words (Deut. 32.47). Shepherd 1997: 1106.

137. Outside the Deuteronomistic corpus, the phrase is used in 2 Chron. 13.7, in the polemical speech of king Avia, to designate the recruits of the usurper Jeroboam. There, 'empty men' stand in apposition to the clearly contemptuous idiom, 'sons of Belial'.

138. Abimelech is described as the son of a פִּילגֶשׁ (8.31) and of an אִמָּה (9.18); Jephthah as the son of an אִשָּׁה אַחֲרַת/אִשָּׁה זֹנָה (11.3).

139. Abimelech kills 1000 men and women in the tower at Shechem (9.49). Jephthah instigates the killing of 42,000 Ephraimite fugitives.

At the beginning of the previous century, Burney argued that אנשים ריקים denotes primarily material and ethnic destitution, or the lack of tribal status.¹⁴⁰ Most modern commentators, however, emphasize only the moral aspect.¹⁴¹ This line of interpretation appears to be based solely on the context of Judg. 9.4, which I find unfortunate.¹⁴² My conclusion is that the association with 'empty men' further confirms Jephthah's peripheral position at the opening of the text, a position already indicated by the previous double epithets as son of a 'prostitute'/'other woman'. The triple aspects of moral, economic and ethnic 'emptiness' should not be minimized, since they widen the scope of the character's alienation. Moreover, the numerous similarities between Jephthah and Abimelech colour the characterization of the former negatively, and could possibly function as implicit criticism.

The speaker. Jephthah's main activity in the text is speech. In the analysis of the story, I have discussed its relationship to other events, and in the analysis of order and rhythm I have underlined how speech structures the narrative. In this section, I will focus thematically on the content of these speeches and show how they contribute to the characterization of Jephthah.

The negotiation with the Ammonite king is framed by assertions of innocence on the part of Jephthah. His position is most clearly stated in the conclusion (11.27): 'I have not sinned against you' and 'you have committed evil against me'. This propaganda for war constructs images of Jephthah as the wrongly accused victim, and of the enemy as a liar and aggressor. Three features of the episode complicate this picture. In terms of religious affiliation, the sharp contrast between Israel and Ammon dissolves in the climax of the speech: 'Will you not possess what Chemosh your god gives you to possess? And all that the Lord our God has dispossessed before us, we will possess' (11.24). The force of Jephthah's rhetoric lies in the assumption that the two peoples live by the same ethics, that they both conquer whatever their gods give them. Here, similarity between the peoples and their gods is presumed. Secondly, through his declaration of innocence ('I have not sinned'), Jephthah establishes a contrast as well as a similarity, not only in relation to the Ammonites but also to his fellow Israelites. Contrast is created by the inverted usage of the terminology of confession familiar from the introduction ('We have sinned against you', 10.10, 15). Similarity is created by the use of first-person pronouns to describe the state of war between the two nations.

140. Burney 1920: 308-309.

141. Niditch (2001: 184) proposes 'social bandit'; Olson (1998: 827) 'outlaw'; O'Conner (1996: 140) 'gangster or condottiere'.

142. Boling (1975: 196-97) offers an example of the interpretation of the term as a professional designation, through his translation 'mercenaries', which fits perfectly the context of 9.4, but hardly that of 11.3.

Thirdly, one might ask whether Jephthah's mistaken naming of the Ammonite deity as Chemosh constitutes an ignorant or deliberate provocation.

In the dispute with the Ephraimites, Jephthah speaks in a different tone. The vilification of the other side and the idealization of his party are not as explicit here as in the negotiation episode. First, there is a linguistic ambiguity in Jephthah's self-presentation (12.2), which establishes a continuity of identity between himself, Israel and Ammon: 'A man of strife (אִישׁ רִיב) I have been, me, my people and the sons of Ammon.' It is clear from the literary context that Jephthah and Israel oppose Ammon. However, the formulation could also indicate that the three parties are united through a common feature, belligerence.¹⁴³ Secondly, the way in which Jephthah addresses his opponent in this episode is notable. Rather than rebuking him, he uses the reverent terminology of people at prayer: 'I cried out to you, but you did not save me.' In the context of the cycle, this implies yet another allusion to the confession of Israel in the introduction (10.15). Contrary to what he did in the negotiation episode, Jephthah here indicates his loyalty to the people by taking up their role. He distances himself from his opponents by placing them in God's position, as the one who can save, but who chooses not to do so. In this episode, Jephthah continues to accuse his opponents and to assert his own innocence, although not as forcefully as in the Ammonite negotiation.

A comparison of Jephthah's reply to the Ephraimites with that of Gideon adds a few nuances to the statement above. Jephthah's predecessor is faced with almost exactly the same accusation, that of non-mobilization before going to war (8.1-3).¹⁴⁴ Gideon belittles himself and flatters his opponents, thus using a rhetorical strategy the opposite of Jephthah's. His speech shows that politics, specifically, peace, is more important than personal prestige. Jephthah's speech shows, on the contrary, that no criticism can be tolerated, whatever the cost. In this light, his words appear to be rather self-assertive.

The dispute with the Gileadite elders (11.6-10) centres on the issue of belonging. Jephthah's refusal of the elders' offer that he re-enter the community is a declaration of no-confidence (v. 7). He identifies the elders with his brothers and supplies a personal motive for the expulsion, namely, hatred.¹⁴⁵ The logic of the concluding rhetorical question is that someone who has been excluded cannot suddenly be included again. The MT and the LXX offer divergent options about whether or not the elders agree with

143. The idiom occurs only here.

144. The motif of the occupation of the fords of Jordan occurs three times in Judges (3.28-30; 7.24-25; 12.4-6), a fact that Jobling (1995: 91-116) has made the subject of a structuralist analysis.

145. The identification is achieved through the repetition of the verb of expulsion, גָּרַשׁ, in the second plural form.

Jephthah (v. 8).¹⁴⁶ LXX's denial of this, 'not so' (Οὐχ οὕτως), appears more logical in context, since it could be seen as an argument for Jephthah to accept the offer. Yet, MT's seemingly paradoxical answer, 'therefore' (לכן), fits the pattern of the dispute as a whole in that whatever Jephthah says, the elders concede. Jephthah's second line (v. 9) indicates the persistence of mistrust. The deal must be anchored outside the relationship between Jephthah and the elders, namely, with Yhwh.

This dispute can be understood in two completely different ways with regard to Jephthah's character. One alternative is that his leadership is hereby reduced to that of a puppet, who even at the moment of humiliation features as the object of other people's action and whose only precondition is neglected. Another interpretation would be that Jephthah proves to be a skilful and autonomous negotiator, who manages to change the offer from becoming the commander of the army (קצין) to that of the leader of the people (ראש) and who makes his counterpart confirm the deal by a vow.¹⁴⁷ Again, two options are possible, neither of which is clearly preferable to the other.

In the confrontation between Jephthah and his daughter (11.35-38) yet another variation on the theme of vilification and idealization is given. Unique to this passage is the occurrence of body language, which is both enhanced and contrasted in the verbal speech that follows. Jephthah's first response (v. 35) can be divided into five segments. First, a cry of alarm is addressed to his daughter. Secondly, Jephthah describes his reaction in physical terms ('you really bring me to my knees').¹⁴⁸ A significant parallel is Judg. 5.27, where the verb is used (albeit in the *qal* form) to describe the likewise unexpected collapse of another military leader, Sisera, by the hand of a woman, Yael. Thirdly, Jephthah utters words that supposedly express very grave social consequences of the confrontation ('you have become my disaster'), which amounts to a symbolic fall.¹⁴⁹ Fourthly, Jephthah speaks of his

146. Since the object of this study is not to establish the oldest text, there is no reason for me to choose one option rather than the other. MT and LXX represent two different readings, which both indicate grave communication difficulties between Jephthah and the elders.

147. This line of interpretation is followed by e.g. Tribble (1984: 94-95) and Webb (1987: 52).

148. The literal sense of כרע in hiphil is to cause to bow down (Clines; Brown-Driver-Briggs; Koehler and Baumgartner). Its most common usage is to express the subjugation of prisoners (e.g. 2 Sam. 4.19). Only once, i.e. here, is it used in a context of grief. I therefore find explicative translations of the metaphor, such as 'throw into misery' (Clines) and 'to bring disaster' (Koehler and Baumgartner), unnecessary. LXX (B) reads עכר instead of כרע. This version is not preferable to the MT since it makes the second clause tautological, which is also the argument of Burney (1920: 322).

149. For עכר in *qal*, Clines has disturb, trouble, whereas Koehler and Baumgartner suggest entangle, put into disorder, bring disaster, throw into confusion, ruin.

own complicity in the situation ('I have opened my mouth to Yhwh'). This creates a certain tension with the previous two phrases, where the daughter was emphatically constructed as the cause. Fifthly, however, Jephthah disavows responsibility through the pronouncement of powerlessness ('I cannot return it').

Jephthah's lament (v. 35) can be described as a contradictory meditation about agency, whose main effect is to cloud the issue of agency. In the speech, the daughter is transformed from Jephthah's sacrificial victim to the vilified agent of his physical and symbolic descent.¹⁵⁰ For his part, Jephthah is simultaneously described as a victim (object), as the *de facto* cause (primary subject) and as a failing unable subject. Jephthah's final words (v. 38) further manifests this disunion. The imperative 'Go!' (לך) is at the same time a concessive response to the initiative of the daughter, a performative commandment by the leader in charge, and an illustration of his failure actually to alter the situation.

The vow (11.30-31) implies an alteration of roles in yet another relationship, the one between Jephthah and Yhwh. In order to expound the meaning of the vow, I will make a few remarks on its literary form.¹⁵¹ The condition (*protasis*) is straightforward and contains only a single element in the typical emphatic combination of the absolute infinitive with the finite verb. The promise (*apodosis*), however, consists of a unique series of three consecutive *waw*-clauses in the perfect tense. Through this chain of attributes, the sacrificial object is minutely described. Exceptional is also the fact that the subject of the fulfilment of the promise is not specified. The imbalance between the two parts of the vow is what distinguishes it from the other two narrative vows in the Deuteronomist corpus, that of Absalom and that of Hannah.¹⁵² Jephthah's vow has the form of a detailed bargain, which can be read as a challenge to the divine sovereignty, an attempt to dictate Yhwh's future actions. As such, it also indicates a peak of self-assertiveness, in stark contrast to the reverent position before Yhwh formulated in the dispute with the elders (11.9) or in the negotiation with the Ammonite king (11.27).

It was shown in the analysis of the story that the vow is part of a pattern of performative speech, the severity of which escalates throughout the cycle.¹⁵³ In

150. The interpretation that Jephthah here blames the victim is supported for example by Tribble (1984: 102), Fuchs (1989: 39), Bal (1988b: 63), Exum (1992: 52) and Webb (1987: 67).

151. Cartledge (1992: 14-25) makes important distinctions between promises, oaths and different forms of vows. He convincingly proposes a format for the vow, the 'Vow Account' (145). However, he does not substantiate his suggestion that the literary function of the vow in the Jephthah cycle is simply that 'it makes for a wonderful, if heart-wrenching story' (185).

152. See Cartledge 1992: 145-50.

153. See above, 'A Series of Confrontations'.

Judges as a whole, vows are a recurrent motif. In fact, vows involving virgins/daughters frame the book. In the first chapter, Caleb offers his daughter Achsah to the warrior who conquers Kiriath-Sepher (1.12). Although the object of the sacrifice is covert at the time, this is also what Jephthah does—he offers his daughter to the one who gives him victory, to Yhwh. In the final chapter, conversely, the Israelites swear not to give their daughters to the Benjamites (21.1). This is done in revenge for the outrage at Gibeah (19), where a daughter was given to the men of the city and killed through sexual assault. Paradoxically, however, the rest of the chapter concerns how to circumvent the vow. The Israelites had compassion on the Benjamites (21.15), and solved the situation by allowing them to abduct the dancing virgins of Shiloh as wives. Although, technically speaking, the vow is kept, the spirit of the vow is broken. The loyalty of the Israelites is with the male perpetrators, not with the female victim. Neither is Jephthah's primary loyalty to his daughter, but rather to the deity, which explains why he makes no effort to circumvent his vow.

King Saul is the only other example in the Deuteronomistic history of an Israelite leader who unwittingly utters a vow, the fulfilment of which implies the death of his offspring (1 Sam. 14.24). In contrast to Judges, there is no question of blurred agency here. Jephthah proceeds with the sacrifice, although he laments it. Saul is stopped from executing the sacrifice, although he confirms his decision by swearing a new, more specific, vow (1 Sam. 14.45). In Judges, Jephthah protests against the consequences of the vow that he himself swore. In 1 Samuel, the conflict is manifested in the relationship between the king and his people. Although the outcome in the two narratives differs, the main characters are alike in that they do not succeed in changing the course of events. Another similarity is that others supply the theological motivations for the sacrifice as well as for the non-sacrifice, namely, the daughter and the people respectively. Saul thus appears as the mirror image of Jephthah, although less ambiguous in terms of the conflict between speech and action.

Changed by others. With regard to Jephthah's character, the criteria of independence and transformation are connected.¹⁵⁴ Jephthah's first action is to flee in response to his expulsion by his brothers (11.2). He thereby loses his

154. Although many commentators describe Jephthah's character, few deal with the aspect of transformation. Webb (1987: 54, 75) reduces Jephthah to two features, i.e., he is a skilled negotiator, but his self-interest disqualifies him from properly judging the people. Klein (1988: 90) labels him a complex character and attributes to him a wide range of positive qualities, such as strength and humility(!), but only a single negative one, ignorance. O'Connell (1996: 200-201) categorically states that the characterization shifts from positive to negative after the endowment of the Spirit. Amit (1999: 85)

foothold in Gileadite society, which means that his status degenerates. The rehabilitation that follows (11.11) is achieved due to the initiative of the elders, although it can be argued that Jephthah gives proof of independent negotiating skills during the dispute.¹⁵⁵ In fact, his inauguration as the head of the people means that Jephthah's new position greatly exceeds the position he held during his exile. Jephthah the marginalized outlaw becomes not only part of the community again but its elected commander-in-chief. Through the endowment of the Spirit (11.29), Jephthah receives divine power. This signifies a further amelioration of Jephthah's status, since he is thereby organically connected to the divine sphere.

In the core event of the story, the victory over the Ammonites (11.32–33), Jephthah is doubly determined by the actions of others. That is most directly due to the activity of God, who gives him the victory (11.32) and whose Spirit comes upon him (11.29), but in the last instance it is also due to the people, whose prayer of repentance (10.10, 15) is the precondition for Jephthah's appearance. However, the juxtaposition of the descent of the Spirit and the vow creates an ambiguous effect in terms of Jephthah's autonomy.¹⁵⁶ Since there are no explicit causal links, uncertainty remains as to who is responsible for setting up this delicate situation. It appears as if Jephthah both uses God and is used by God in order to win the victory. Interdependence is perhaps the most proper term by which to describe this relationship.

In the narrative Jephthah's initiatives are all connected with speech. The private conversation between Jephthah and God establishes a closer link between the two parties (11.11b), but it has no other apparent effect. The second initiative is the negotiation with the Ammonite king, which does not count as an event in the story. In the narrative, the negotiation stresses the rhetorical skills of Jephthah, serves to give ideological legitimacy to the war with Ammon and connects the Jephthah cycle to the larger narrative of Israel. Finally, Jephthah swears the vow that causes him to lose his freedom of continued action. The uncertainty of whether or not he swears his vow

likewise categorizes him as one of the 'disappointing judges'. Exum (1992: 54–57) describes Jephthah as an excessive, inadequate negotiator. In contrast to these other studies, she argues that the lack of hubris explains why no tragic development occurs.

155. See above, 'The Speaker'.

156. Tribble (1984: 96) claims too much in my view when she states that the account of the Spirit's descent on Jephthah 'clearly establishes divine sanction for the events that follow'. Webb (1987: 63) also simplifies the situation by making the distinction that the victory is 'causally' related to the descent of the Spirit, but only 'incidentally' related to the vow. Exum (1992: 49) is most to the point in her observation that Jephthah swears the vow under the influence of divine Spirit and that 'the vow interferes...with the logical progression of cause and effect'.

under the influence of the Spirit makes it difficult to assess the independence of this speech-act.

Jephthah is twice faced with the threat of dethronement from his elevated position as head of the people. The first threat occurs when he meets his daughter, whom he literally accuses of 'bringing [him] low' (11.35). In this case, Jephthah acts as if debasement were already a fact, by mourning. However, nothing in what follows indicates that his status has actually changed. As stated previously, Jephthah's strategy in his confrontation with his daughter is to retreat verbally from the position of the independent subject.¹⁵⁷ The second challenge to Jephthah's sovereignty is the attack by the Ephraimites (12.1b). This is a threat of ultimate debasement from which there is no verbal retreat. Having begun to avert the threat (v. 4), Jephthah disappears from the text (vv. 5-6).

In conclusion, Jephthah acts most often in response to the initiatives of others. In fact, other characters (the brothers, the elders, Yhwh) bring about the major changes—marginalization and exaltation—in the status of his character. When he acts on his own behalf, through speeches, the effect is negative or unintelligible. Even the successful defence of his newly attained position, provoked by the daughter and the Ephraimites, is clouded by a lack of agency.

The Daughter

The daughter's appearance in the narrative is limited to a single but crucial episode.¹⁵⁸ She relates directly only to her father and also indirectly to her companions. Her character requires a more systematic treatment for two main reasons. To begin with, the scene in which the daughter appears is the most elaborate and thus one of the most emphasized. Moreover, the narrator's comments cluster around the daughter. I suspect that many commentators ignore the significance of the daughter because of their one-sided focus on the basic events of the story, in which, as they correctly observe, she plays a minor part.¹⁵⁹

Stereotype and decree in Israel. The narrator makes four different kinds of comments about the daughter, two before the sacrifice and two afterwards. First, he introduces her by her physical attributes (v. 34). In the Deuteronomistic history, tambourines and dances signal the collective function of women to celebrate the successful return of heroes of war, such as David (1 Sam. 18.6-7). More specifically and ominously, tambourines and dances

157. See above, 'The Speaker'.

158. Gunn (1987: 117) remarks that the daughter 'wrenches the emotional center of the whole story from Jephthah to herself'.

159. That is the case with e.g. Boling (1975) and Soggin (1981).

indicate a relationship to the daughters of Shiloh (Judg. 21.21), who also go out to dance before they are abducted by the Benjamites. As an individual, the daughter thus engages in what can be described as stereotypical female behaviour. Secondly, the narrator defines the daughter in terms of her relationship to her father by a series of synonymous phrases (v. 34): he has ‘only her’, she is the ‘only one’ and ‘he had no one beside her’, ‘neither son nor daughter’. That the daughter is described as the possession of her father is not remarkable in this context.¹⁶⁰ However, it is unusual that the daughter is assigned the position of a son. More precisely, she is constructed as the negative mirror image of Isaac (Gen. 22.1-19).¹⁶¹

In the comment that follows the sacrifice, the physical and the social aspects of the daughter merge. The narrator defines the daughter in terms of her sexuality, that is, as a cultural body (v. 39). The statement ‘she had not known a man’ is a specification of the double references (vv. 37-38) to the daughter’s ‘virginity’ (בתולה), which is a much more multifaceted concept than indicated by the traditional translation.¹⁶² Otherwise, the narrator’s comment would indeed be redundant. According to Walton, the term has to do with the variables of age and marital as well as sexual status, and signifies a ‘girl under the protection and guardianship of her father’.¹⁶³ Bal argues in the same direction that it designates the life-phase of the nubile woman, who is about to be transferred from the power of her father to that of her husband.¹⁶⁴ That this is an exposed position is further demonstrated by the offer of ‘virgin’ daughters to the hostile mobs in Judges 19 and Genesis 19. The narrator thus presents the daughter as a sexually available woman, about to be transferred from the realm of her father.

The narrator’s final comment concerns the commemoration of the daughter’s sacrifice: ‘it/she became a custom/statute’ (v. 39, וַתְּהִי חֻקִּים). Two points of contention require comment. First, the common emendation from the feminine to the neuter form of the verb ‘to be’ is completely uncalled for in

160. Ljung 1989: 34-38.

161. I will not dwell on the relationship between Gen. 22 and Judg. 11, since it has been investigated by a large number of scholars. To mention two examples, Leach (1969: 38-39) finds that Judg. 11.30-40 is the structural inversion of Gen. 22.1-18, and Bal (1988b: 109-13) states that the occurrence of יְחִידָה establishes an inter-textual relation that enhances the opposition.

162. A certain confusion about the term is visible among lexicographers. Koehler and Baumgartner emphasize the sexual aspect, ‘virgin, grown-up girl without any experience with men’. Clines keeps all possibilities open, ‘young woman marriageable (rarely married), sometimes with specific reference to virginity’. Brown-Driver-Briggs’s suggestion is a mixture of the old and the new, ‘one living a part in her father’s house as a virgin’.

163. Walton 1996: 782-83.

164. Bal 1988b: 46-51. Day (1989: 59) also supports that interpretation.

my view, since no readings divergent from the MT motivate it.¹⁶⁵ For the daughter's status as a subject, however, the issue is significant. If the MT is changed, the daughter continues to be the object of other people's action. If the MT is kept, which I accept as correct, it can be stated that the daughter transcends her destiny and reaches literary immortality.

The second controversy is connected to the previous one and concerns the meaning of the noun *תקן*. What is it that the daughter becomes?¹⁶⁶ In a Deuteronomistic context, it is clearly a cultic term.¹⁶⁷ The difficulty in this specific context is the unique combination of the noun *תקן* with the verb *היה*. Tribble and Bal have rightly criticized the common translation of the term as 'custom' (Slotki, Boling, Soggin) as being too bleak.¹⁶⁸ In my view, there are no textual reasons why the meaning 'law, prescription' cannot be applied here.¹⁶⁹ The implicit historical assumption that a woman cannot generate a legal statute depends on an androcentric bias.

In order to understand the fate of the daughter, it is crucial to understand the verb of the ritual activity (v. 40). The meaning of *תנה* in the Hebrew Bible—to recount, to rehearse, to recite—is not a point of contention in modern lexica.¹⁷⁰ When it occurs in the song of Deborah (Judg. 5.11), it unequivocally signifies 'to recount for celebration'. In the context of the Jephthah cycle, however, many translators choose to render the term by the much narrower 'to lament'.¹⁷¹ This translation reduces the commemorative aspect of the verb, an aspect that certainly is valid in this context.¹⁷² The diminution of the verb is in line with the tendency to minimize the role or impact of the daughter, which was demonstrated in the preceding discussion of the expression 'she became a statute'. That the same verb is used for the remembrance of the daughter as well as for the celebration of the victories of Yhwh indicates something about the magnitude of the ritual. Jephthah's daughter is not simply pitied. She is commemorated by an official decree.

165. Tribble (1984: 106) successfully argues that *ותהי* should be kept, for reasons of grammar, content and context.

166. The noun is a derivative of *תקן*, according to Enns (1996: 250-51).

167. The usage of the term often overlaps that of *מצוה*, *משפט*, and *חוק*.

168. Tribble 1984: 106 and Bal 1988b: 66.

169. This is also the view of Clines, Brown-Driver-Briggs, and Koehler and Baumgartner.

170. See e.g. Clines, Brown-Driver-Briggs, and Koehler and Baumgartner.

171. So does the RSV as well as the versions of the LXX and the Vulgate. Burney (1920: 325) and Soggin (1981: 214) both suggest 'to commemorate'.

172. Bal (1988b: 67) regards the verb *תנה* as an indicator of a female counterculture, not only of this specific story, but in Judges as a whole. I find her suggestion plausible, although the occurrence of *תנה* ought to be regarded more as circumstantial evidence than as proof.

The ambiguous agent. The dialogue between Jephthah and his daughter will now be revisited with regard to its relevance for the daughter. To cloud over the agency is the main effect of Jephthah's speech. His accusation that the daughter 'brings him low' (כרע) indicates a discursive inversion of roles. Moreover, the verb suggests a relationship between the daughter and Yael, the slayer of Sisera (5.27). Far from serving as her father's assassin, however, she theologically legitimizes the sacrifice, arguing that if Yhwh has fulfilled his part of the vow, Jephthah must fulfil his. Her repeated exhortation to Jephthah to proceed with the sacrifice further confuses the location of agency. At the same time, however, she does not confirm Jephthah's accusation of her. Rather, Jephthah and Yhwh are identified as the joint architects of this tragedy, the former by opening his mouth and the latter by exacting his revenge. Thus, the verbal agency of the daughter appears ambiguous in that she, on the one hand, explicitly supports her father in the decision to carry out the sacrifice, while, on the other hand, implicitly guarding herself against his accusation.

With regard to agency, the most important achievement of the daughter is the postponement of the sacrifice. In the petition to her father (v. 37), an imaginary space is created in which the daughter is the subject of a series of verbs (הלך, ירד, בכה). The daughter here demonstrates the same negotiating skills as Achsah (Judg. 1.14-15), who demands springs of water from her father before she is given away (in fulfilment of his vow) to the warrior Othniel. Neither of these women is in the position to change their situation radically. Yet, both succeed in affecting a slight alteration of their condition.¹⁷³

The daughter's appearance as negotiator/speaker also reveals similarities with Jephthah. First, their speech-acts appear more emphasized in the narrative than their actual deeds, particularly when Jephthah theologically legitimizes the war against the Ammonites and when the daughter does the same with the sacrifice. Secondly, for both actors, speech-acts are decisive in the development of agency. Jephthah's vow is pivotal to the issue of the character's independence, as well as to the narrative as a whole.¹⁷⁴ The daughter's request for a respite is a presupposition for her continued, although short, appearance in the narrative, but also for the development of the posthumous rite, through which she is made immortal.

173. Danna Fewell (1992: 71) also finds a resemblance between the two female characters with regard to their agency. However, she goes further than I do, arguing that the daughter knew of the vow and thus deliberately went out first to meet Jephthah. Although an intriguing inference, the textual evidence is hardly clear-cut in favour of it.

174. See above, 'Changed by Others'.

A transformed object. The acts of Jephthah's daughter are few. Her first appearance is presented as a literal fulfilment of the conditions of the vow. She goes out to meet the victor (v. 34). Her final deed, to return, is also in agreement with the words of her father (v. 39). The daughter's participation in the narrative is thus framed by movements away from and back to her father. In the meantime, she goes and mourns with her companions. This can be described as her only independent act in two ways. First, the initiative originates with her. Secondly, this activity is uniquely focused on the daughter, on her virginity and not on her father. Nevertheless, the independence of this act must be described as limited, since it can be carried out only with the permission of the father.¹⁷⁵ Thus, Jephthah determines every one of his daughter's acts. Her freedom lies solely in the attitude with which she carries out what her father allows her.

The status of Jephthah's daughter undergoes a series of transformations, although her appearance in the cycle is indeed very brief (11.34-40). She is introduced as the vilified object of the gaze of her father (v. 34). Her first act is an individual enactment of typically collective female behaviour. In her speech, she develops into an ambiguous subject, who first appears as the moral and religious support of her father (v. 36), and, secondly, features as the negotiator for her own case (v. 37). Her strongest moment of agency is when she leaves her father in order to mourn her virginity (v. 38). The following return to the father, her final deed, could imply resignation as well as strength (v. 39), although I find the former most likely in the literary context.¹⁷⁶ Towards the end, her status once again becomes that of the object of Jephthah, this time as his sacrificial victim (v. 39). Finally, however, she becomes the object of the commemoration by Israel's daughters.

Although Jephthah's daughter both begins and ends her literary life as an object, her position does not remain unchanged. The development of the daughter's status can be described along two lines. At the beginning, she is occupied with the celebration of her father and defined by the narrator in terms of her importance to her father. At the end, she is celebrated by her female peers and defined by the narrator as the originator of a national decree.

Yhwh

Yhwh appears in all the episodes of the cycle except one, Jephthah's expulsion. The deity relates mainly to the people of Israel, to a lesser degree to Jephthah, and indirectly, to the Ammonites and to the daughter. In my

175. Fuchs (1989: 43) regards the daughter's return as a means to demonstrate 'her own free will' and concludes that she thereby co-operated with her father. In my opinion, 'free will' seems to be saying too much, although a certain co-operation cannot be denied.

176. Since the daughter has no options in the narrative, it is difficult to see that compliance with Jephthah's dictum signals an increase of agency.

analysis of the story, Yhwh functions rather unequivocally as the sender of redemption to the people and as Jephthah's helper to victory. Here, I will investigate in what sense, if at all, the actor Yhwh is developed as a character in the text.

As what kind of a subject does Yhwh feature in the introduction to the cycle? To begin with, emotional outbursts of anger (11.7) and impatience (v. 16) frame the passage. The verb 'to become angry' (חרה) is consistently used when Yhwh faces Israel's unfaithfulness in the Deuteronomist and indicates nothing specific in this context.¹⁷⁷ The idiom 'his spirit was shortened' (ותקצר נפשו) is less frequent. In Judges it is also used to describe Samson's reaction to Delilah's repeated requests (16.16).¹⁷⁸ The term thereby contributes to an anthropomorphic picture of the deity. Secondly, it is worth noting that Yhwh is not the initiator of the action in the introduction. In fact, Yhwh is introduced as the forsaken object of Israel's worship (v. 6), and, in what follows, as the reactive subject to the changes made by the people, whether to apostasy or to repentance (vv. 7, 16).

Yhwh appears in the introduction primarily as a speaker. As such, however, the deity seems 'inefficient', since it is the people who triumph in the verbal dispute. Moreover, comparisons to other divine speeches in Judges indicate that the speech in the introduction is stereotypical.¹⁷⁹ The speeches are all structured along the same pattern—a reminder of God's redemptive acts in the past is followed by an account of Israel's sin and concluded by a statement of Yhwh's unwillingness once again to redeem the people. The speeches also include detailed instructions, for example about warfare and troop movement.¹⁸⁰ By contrast, nothing in the speech of the introduction ties it specifically to the situation of the Jephthah cycle. Rather, the enumeration of no less than seven past foes (10.11-12), from which Yhwh has saved the people, amounts to a literary three-way forecast.

Throughout the rest of the cycle, Yhwh remains mute. The deity does not respond to Jephthah's double addresses (11.11, 30-31). For the most part, Yhwh appears at another narrative level than the other actors. This is evident when Yhwh is invoked as judge and as witness to vows (10.27; 11.9) or on the numerous occasions when Yhwh is spoken of in the third person (11.21, 23-24, 35-36; 12.3). Apart from being silent, Yhwh performs two crucial actions in chs. 11–12. The first is when the Spirit of Yhwh comes upon Jephthah (11.29) in order to empower him. The second is when Yhwh gives the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands (11.32). In both cases, the God of Israel features as the ultimate power behind the victory.

177. Creach 1997: 267.

178. Webb 1987: 46-48.

179. See e.g. Judg. 2.1-2; 2.20-21; 6.8-10. The first of these refers to an angel of Yhwh.

180. See Judg. 1.2; 6.18, 20, 23; 20.18, 28.

Yhwh's character can be viewed as a series of contrasts, formed by the two story-lines (10.6-18 and 11.1-12.7).¹⁸¹ The inefficient speaker of the former becomes the silent achiever of the latter. The initially anthropomorphic and close-at-hand figure of the former becomes the distant guarantor of law and justice of the latter. The actor called Yhwh thus harbours a number of disparate elements. Yet no process of transformation of the actor is visible. My conclusion is that Yhwh's speech and behaviour are too stereotypical to suggest that this actor has developed into a character.

Conclusions on Judges 10.6-12.7

There are in my view four major areas of ambiguity in the Jephthah cycle. The first of these has to do with coherence. On the one hand, all events can be fitted together into a unified story.¹⁸² On the other hand, the final events are rather loosely connected to the others and the story can in fact be broken down into two story-lines, although not completely separate. Furthermore, although the victory over the Ammonites appears as the logically central event of the story, to which all other events are related, the analysis of order and rhythm indicated that the return to Mizpah and the ensuing sacrifice is the most emphasized episode of the narrative. Thus, the story's internal unity and the location of its climax are not self-evident.

A second ambiguity concerns the function of the actors. Which of the four actors carries the responsibility for the course of the action? It is the people of Israel/Gilead who demand a leader and therefore negotiate an agreement with Jephthah. Jephthah in his turn swears a vow to Yhwh to ensure/buy divine assistance. Yhwh, however, lets the Spirit descend on Jephthah before he utters his vow, and Yhwh acts without protest in accordance to the vow. Moreover, the consequences of God's initial return to the people are not specified. Finally, the daughter's exhortation to her father to proceed makes what is unconditional appear as a matter of choice, thus transforming necessity into virtue.

The narrator's stance toward the narrated events amounts to a third ambiguity. In contrast to what happens elsewhere in the book of Judges, the narrator neither praises nor reprimands judge Jephthah in the obituary that follows. Instead, the narrator's comments concentrate on the daughter's sexuality. Furthermore, focalization remains external throughout the narra-

181. I thus question Webb's (1987: 76) statement that Yhwh's as well as Jephthah's characters are presented 'with consistency'.

182. The unity of the narrative is also supported by the thematic reading above in 'A Series of Confrontations', which showed that the motif of lethal speech accelerates in intensity throughout the story. Moreover, the analysis in 'Frequency' showed that *iterative narrating* frames the narrative.

tive, although momentarily coloured by Jephthah. Without clear cues from the narrator, it becomes difficult to assess the narrative as a whole. Thus, it is left to the reader to decide whether the narrative should count as a comedy or a tragedy, whether it leads to success or to failure for Jephthah, for the daughter and for the people.

Characterization, which might serve as an indirect indication of the narrator's assessment, features as a fourth area of ambiguity. The name Jephthah harbours contradictions *in legio*. He appears as a war hero and as an illegitimate child, as an exiled outcast and as the head of a tribe, as leader and yet dependent on others, as an eloquent but inefficient negotiator, unable to recognize the impact of his own words. The anonymous daughter appears both as a sacrificial object and as a discursive subject. She is stereotypically defined as a sexual being, yet posthumously commemorated by official decree. Although confined (and killed) by patriarchy, she establishes a space for a community of women. Yhwh, finally, becomes no more than a rough cliché, who seems split between an anthropomorphic speaker and a mute guarantor of order, between the forsaken object and the ultimate power.

These ambiguities can be summarized by four questions. In the analyses of the extra-biblical material, I will consider if or how these are resolved.

1. Where does the centre of the story lie?
2. Who is the driving force in the story?
3. What is the narrator's explicit ideological stance towards the narrated events?
4. What does the characterization of the main actors indicate about the narrator's implicit assessment of the narrated events?

2

EARLY JEWISH TRADITION

Two early variations of the Jephthah narrative, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 39–40 and *Jewish Antiquities* 5.255–70, offer important insights into the religious interpretation of this text.¹ Since they resemble the biblical narrative in both scope and form, the alterations made appear all the more clearly. Whereas the anonymous *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (LAB) had largely been forgotten until the end of the nineteenth century,² Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* (*Ant.*) was widespread and has exerted an immense influence on Christian tradition as well as on modern literature.

Introduction to Liber antiquitatum biblicarum

LAB is a rewrite of the biblical narrative.³ Yet it is neither a paraphrase nor a commentary.⁴ It handles the biblical text more freely than the targums and, unlike the midrashim, it does not engage in immediate exposition of the biblical text.⁵ I thus find Charles Perrot's description of LAB as an intermediary form between 'texte continué' and 'texte expliqué' appropriate.⁶ No agreement has been reached among scholars regarding the work's genre.⁷

1. There are other texts of a similar genre from this period, such as *Jubilees* and *Genesis Apocryphon*, but none of these includes the Jephthah narrative.

2. Pierre Abélard's *Placatus virginum Israel super filia Jeptae Galadiae* is the only major treatment of the narrative still available. See von den Steinen 1967.

3. Vermes (1961: 67) and later Harrington (1992: 344) call it a 'rewritten Bible'. Alexander (1988: 116–17) further delineates the criteria for such a literary genre on the basis of a case study of *Jubilees*, *Genesis Apocryphon*, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and *Jewish Antiquities*.

4. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 25.

5. Harrington 1992: 344.

6. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 24–28. The LAB makes an independent contribution to the account of Israel's sacred history. At the same time, it explicitly presupposes the biblical narrative and does not purport to have the status of an independent work as such.

7. Perrot and Bogaert (1976: 27) make two suggestions, the somewhat vague label

Since Leopold Cohn, many have recognized the parallels in form between the *LAB* and the book of Chronicles.⁸ These are seen most clearly in the central role of genealogies and the great liturgical interest shown in prayers, hymns and psalms.⁹ Since Chronicles begins where the *LAB* ends, it has even been proposed that *LAB* is an anterior supplement to Chronicles.¹⁰ That hypothesis cannot be sustained, mainly because of differences in scope and the use of apocalyptic and legendary material in the two texts.¹¹ Nevertheless, in terms of genre, the book of Chronicles appears to be the closest cousin to the *LAB* that can be found in the biblical canon.¹²

The narrative of Israel's history found in the *LAB* begins with Adam and ends with the death of Saul.¹³ It contains material from all the biblical books from Genesis to 2 Samuel¹⁴ and attains new emphasis through expansion or deletion of certain parts. With regard to the content, the most remarkable change is perhaps the extensive treatment of the period of the judges.¹⁵ In quantitative terms, that constitutes approximately one third of the *LAB*. Only a single part of Judges, the introductory historical summary in 1.1–3.6, is completely omitted in *LAB*. The most elaborated narratives about individuals in *LAB* are those of Cenaz (25–28) and Deborah (30–33).¹⁶ They appear as paradigmatic judges and, in the work as a whole, only Moses can

'midrashim populaire', as opposed to 'midrashim exegetique', and the metaphorical 'haggadah historique'.

8. Cohn 1898: 315.

9. L.H. Feldman 1971: xxxii, and Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 40.

10. The hypothesis was presented by Spiro (1951) but has not been widely accepted. Both L.H. Feldman (1971: xxxii) and Perrot and Bogaert (1976: 24) refute it.

11. As against Spiro's hypothesis, L.H. Feldman (1971: xxxii) argues correctly that *LAB* is a selective account of a large portion of the history of Israel, whereas Chronicles is a concentrated report on merely two figures. Moreover, *LAB* contains much more apocalyptic and legendary material than Chronicles. However, I disagree with his conclusion that *LAB* has more parallels to Josephus's *Antiquities* and the targums in terms of genre.

12. Among extra-biblical texts, the *LAB* resembles *Jubilees*, *Genesis Apocryphon* and Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* most closely because of its inventive reconstruction of the biblical narrative. With regard to apocalyptic language, it has most in common with 4 *Ezra* and 2 *Baruch* (Harrington 1992: 345).

13. The ending of *LAB* is somewhat abrupt. It has been argued by James (1917: 63) that the book is incomplete. With L.H. Feldman (1971: lxxvii) and Perrot and Bogaert (1976: 21–22), I find such a conclusion unnecessary.

14. The biblical material is treated in the following sections of the *LAB*: Genesis (1.1–8.14), Exodus (9.1–13.2), Leviticus (13.3–10), Numbers (14.1–18.14), Deuteronomy (19.1–15), Joshua (20.1–24.6), Judges (25.1–48.5), 1 and 2 Samuel (49.1–65.5), according to Harrington (1992: 344).

15. James 1917: 73 and Nickelsburg 1980: 49.

16. Cenaz in *LAB* corresponds to Othniel, a marginal figure in the biblical text.

rival their status.¹⁷ According to G.W.E. Nickelsburg, the concentration on Judges corresponds to two general features in the *LAB*: first, the usage of the Deuteronomistic formula of apostasy, punishment, repentance and redemption, and secondly, the attention paid to Israel's leaders.¹⁸

It has proved difficult to establish any specific purpose for or theological bias in the *LAB*.¹⁹ *LAB* thus appears as a rather disparate work in terms of its theology or ideology. Among its many themes, however, the following can be mentioned as distinctive and recurrent: the Temple and the sacrificial laws, the Covenant, the Decalogue, the divine providence, eschatology and angelology, the Messiah and the Spirit.²⁰ Several of these themes are developed in the Jephthah account.²¹ Most significantly, the general interest in sacrificial laws increases the significance of Seila's sacrifice in the work as a whole.²² With regard to the use of biblical material, it can be ascertained that *LAB* does not simply recount these narratives, but aims to specify, rectify and save from oblivion certain parts of the biblical tradition.²³ Unfortunately it is not possible to specify the purpose of this work any further than Cohn has already done in suggesting that it serves 'to interest and edify the reader, and to strengthen his belief in God's providence and in the high mission of Israel'.²⁴

Several scholars notice the treatment of female characters in the *LAB*. Perrot refers anachronistically to the 'féminisme' of the *LAB* as one of its

17. Nickelsburg (1980: 50) finds that Cenaz is second to Moses in importance but neglects the role of Deborah. The narrator's high esteem of her is discussed below.

18. Nickelsburg 1980: 50.

19. The list of suggestions includes that it might be a polemic (anti-Samaritan, anti-Tobiad, anti-Mithraic, anti-intermarriage) or an apologetic work, that it might be connected to a specific community (the Essenes) or to broader religious currents (mysticism, Gnosticism). The problem is that only minor fragments of the book support these hypotheses (L.H. Feldman 1971: xxxiii-xlvii). In my view the least improbable proposition is the one made by Steck (1967: 173-76) that *LAB* expresses a Deuteronomistic conception of Israel's history, seen in the use of the same narrative formula.

20. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 39-65.

21. The Covenant theme appears in the negotiation with the Ammonites (39.8-9) and the idea of divine providence occurs in Israel's speech to Jephthah (39.3). Among the eschatological themes are the consciousness of sin (39.6) and the idea that the deaths of the righteous (40.4) are precious to God. The role of the Spirit is crucial to the Jephthah narrative (39.8) and the stress on God's willingness to redeem the people, despite the offence of the human agent Jephthah, could be interpreted as an expression of the *LAB*'s specific form of messianism. Common elements in *LAB* that are not found in chs. 39-40 are references to angels or to the Decalogue.

22. The many parallels to the sacrifice of Isaac (18.3; 32.1-4) also contribute to making Seila's sacrifice a central episode in the *LAB*.

23. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 34.

24. Cohn 1898: 322.

themes.²⁵ Daniel Harrington suggests that notions such as ‘woman of God’ (33.1) and ‘the bosom of her mothers’ (40.4) may have historical significance, but makes no specifications as to how.²⁶ Cheryl Anne Brown sees a generally more favourable attitude towards women in the *LAB* than in the biblical text, demonstrated for example by the improvement of the roles of female characters, the use of female imagery or the inclusion of women in genealogies.²⁷ Although it is correct that the *LAB* enlarges the roles of women in the narrative, I do not find its interest in women a theological ‘theme’ of the same category as eschatology or angelology.²⁸ Moreover, the quantitative expansion of women’s roles does not necessarily imply an unequivocally positive bias towards women. This can be exemplified by the transformation of Micah’s mother from a minor, although apostate, character in Judges 17, into a full-scale villain in the *LAB* (44–47), which hardly amounts to an improvement.²⁹ Other examples of a less favourable view of women in the *LAB* are found in the account of the crisis at Nob (45),³⁰ where the rape of the concubine is justified by her single ‘transgression’ with an Amalekite, and in the retrospective blaming of Eve for the fall and the consequent mortality of humanity.³¹

The historical context of the *LAB* is the Palestinian synagogue during the first century of the Common Era.³² The work was in all probability originally written in Hebrew, and then translated into Greek and finally into Latin, which explains the presence of Semitisms and Greek words in the text.³³ Concerning authorship, one can reasonably assume that the *LAB* was defi-

25. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 52–53. In the same context, he suggests that the interest in women’s lives may be explained by the status of the female listeners in the synagogue.

26. Harrington 1985: 300.

27. Brown 1992: 17.

28. To categorize the material in such a way presumes that the account of the male characters is the norm and the inclusion of e.g. angels or females constitute a thematic deviation from that norm.

29. Jacobson (1996: 251) gives this and further examples. Although I agree with him that Brown’s assessment of *LAB*’s feminism is too ‘generous’, his own is probably the opposite. When he states that ‘most of the positive material about women in the *LAB* essentially builds on biblical sources and thus does not necessarily tell us much about *LAB* himself (*sic*)’, I find that he generally reduces the significance of the changes made by the *LAB*. More specifically, he does not do justice to the changes made with regard to Jephthah’s daughter Seila.

30. This passage in the *LAB* corresponds to the ‘outrage in Gibeah’ in Judg. 19.

31. In the context of the inauguration of the religious festivals in the desert, God makes the following observation: ‘But that man transgressed my ways and was persuaded by his wife; and she was deceived by the serpent. And then death was ordained for the generations of men’ (13.8).

32. Harrington 1985: 300.

33. Cohn (1898: 327–32) first formulated the hypothesis.

nately not written by Philo.³⁴ With regard to its date, the main issue revolves around the question whether this work was completed before or after the fall of the Second Temple (70 CE).³⁵

The historical significance of the *LAB* lies above all in providing an example of Jewish ideas and beliefs in the late Second Temple period.³⁶ As a contemporary to many New Testament writings, it also is important for the history of early Christianity.³⁷ I use the eclectic edition of the Latin text by Harrington, translated into French by Jacques Cazeaux, published in *Sources chrétiennes*, 1976. When not otherwise stated, the English translation cited is Harrington's (in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, *OTP*, 1985), which is based on the same edition (*Source chrétiennes*, *SC*).³⁸

The Story of LAB 39–40

The story of *LAB* is almost as long as that of the Hebrew Bible, but more straightforward. The daughter is named Seila and the Ammonite king Getal, but no new actors are added.³⁹ Instead, two collective actors are eliminated (the Gileadite elders and the Ephraimites). The story can be summarized by the following list of narrative propositions:

34. The following three arguments are given by Harrington (1985: 300): (1) *LAB*'s author does not allegorize the biblical text, as Philo did; (2) Philo wrote in Greek, whereas *LAB*'s author wrote in Hebrew; (3) *LAB* contradicts Philo on a number of points, e.g., the number of years from Adam to the Flood.

35. Cohn (1898: 325–27) and James (1917: 29–33) argue for a post Second Temple date mainly on the basis of the possible reference to the fall of the Temple in *LAB* 19.7. Furthermore they both argue that it cannot be dated long after the fall of the Temple due to the fact that it was translated into Latin and adopted by the Christian Church. Another argument in favour of a post 70 CE date is the existence of literary parallels with *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* (Harrington 1985: 299). Perrot and Bogaert (1976: 66–74) propose an earlier date mainly because the destruction of the Temple is not mentioned.

36. James (1917: 7) describes it as a 'genuine and unadulterated book of the first century'. L.H. Feldman (1971: ix), among others, suggests that it is one of the most significant links between early haggadah and rabbinic midrashim.

37. Harrington 1985: 302. Yet, the *LAB* only received little attention until Cohn (1898) revived modern scholarly interest.

38. Jacobson's new translation (1996) is not another translation of the Latin text but an attempt to reconstruct the Hebrew original of the *LAB*. Although his translation differs from Harrington's in a large number of cases, he does not establish a new edition of the Latin text. For matters of consistency, then, I stick both to Harrington's edition (*SC*) and translation (*OTP*).

39. The wise men of Israel feature in one event (no. 13), but as objects (of Seila's and God's speech and action) and not as actors.

1. The Ammonites attack Israel (39.1).
2. The brothers expel Jephthah (39.2).
3. Israel and Jephthah negotiate about the leadership of the people (39.3-5).
4. Jephthah summons Israel to prayer (39.6).
5. Israel prays to God for redemption (39.7).
6. God strengthens Jephthah (39.8).
7. Jephthah swears a vow to God (39.10).
8. God decides the outcome of Jephthah's vow (39.11).
9. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites (40.1).
10. Seila meets Jephthah (40.1).
11. Seila exhorts Jephthah to fulfil his vow (40.3).
12. Seila negotiates with Jephthah for a respite (40.3).
13. Seila renders the wise men of Israel speechless (40.4).
14. Seila departs to Mt Stelac to lament (40.4).
15. Seila returns to Jephthah (40.8).
16. Jephthah sacrifices Seila (40.8).
17. Israel establishes a yearly mourning ritual in memory of Seila (40.8).

Three different types of alterations increase the homogeneity of the story. To begin with, reductions are made at the beginning and at the end. Only a fragment (no. 5) of the detailed controversy between God and Israel is retained (although moved), and the loosely connected episode about the Ephraimites has been discarded altogether. Secondly, and partly as a consequence of the first change, the story cannot be divided into different series of events, each of which feature their own actors. Thus, there is in the LAB no oscillation between Israel and Gilead. Jephthah appears in all but the first and the last events, and the story is framed by events that affect Israel as a collective. Thirdly, four events have been added, three of which are speech-acts. Jephthah summons Israel to prayer (no. 4), God designates the daughter as the object of Jephthah's vow (no. 8) and Seila reduces the wise men to silence (no. 12). Finally the mourning ritual (no. 16) is transformed from a meta-comment by the narrator into a proper event that concludes the story.

The above-mentioned changes call for a few remarks on the logical relationships between the story's events. First, and despite the abbreviated introduction, the LAB maintains the Deuteronomistic paradigm of Judges. The Ammonite attack (no. 1) is precipitated by the apostasy of Jair (38.1-4),⁴⁰ and the prayer of Israel (no. 5) immediately results in God's strengthening of judge Jephthah (no. 6) and, eventually, God leads Jephthah to victory

40. The episode about Jephthah is introduced by the words 'And after these events', which refer to the preceding episode about Jair.

(no. 9). Secondly, with regard to the goal of the story, the ambiguity of the vow is dissolved. Through the intervention of God (no. 8) it becomes clear that the vow complicates or obstructs the achievement of victory, whereas in the biblical story the vow appears as a means of facilitation. Thus, a fundamental difference between the two stories lies in the fact that, in the latter, Jephthah wins the war despite his vow and not in any way because of it.

The homogeneity of the story affects the general pattern of the relationship between the actors. In the biblical account, the web of relationships could be described as three circles. Jephthah is at the centre of the largest circle and he relates separately to five different actors, between whom no 'horizontal' interaction occurs. Two minor circles, with God and Israel in one and the daughter and her virgin companions in the other, appear at the periphery of the Jephthah circle and both include actors who are unrelated to Jephthah (i.e., Israel and the daughter's companions respectively).⁴¹ By contrast, the web of relationships in *LAB* can be described as a unified circle, in which each actor interacts individually with all the others.⁴² In Greimas's terms, this means that, compared to the biblical story, it is even easier in *LAB* to consider different actors as the subject of this story.

Relationships between the actors are different from those in the biblical story. To begin with, it seems that Israel has a stronger position vis-à-vis God, since the nation's guilt is less emphatically spelled out,⁴³ and since the notice of God's repentance from wrath suggests some kind of divine responsibility for the crisis. The relationship between Israel and Jephthah is marked by reciprocity. On the one hand, Israel clearly dominates the negotiations. On the other, Jephthah exhorts the people to turn to Yhwh in prayer. A new element of confrontation is introduced into the relationship between God and Jephthah. The conflict is unilateral and effectively dissolves any ambiguity about the location of the initiative. According to the *LAB*, Jephthah is in no position to prescribe God what to do. Rather, God actively punishes Jephthah for his inappropriate words.

Seila's set of relationships is greatly expanded. She is no longer confined to interaction with Jephthah and her virgin companions, but her importance

41. This illustrates the tensions within the biblical story, which can be described both as a whole and as separate story-lines. See Chapter 1, 'The Story of Judges 10.6–12.7'.

42. It can be debated whether the virgin companions should be counted as a separate actor or as part of Israel. The expressions 'the virgins of Israel' and 'the children of Israel' appear consecutively (40.8) and, probably, synonymously. The only clear exception to this pattern is the Ammonite king Getal, who relates to Jephthah only by messengers.

43. In the brief introduction, guilt on the part of Israel can be inferred from the context, i.e., from Jair's apostasy in ch. 38. Israel's sin is mentioned once in the story, not in the form of a confession to God, but as an argument in the negotiation with Jephthah (39.4).

grows through verbal contacts with the wise men of Israel and through the high esteem in which she is held by God. Finally, it can be noted that God, for the most part, relates indirectly to the other actors, which draws attention to the distance between deity and humanity.⁴⁴ Thus, in general terms, Seila and Israel both gain status in this web of relationships, whereas Jephthah is weakened.

The Time of LAB 39–40

In terms of order, the balance between analepsis and prolepsis is more even-handed in the narrative of *LAB* than in the biblical narrative.⁴⁵ No rival accounts of the same events appear, which indicates that historiography is not an issue. The main function of analepsis is instead to create a referential context, by situating specific elements of this narrative within the larger context of the history of Israel.⁴⁶ This is evident in the two negotiation scenes (39.3-4, 8-9) as well as in Seila's interpretation of her own fate in the light of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac (40.2). With regard to prolepsis, the *LAB* features new cases that all serve to lessen the ambiguity produced by the vow. Three different actors explicitly announce Seila's death before it takes place: God (39.11), Jephthah (40.1), and Seila herself (40.5). Thus, the order of narrating underscores the significance of the daughter's fate while at the same time erasing the element of suspense with regard to the resolution of the narrative.

The rhythm of the narrative of the *LAB* resembles that of the biblical text in that the main movement lies in the alternation between summaries and scenes. The summaries are even shorter in the *LAB* than in the book of Judges, so that emphasis falls even more heavily on the scenes. Two scenes have been greatly shortened: the introduction (39.1) and the negotiations with the Ammonites (39.8-9), which supports my claim above that historiography is no longer an issue. A number of other scenes have been expanded. Prayers by both parties are added to the negotiations between Jephthah and Israel (39.2-7), and the return to Mizpah (40.1-4) is prolonged by the speech of Seila. Responsive reflections by God follow Jephthah's vow (39.11) and precede the mourning at Mt Stelac (40.4). Seila's lament (40.5-7) is the largest addition, and thus the longest individ-

44. There are no dialogues between God and any human actors in the *LAB*. The only direct interaction is when God strengthens Jephthah's spirit (no. 4). Baker (1989: 199) sees the creation of distance between the actors as a general change in Pseudo-Philo in relation to the biblical text.

45. The occurrences of analepsis are fewer and shorter in *LAB*, e.g. 39.1, 3-4, 8-9; 40.1, 2.

46. The function of conveying background information is evident in the introduction (39.1).

ual speech by any of the actors. It is also the climax of the narrative, distinguished by its lyrical form.⁴⁷ The cluster of descriptive pauses focused on the daughter in the biblical narrative is, however, omitted in the *LAB*.⁴⁸ The combined impact of these changes of narrative rhythm decisively shifts the focus from the war to the fate of Seila.

As in the biblical narrative, the order and rhythm of the *LAB* indicate a shift of emphasis from the war to the sacrifice, although by different means. The *LAB* marks this emphasis through repeated prolepses, whereas in the biblical narrative it appeared as an exception. Furthermore, rather than receiving a cluster of comments by the narrator, Seila herself speaks extensively in the lamentation scene.⁴⁹

The Mood and Voice of LAB 39–40

The mood and voice of *LAB*'s narrative resemble to a high degree those of the biblical one. With regard to distance, the narrative of *LAB* lies even closer to the pole of *mimesis* than the biblical narrative does. Direct speech is rendered to a higher degree and the narrator's presence is less visible. With regard to perspective, the ambiguity of the biblical narrative is removed. Focalization remains external throughout and the viewpoints of the actors are never allowed to colour the narration itself.

In the analysis of the biblical narrative above, I discussed whether or not the narrator (cognitively and emotively) sides with Jephthah in the return-to-Mizpah scene. In the *LAB*, Jephthah's reaction in that scene is presented through an unquestionably detached and outward-looking view. Three observations support this claim. To begin with, no correspondence to the biblical particle *hinneh* features at this point of the narrative, which reduces the general emphasis on this scene.⁵⁰ Secondly, the repeated comments about the daughter as Jephthah's social asset do not resurface in the *LAB*. Finally, the biblical narrator's vivid portrayal of how Jephthah tears his clothes is changed in *LAB* to the more general statement that Jephthah 'grew weak' (40.1). This change from a specific into an abstract account of Jephthah's body language reduces the emotional intensity of the situation and indicates that the narrator takes a more distant position regarding Jephthah. Thus, the primacy of Jephthah's view in the biblical account is dismantled in the *LAB*.

47. The return-to-Mizpah scene seems somewhat de-emphasized through the repeated cases of prolepsis directed towards it, especially through the comments by the deity. Not until the scene of Seila's lament is tension finally released.

48. The only pause in the narrative concerns Jephthah (39.2).

49. The concept of frequency is not relevant to *LAB*. There are no cases of repeating or iterative narrative in the narrative.

50. The phrase behold (*ecce nunc*) is recurrent in other parts of *LAB*, e.g. 39.1, 40.4.

What kind of narrator features in the *LAB*? As in the biblical text, the narrator speaks from a position above the story-world (extradiegetic) and does not participate in its action (heterodiegetic). However, this narrator is less obvious than the biblical one. For one thing, the generally short temporal summaries affect the causal links between the events in several cases. The unwillingness of the Ammonite king to listen is, for example, reported as the direct cause of the war (39.10). Secondly, the narrator becomes visible through the singular identification with one of the actors, namely, Jephthah, as a 'man of vigour' (39.2). Thirdly, the closest the narrator comes to explicit commentary is the ideologically coloured statement that 'God repented of his wrath' (39.8).⁵¹ Moreover, the *LAB* contains no example of embedded speech and, thus, no other types of narrator.

The function of the *LAB*'s narrator in this section of the text is restricted to the most obvious one, that is, to narrate the story.⁵² This narrator mainly serves to distribute speech between the actors and could thus be compared to a dramatic toastmaster. The observations made above on how the narrator is perceived are too few and too brief to suggest a specific ideological bias for the *LAB*. It is only in comparison with the biblical text that minor tendencies can be noted in this regard: the ambiguity of Jephthah's background is levelled out and the daughter's sexuality as well as the people's guilt is not emphasized. Instead, ideologically explicit statements feature in the speeches of the actors, primarily in those of God and of Seila. The repeated account of interior monologue on the part of God (39.11; 40.4) could be interpreted as an implicit indication of the narrator's presence. Moreover, it obviously demonstrates the narratological truism that God, as a character, is subordinated to the control of the narrator.

Characterization in LAB 39–40

As in the analysis of the biblical narrative, three actors will be discussed: Jephthah, the daughter, and God.

Jephthah

Jephthah is a main character in the *LAB*, although his role is neither qualitatively nor quantitatively as dominating here as it is in the biblical text.

51. Jacobson (1996: 953) thinks that *OTP*'s translation is peculiar. He suspects that the underlying Hebrew verb is שׁוּב and therefore suggests, 'God turned from his wrath' instead. However, no manuscripts support such a solution.

52. There are examples where the narrator of the *LAB* has a communicative function. Rhetorical questions are directed towards the reader (35.7; 43.4). The five different functions proposed by Genette are discussed in Chapter 1, 'The Voice of Judges 10.6–12.7'.

The discussion of the story above showed that the significance of the relationships between the other actors, such as Seila and Israel or Seila and God, has increased, so that Jephthah is no longer the unique centre of the gallery of actors. As regards distribution, Jephthah is absent from the second half of the text with two exceptions. After his speech to Seila in 40.1, he utters only a single word, 'Go!' (*vade*, 40.4), and in the very last verse of the text (40.9), his achievement in life is summarized. These facts are reflected in the editors' chapter headings: chapter 39 is named after Jephthah and chapter 40 after his daughter.⁵³

The narrator's presentation of Jephthah is devoid of ambiguities. His masculinity is underscored through the description *potens in virtute* (lit. 'mighty in power'), and the biblical references to illegitimate female sexuality are omitted.⁵⁴ The usage of the epithet *potens in virtute* is unique in the *LAB*. In contrast to the biblical text, the *LAB* does not make Jephthah part of any exclusive group of extraordinary males.⁵⁵ Ethnically, Jephthah is introduced as a Gileadite, and neither his father nor his mother is mentioned. His expulsion is not the result of his lineage. Rather, he is cast as a stronger subject, who envies (or possibly is envied by) his brothers when he is cast out.⁵⁶ Finally, the status of the Tobians who gather around him has improved. These men are described as *vagi* ('vagrant'), not *vani* ('worthless'), which indicates that the *LAB* emphasizes the economic rather than the moral

53. This is true of Harrington's edition (SC 1976 and OTP 1985). It deserves mention that the editor does not use Seila's proper name in the heading of 'her' chapter, which indicates that he follows the practice of the Hebrew Bible rather than that of the *LAB*.

54. In the case of Abimelech, the note on his background is kept, although somewhat improved. In the *LAB* he is presented as the son of a concubine (37.1), rather than the son of a harlot, as in the biblical text.

55. Gideon is the only other biblical character to whom the corresponding epithet גבור חיל that features in the *LAB* is attributed. In the *LAB*, however, he is simply referred to as stronger than his brothers (35.1).

56. *LAB* 39.2 is a difficult sentence, which Jacobson (1996: 946) suspects to be corrupted. Yet the manuscripts are unequivocal with regard to the subject and object of the envy. *OTP* chooses to overturn these positions with reference to the biblical text, whereas SC and Dietzfelbinger refrain from such a move. Jacobson supports *OTP*'s solution, although with some reservations as well as different arguments. He proposes that there could be a causal relationship between the envy (of the brothers) and what follows, i.e., Jephthah's being described as *potens in virtute*. Furthermore, he suggests that in this case the *LAB* may have quoted Gen. 37.11 and thus made an association between Jephthah and Joseph. Although possible from a text-critical perspective, this hypothesis contains in my view too many uncertain elements. For my interpretation, the issue is not decisive. Both alternatives (*OTP*/Jacobson and SC/Dietzfelbinger), i.e. whether Jephthah is the subject or object of envy, point towards a more active character in the *LAB* than in the biblical text.

aspect of their deprivation.⁵⁷ In line with this, the verb *commorati* ('spend time with') gives only a neutral and vague indication of their activities.

The final summary of Jephthah's period as a judge (40.9) can be interpreted as an implicit mark by the narrator, since it invites a comparison with the other judges treated in the *LAB*. Only Cenaz and Deborah stand out as excellent judges with regard to three criteria: the time of their rule, the official mourning upon their deaths and the lasting impact of their rule.⁵⁸ The rest of the judges are only described in terms of the first criterion. Jephthah's ten years then prove to be the shortest term except for Abimelech's eighteen months of terror (37.3-4).⁵⁹ Although the significance of number should not be exaggerated, a comparison between these summaries does indicate that *LAB*'s Jephthah, like the biblical Jephthah, belongs to those least esteemed among the minor judges.

Whereas the view of the narrator must be indirectly inferred, the character God gives more explicit value judgments about Jephthah. I consider the deity's polemical response to the vow (39.11) as a rather harsh form of rebuke, through which the deity ensures that it will not be further offended by an inappropriate sacrifice.⁶⁰ This is confirmed in the divine reflection preceding Seila's sacrifice (40.4), which establishes that the daughter literally is 'wiser than her father'.⁶¹ In the literary context of the *LAB*, few men face direct and individual criticism from Israel's God. Jephthah thus belongs to the same category of idol-worshippers as Gideon (36.4), Jair (38.4) and Micah (44.9), who are all criticized in the *LAB*.

Like the biblical Jephthah, the Jephthah of the *LAB* is principally a speaker. In contrast to the biblical text, however, there is no escalation of

57. I contest *OTP*'s emendation, which is explicitly made on the basis of the biblical text. Narratively, the term *vagi* is completely consistent with the tendency of the *LAB* to make Jephthah's background less dubious. In terms of text criticism, both *LXX* and the Vulgate have translations that point in the direction of *vani*. According to the criterion of *lectio difficilior*, the *LAB*'s *vagi* should therefore be kept. Jacobson (1996: 947) concludes his discussion of this issue with the admission that the manuscripts 'might be right', although he finds *OTP*'s emendation 'cogent'.

58. Cenaz ruled for fifty-seven years, was mourned for thirty days and the verdict on his rule was that 'there was fear among his enemies all his days' (27.16; 28.10). Deborah ruled for forty years, was mourned for seventy days, and received the verdict that 'after her death the land had peace for seven years' (32.18; 33.6).

59. Zebul judged for twenty-five years and Elon and Samson for twenty years each. Gideon's rule is not counted in the *LAB*.

60. Jacobson (1996: 959) notes that this criticism of Jephthah basically is the same as the one in Talmud, e.g. in *Ta'anit* 4a.

61. The Latin preposition *pre* appears somewhat awkward in this context. The relationship between the father and the daughter is one of comparison and not, as *OTP* suggests, of contrast.

violent speech-acts in these chapters of the *LAB*. It appears as if words most often trigger more words rather than action.⁶² Besides the monologic vow, Jephthah engages in disputes with Israel, Getal and Seila.

The negotiation between Jephthah and Israel is the longest and most vivid of the dialogues in the text (39.3-7). Israel initiates the talks and backs the offer to rule with an allusion to Est. 4.14: 'For who knows if you have been kept safe to these days or freed from the hands of your brothers in order that you may rule your people in this time?' (39.3).⁶³ The use of this biblical reference suggests that Jephthah's role as leader is predetermined and that he therefore has no choice but to accept. In terms of power, Israel here takes the same paradoxical position over against Jephthah that Mordocai takes over against Esther.⁶⁴ Esther's governor and subject, Mordocai, commands her to interfere with the Persian king, and thus to risk her life on behalf of the Jewish people. Likewise, Jephthah's former antagonists and future subjects command him to risk his life through war with the Ammonite king for the sake of Gilead. Jephthah's first response is a rather poetical attempt to decline the offer and to blame his counterpart (39.4a). Israel does not heed this objection but argues instead that Jephthah ought to forgive them since God has done so.⁶⁵ This call to be godlike is, however, accompanied by the emphatically human address 'mortal man' (39.4b).⁶⁶ Jephthah accepts this interpellation in his second response,⁶⁷ but tries to turn the logic of Israel's reasoning against them:

God can not be mindful of our sins, for he has the time and place where he as God may restrain himself out of his long-suffering; but I, a mortal man and made from the ground into which I will return, where will I expel my wrath and the injury that you have done me? (39.5a)⁶⁸

62. The negotiation between Jephthah and Israel results in long prayers by both parties (39.6-7) and the dialogue between Jephthah and Seila ultimately leads to Seila's lament (40.5-7).

63. The influence of Esther on this verse was recognized by James (1917: 188). Jacobson (1996: 948) indicates at least *quis scit si* as a direct quote.

64. See Beal's (1997: 69-74) interpretation of the power struggle between Esther and Mordocai.

65. That humans should imitate the ways of God is a common rabbinic principle, which Jacobson (1996: 948) points out.

66. The Latin of the end of 39.4, *iniquitates...*, is strange, according to Jacobson (1996: 948), although this does not affect my interpretation of the dialogue.

67. Butler (1997: 24) uses the concept of interpellation (derived from Althusser) to describe how the subject is constituted by an address.

68. Dietzfelbinger (Pseudo-Philo 1979: 209) remarks that the Latin text is somewhat obscure and that there are no close parallels in Jewish tradition to the thought expressed here.

Jephthah's final question is ignored, and Israel again reverts to religious argumentation. Jephthah is now told to 'imitate the dove', a metaphor for Israel used in pseudepigraphic and rabbinic literature.⁶⁹ Two inter-texts can be mentioned here. In LAB 21.6, Joshua sets the dove's loyalty towards her young as an example for Israel.⁷⁰ The image is gendered in that the 'brooding dove' is described as a model mother, 'who on placing her young in a nest does not leave or forget her place'.⁷¹ In 4 Ezra 5.26, the image is used as an indicator of Israel's favoured status among the nations. These literary parallels imply two things: that the leadership of Israel is a duty and that it would be a serious affront towards God to refuse it. In terms of gender, it should be noted that Jephthah is compelled by Israel to resemble two female figures (Esther and the dove). The idea that the future leader ought to learn from the example of females is consistent with the reflection ascribed to the deity (40.4) and discussed above, that the daughter is wiser than her father.

The result of this dispute is that Jephthah accepts the task set before him. In contrast to the biblical text, however, Jephthah does not alter the terms of the agreement and no oaths are sworn to seal it. Rather, Jephthah bursts into a sermon to mobilize the troops,⁷² in which he emphasizes the unity between himself and the people (39.6) and thereby negates the recent conflict. Thus, Jephthah here displays poor negotiating skills, that is, he fails to assert his own position versus that of his counterpart. Furthermore, in the end he follows the female examples set before him, namely, to be a meek and obedient leader who risks his life for his people.

In the negotiation with Getal, Jephthah displays more active and aggressive features (39.8-9). He is the one to initiate the verbal battle from a distance, and gradually he also intensifies its severity. By comparison to the biblical text, this conflict is turned on its head.⁷³ Jephthah's first line of speech to Getal begins with a series of rather blunt rhetorical questions: 'Why are you troubling our land and taking my cities. Or are you sad that Israel did not take you first...?'⁷⁴ Next comes a threat, which is first stated implicitly and then explicitly: 'And now return to me my cities and my anger will cease from you. If not, know that I will come up to you and return to you past offences and repay your wickedness on your own head.'

69. Perrot and Bogaert 1976: 187.

70. In my view, the usage of this image in LAB 23.7 is more obscure and does not shed light on the current passage.

71. According to Jacobson (1996: 684), *feto* here refers to the act of giving birth.

72. According to Murphy (1993: 163), the fact that Jephthah's first act as a leader is to speak to the people follows a general pattern in the LAB.

73. Jacobson 1996: 954.

74. According to Jacobson (1996: 954), the meaning of the passage *aut contristaris...ut disperderes inhabitantes terram* is obscure and the manuscripts vary significantly.

The final rhetorical question of Jephthah's first line of speech gives emphasis to the firmness of his position: 'Or am I not mindful that you were deceitful to the people of Israel in the wilderness?' Jephthah's second line of speech to Getal is more theologically oriented:

Truly I have learned that God has brought you forward that I may destroy you unless you cease from the iniquity by which you wish to harm Israel. And I will come to you and show myself to you. For they are not gods, as you say they are, who have given you the inheritance that you possess; but because you have been deceived by following after stones, fire will come after you for vengeance (39.9).

First, Jephthah reduces the independence of his adversary by suggesting that Israel's God has predetermined the Ammonite attack, as well as their destruction. Secondly, he threatens Getal that he will display his identity before him. Thirdly, he denies that the enemy's gods are in fact gods and specifies his threat as vengeance by fire.

Jephthah here speaks as the representative of the people of Israel as well as of their God. By contrast to the negotiation between Jephthah and Israel, here godlikeness is not indicated by forgiveness, but by anger. The character Jephthah thereby exhibits a new self-assertiveness, which is even explicitly spelled out in his second line of speech: 'I will show myself to you.'⁷⁵ By comparison to the biblical text, more emphasis is laid on the present than on the future. In addition, the distinction between the peoples is sharpened; in the *LAB*, for example, Jephthah presumes no equality between the two with regard to their religious ethics. Thus, Jephthah's rhetoric in the *LAB* is more concise as well as more varied than in the biblical text. Yet, in terms of diplomatic efficiency, neither version is particularly successful.

Jephthah's confrontation with Seila is his third reported negotiation in this text. It results from their simultaneous and reciprocal movements (his return and her going out), but it is Jephthah who starts the discussion:

Rightly was your name called Seila, that you might be offered in sacrifice. And now who will put my heart in the balance and my soul on the scale? And I will stand by and see which will win out, whether it is the rejoicing that has occurred or the sadness that befalls me. And because I opened my mouth to my Lord in song with vows, I cannot call that back again (40.1b).

This speech can be divided into four parts. First, Jephthah uses the name of Seila as a sign of the inevitability of the sacrifice. No doubt is thus left with regard to the fate of the daughter. Secondly, he raises the issue of what consequences her sacrifice has for him. These specifically concern his mental state, not, as could be expected, the possibility of acquiring future descen-

75. According to Jacobson (1996: 957), neither $\Delta.s$ *manifestabo me tibi* or $\pi.s$ *manifestabo te* makes perfect contextual sense.

dants. Thirdly, he casts himself as spectator in the match between joy and sadness. This means that he takes a decisively passive stance, which apparently involves no element of choice. Fourthly, he explains his powerlessness with regard to the course of events. Since his words took the form of a vow, before God, he cannot annul their effect. These four parts form an *inclusio*, in which the explicitness of the first and last parts frames the indecisiveness of the second and third. Taken together, the speech shows that Jephthah is here a man of resignation, a man who can state the facts of the case but who lacks the capacity to deal with them actively. In relation to the biblical text, it can be noted that the Jephthah of the LAB, although occupied with how the sacrifice will affect him, does not blame his daughter for the situation. He calls her instead by her name. The element of a power struggle between the father and the daughter is thus noticeably less accentuated in this text.

The ensuing speech by Seila contrasts sharply with that of her father (40.2-4). Whereas he stands bewildered, she analyses the situation theologically and proposes how to proceed. Through a reference to the Aqedah, she urges him to resemble Abraham, in other words, to leave his uncertainty and to rise to the occasion. Moreover, she explicitly describes Jephthah as a victim of circumstances, who is 'caught up in the snare of his vow' (40.3). She thus mirrors the picture of Jephthah suggested by his own speech, namely, that of a man of resignation. This view is also confirmed through his succinct final concession—Go!—in response to her request of respite.

The making of the vow is Jephthah's shortest speech. It is triggered by Getal's refusal of diplomacy and provokes, in its turn, immediate punishment by God:

When the sons of Ammon have been delivered into my hands and I have returned, whoever meets me first on the way will be a holocaust to the Lord (39.10).

This speech differs from the biblical vow in a number of ways. To begin with, it is not introduced as a vow: Jephthah merely 'says' it.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the first part, namely, the condition (protasis), has been simplified in that it does not specify any exact location of the sacrificial object. More importantly, the Hebrew conditional particle (*'im*) has been changed into a temporal one (*cum*). Finally, God is not directly addressed by this vow, although the deity's activity as the one who delivers the Ammonites into Jephthah's hands is implied. It can thus be debated whether or not Jephthah's words amount to a vow in the formal technical sense. Yet, whereas the proposed

76. Brown (1992: 96) finds that 'the vow is not couched in formal language'. Although I agree with her that the form of the vow is more casual in the LAB than in the biblical text, I do not see that its formal aspect is completely changed. It still contains a condition as well as a promise.

agreement is not stated in the same straightforward way as in the biblical narrative, Jephthah's words in the *LAB* still serve the function of bargaining. Thus, compared to the biblical text, Jephthah's vow in the *LAB* appears, to a lesser degree, as a sign of self-assertiveness.⁷⁷

In terms of independence, Jephthah mostly speaks and acts in direct response to others.⁷⁸ This tendency was already observed in the biblical text, but here it is more accentuated. Two exceptions will, however, be discussed. On two accounts, the biblical text appears ambiguous with regard to the relationship between Jephthah and God: does Jephthah take this vow under the influence of God or not, and does Jephthah use God to win the war or is he being used by God for that purpose? In the *LAB*, the vow certainly does not have the approval of the deity; it is the enemy that provokes it. In my view, this indicates that Jephthah features solely as God's instrument of redemption from Ammonite suppression.

The other exception concerns the relationship between Jephthah and Israel, which in the *LAB* is one of reciprocity. Israel persuades Jephthah to accept leadership, whereas Jephthah makes the people turn to heaven in prayer. This first act as their leader indicates some initiative on the part of Jephthah. At the same time, it could be argued that Jephthah only does what Israel has requested him to do. In line with Jephthah's pattern of reactive behaviour, the two major transformations of his status (the expulsion and the promotion) are both initiated by others. However, once Jephthah has obtained the position as leader, no one challenges him.⁷⁹ It is difficult to see this character undergoing any obvious development.

Seila

The *LAB* greatly increases the role of Jephthah's daughter in the narrative. She is more active, has more relationships and, above all, she gives the longest speech in the entire text (39–40). In the latter half, Seila in fact replaces her father as the main character.

77. While discussing the vow, Murphy (1993: 165) makes the sweeping remark that 'Jephthah is a character tailor-made for one of Pseudo-Philo's themes—that people can be well-intentioned and foolish'. However, Murphy neither supports his psychological and judgmental generalization with arguments, nor does he discuss the characterization of Jephthah in *LAB* 39–40 as a whole systematically.

78. He goes to Tob due to the expulsion of his brothers. He accepts leadership due to pressure from Israel's leaders. He negotiates with Getal as a result of God's strengthening of his spirit. He arms the people and swears the vow because of the provocative silence of Getal.

79. In the biblical narrative, the Ephraimites challenge Jephthah's status and, according to his own words, so also his daughter. In the *LAB*, God's indignation is aroused, but God lets the punishment fall upon Jephthah's offspring.

The narrator at first presents Seila as part of a collective of celebrating women (40.1).⁸⁰ Only two specific features are mentioned, both crucial to the narrative: she is Jephthah's only daughter and she is the first to come out to meet him. By comparison to the biblical text, the *LAB* is briefer and less concrete. Seila here lacks any physical accompaniments (no tambourines) and the three synonymous descriptions of her relationship to Jephthah are reduced to one. It is consistent with the development of her character as a speaker representing all of Israel that the stress on her physical appearance and her value as an exclusive social asset of her father is diminished.

As in the case of Jephthah, the ending gives some indication of the narrator's judgment (40.8). This time, however, it appears more favourable. Several observations support this view. To begin with, Seila is officially mourned by all of Israel and not exclusively by her companions, which is the case in the biblical text. In the literary context of the *LAB*, this places her in the same category of such exemplary leaders as Cenaz (28.10), Deborah (33.6) and Joshua (24.6), whereas all that is said of judges like Zebul (29.10), Jephthah (40.8) and Samson (43.8) is simply that they are buried. Seila and Joshua are the only ones for whom the people make a 'great lamentation', and the mourning for Seila takes place over a number of days, like that for Cenaz and Deborah. Yet the mourning ritual for her is unique in that it is repeated annually and in that a date for it is fixed. Furthermore, Seila's lament is distinguished both by its length and its lyrical form, and she performs it herself before she dies. Finally, Seila is the only character in the *LAB* whose tomb is named. These features combine to indicate that the narrator casts the daughter as an extraordinary character in the entire *LAB*.

Jephthah offers an explanation for the significance of the daughter's name: 'Rightly was your name called Seila, that you might be offered in sacrifice' (40.1). In line with biblical tradition, Jephthah uses the name to define the character's chief purpose in the narrative.⁸¹ Seila, from the Hebrew verb שָׁאַל ('to ask, inquire'), suggests that the daughter is 'the requested one'.⁸² But who requests her? The narrative etymology here proves somewhat ambiguous. Jephthah's line, as well as the later reference his daughter makes to the binding of Isaac, indicates that God is the one who requests her. This is also confirmed by God's reflection before the vow, 'her death is precious to me' (40.4). Yet, in God's speech, Seila is specifically connected twice to

80. Jacobson (1996: 960) suggests that the change in the *LAB*, making Seila part of a group of women, may be due to influence from Exod. 15.20 or from 1 Sam. 18.6.

81. A similar etymology is used e.g. for Samuel in 1 Sam. 1.20, 27-28 (Jacobson 1996: 961).

82. According to Jacobson (1996: 960) and contrary to Cohn (1898: 300), the underlying Hebrew name is שְׂאוּלָה, rather than שְׂאִילָה.

Jephthah's, or possibly her own, *request* (39.11; 40.4).⁸³ Like her male namesake in 1 Samuel—Saul (שאול)—she can be understood as the answer to a request that is deemed to be sinful.⁸⁴ Seila's name thus identifies her as the one asked for and killed. Uncertainty remains both with regard to the subject of the request and to its appropriateness, with the effect that responsibility for Seila's death is ambiguously shared between Jephthah and God.

God's verdict on Seila is complimentary, to say the least. She is not only described as wiser than her father, which has been discussed above, but also as more perceptive than all the wise men present (40.4). Her status is even further ameliorated if the statement 'her death is precious to me' is read, with OTP and Dietzfelbinger, as a near-quotation of Ps. 116.15. The death of Seila could thus be compared with those of God's *hassidim*.

Seila's development as a character is most closely tied to her capacity of speech, which is demonstrated in her answer to Jephthah (40.2-3) and in her lament (40.5-7). These speeches differ dramatically and will therefore be examined one at a time.

Seila's response to Jephthah can be divided into four sections. The first and third concern her interpretation of the situation and the second and fourth deal with her request:

And who is there who would be sad in death, seeing the people freed? Or do you not remember what happened in the days of our fathers when the father placed the son as a holocaust, and he did not refuse him but gladly gave consent to him, and the one being offered was ready and the one who was offering was rejoicing? And now do not annul everything you have vowed, but carry it out. Yet one request I ask of you before I die, a small demand I seek before I give back my soul: that I may go into the mountains and stay in the hills and walk among the rocks, I and my virgin companions, and I will pour out my tears there and tell of the sadness of my youth. And the trees of the field will weep for me, and the beasts of the field will lament over me. For I am not sad because I am to die nor does it pain me to give back my soul, but because my father was caught up in the snare of his vow; and if I did not offer myself willingly for sacrifice, I fear that my death would not be acceptable or I would lose my life in vain. These things I will tell the mountains, and afterward I will return (40.2-3).

In the first section of her speech, Seila rhetorically answers Jephthah's earlier question about whether rejoicing or sadness will prevail.⁸⁵ She does so

83. With regard to the second passage (40.4), the subject of the request has been contested. Jacobson (1996: 967) argues from the context that it should be rendered 'let her soul be given up in accord with her request'. So does Baker (1989: 203), who finds that the ideological assumptions of the translators leads them to inappropriately reduce the subjectivity of the daughter in their translations. This uncertainty underscores my point further.

84. Long 1997: 1179.

85. Jacobson sees an underlying Grecism in the phrase *quis est qui tristetur moriens*,

by supplying a crucial example from the biblical tradition, the Aqedah, which has already appeared twice in the LAB (18.5; 32.1-4) and which has also been alluded to in the speech by God (39.11).⁸⁶ Through identification with Abraham and Isaac, Jephthah and Seila become theologically significant actors. Moreover, Seila uses the reference as a means to challenge her father. The criticism implicit in the first two questions ('who is there...?' and 'do you not remember...?') is intensified in the final exhortation ('do not annul...but carry it out'). Seila's decisiveness here contrasts with Jephthah's hesitation.

After this generally positive evaluation of the situation by Seila, a shift of temper occurs in the second section of her speech. Seila formulates how she would like to respond to the situation. Before the ultimate separation from this life at the hand of her father, she initiates a limited separation from him, which she describes as a 'small demand'.⁸⁷ The purpose of her request is to create space for grief. Three different verbs of movement are used (*vadam*, *permeem*, *perambulem*), which suggest intense activity on her part.⁸⁸ Apart from crying, she will also, and more importantly, (lit.) 'remember my youth, which sadly goes away'. Seila herself thus sets the example for the yearly ritual to which her death will give rise. By contrast to the biblical text, she does not specifically grieve over her virginity. Moreover, she will not mourn in isolation. Along with her virgin companions, even the trees and the beasts will participate in her lamentation.

In the third section of her speech, Seila elaborates on her understanding of the situation and thereby qualifies what she stated in the first and second parts. She is sad for Jephthah's sake, not for her own. In contrast to the biblical text, it is thus the daughter who overturns the balance of power through her description of Jephthah as a victim. However, the LAB does not suggest that she is the cause of the tragedy, which is the case in the biblical text. In this section of her speech, she also offers a pragmatic argument for her acceptance of the sacrifice: her willingness is necessary for the sacrifice to please God. This idea of the fundamental role of the sacrificial victim's

which according to him ought therefore to be translated 'who would be sad that (s)he is dying' rather than OTP's 'who would be sad in death'.

86. Brown (1992: 98-99) finds that three terms, 'first-born', 'fruit of his own body' and 'only-begotten', all point to the Isaac narrative, although only the last term is found in the biblical text (Judg. 11.34; Gen. 22.2). The second term appears elsewhere in the LAB with reference to Isaac (32.2, 4).

87. The daughter's demand for a respite (*petitionem peto*) may be wordplay on her name, if the LAB used the root **שׂא** for either the noun or the verb. Cf. Jacobson 1996: 962 and Philonenko 1973: 173.

88. The use of *permeem* is an emendation made by the first edition. All manuscripts have *maneam*, except K and P, which read *permaneam* (Jacobson 1996: 963).

attitude is twice stated earlier in the *LAB*, by God in the dispute with Balaam (18.3) and by Isaac in the hymn of Deborah (32.1-4). In the latter passage, Isaac goes so far as to say that the purpose of his life is to be sacrificed and that this makes him more blessed than any other man. Following in the footsteps of Isaac, Seila makes the inevitable meaningful by wanting it to take place. She cannot save her life, but she can affect the impact of her death. In terms of agency, this renders the daughter both powerless and powerful at the same time.

At the end, the focus shifts back to Seila's requested sojourn upon the mountains. She announces two things that she will do: tell and return. The first activity indicates an intention to be the narrative subject of her own story (before death), not simply the posthumous object of others' commemoration. The mention of the second activity is a promise to Jephthah. By giving a redundant assurance of the obvious, Seila again stresses her willingness and thus makes the unavoidable a matter of choice. Moreover, Seila here proves to be a competent negotiator. The dialogue ends when Jephthah finally yields to her request.

Seila's lament (40.5-7) develops several of the themes already touched upon in her response to Jephthah, which in several cases results in tensions between her two speeches. Moreover, the lyrical impulse of the lament is unique in the literary context of the *LAB* as a whole.⁸⁹ I will first give an overview of the structure of the poem in the close context of chs. 39-40 and then briefly discuss the symbolism in light of a few possible inter-texts.

1. Hear, you mountains, my lamentation;
2. and pay attention, you hills, to the tears of my eyes;
3. and be witnesses, you rocks, of the weeping of my soul.
4. Behold how I am put to the test!
5. But not in vain will my life be taken away.
6. May my words go forth in the heavens,
7. and my tears be written in the firmament!
8. That a father did not refuse the daughter whom he had sworn to sacrifice,
9. that a ruler granted that his only daughter be promised for sacrifice.
10. But I have not made good on my marriage chamber,
11. and I have not retrieved my wedding garlands.
12. For I have not been clothed in splendor while sitting in my woman's chamber,

89. Alexiou and Dronke (1971: 820) and Baker (1989: 199). Other examples of poetry in the *LAB* (2.10; 9.2; 32.1-17; 51.3-6; 59.4) are either very short or adhere closely to the biblical text. Seila's lament appears unique in its independence from the biblical text as well as through its emotive and dramatic qualities.

13. And I have not used the sweet-smelling ointment,
14. And my soul has not rejoiced in the oil of anointing that has been prepared for me.
15. O Mother, in vain have you borne your only daughter,
16. because Sheol has become my bridal chamber,
17. and on earth there is only my woman's chamber.
18. And may all the blend of oil that you have prepared for me be poured out,
19. and the white robe that my mother has woven, the moth will eat it.
20. And the crown of flowers that my nurse plaited for me for the festival, may it wither up;
21. and the coverlet that she wove of hyacinth and purple in my woman's chamber, may the worm devour it.
22. And may my virgin companions tell of me in sorrow and weep for me through the days.
23. You trees, bow down your branches and weep over my youth.
24. You beasts of the forests, come and bewail my virginity,
25. for my years have been cut off
26. and the time of my life grown old in darkness.

Two different sets of appeals frame the lament. Addresses to nature to witness (1-3) and to participate in (23-24) her mourning form a first inclusio.⁹⁰ A second inclusio consists of her repeated exhortations to the divine (6-7) and to her female companions (22) to remember her fate.

The rest of the lament can be divided into two major parts, which Baker has convincingly showed as thematically and ideologically separate.⁹¹ The first part (8-14) takes place in the realm of the father and the second (15-22) in that of her mother. Whereas the poem abstractly speaks of 'a father', it directly invokes the mother, 'O Mother'. Furthermore, the formal listing of missing accessories for the wedding ritual in the former part are personalized and specified in the latter. 'Clothed in splendour' (12) becomes 'the white robe that my mother has woven' (19). The most obvious contrast between the two parts consists in the apparent contradiction which Seila states in line 5, 'not in vain will my life be taken away', whereas, in line 15, she says to her mother, 'in vain have you borne your daughter'. Baker suggests that this inconsistency would only be rendered intelligible if the words 'father' and 'mother' were understood as dichotomies that signal absolute differences

90. Jacobson (1996: 963-64, 968, 975) remarks that nature mourning for human affliction is a common Graeco-Roman theme, but exceptional in Jewish texts. Yet this precise address also occurs in Mic. 6.2.

91. Alexiou and Dronke 1971: 824 and Baker 1989: 200-201.

with regard to life conditions.⁹² The impersonal and abstract rule in the realm of the father, which explains why vows are irreversible and children are offered as burnt offerings. Seila's death appears in this context as something logical and consistent, so that in fact she does not die 'in vain'.⁹³ The realm of the mother is, by contrast, one of intimacy rather than formality. In this sphere, one shares grief and recognizes that death will corrupt the gifts crafted by the female community and that, accordingly, Seila's mother did bear her 'in vain'.

This tension with regard to the meaningfulness of Seila's death is connected to the issue of her willingness to die. In the literary context as a whole, however, Seila's implicit protest spoken in the mother's realm appears as unique. The description of the situation as a test (4) pushes the idea of a willing sacrifice to its extreme and connects it to the double account of the Aqedah in LAB 18 and 32, where Isaac's free will is stressed. In Seila's lament the logical conclusion is drawn that it is in fact the victim of the sacrifice, not the executioner, who is put to the test. Moreover, her declaration spoken in the father's realm that her life will not be taken away in vain (5) echoes her earlier reasoning in 40.3 about willingness as a prerequisite for a proper sacrifice. Baker argues that the translators' perceptions of Seila's status as a willing subject have affected their translations on several counts,⁹⁴ for example, the much-contested eighth line of the lament, *ut pater non expugnet...*⁹⁵ What does the father not do to his daughter—'refuse' (OTP), 'overrule' (Alexiou and Dronke), 'overcome' or 'fight against' (James), 'force' (Dietzfelbinger) her? The first option reduces the assent of the daughter whereas the latter two underscore it.

The main body of the poem (stanza 10-21) concerns the consequence that, due to the sacrifice, Seila will not marry. In contrast to the earlier prose account, but reminiscent of the biblical text, Seila mourns her virginity (40.7). As suggested by Brown, the imagery of virginity and of marriage indicates, in contexts of grief, connections with several biblical as well as

92. Baker 1989: 201-202.

93. Alexiou and Dronke (1971: 825-851) show that the themes of marriage and death are closely related in Hellenistic contexts.

94. Baker 1989: 203. Another example is the rendering of the Latin word *eius* in the last line of God's speech in 39.11, where e.g. OTP, in contrast to Alexiou and Dronke (1971: 822) and James (1917: 193), suddenly translates its second occurrence with 'his' rather than 'her', thus making the request Jephthah's rather than Seila's. With regard to initiative, the change of the pronoun has a decisive effect.

95. *ut pater non expugnet...* is a difficult passage (Jacobson 1996: 970 and Baker 1989: 204). Of primary issue are the precise meaning of the verb *expugnet* and the function of the *ut* clauses, i.e., whether they express purpose or not.

extra-biblical inter-texts.⁹⁶ In Lamentations, Jerusalem is referred to as a virgin daughter, and, like Seila, she mourns her own destruction.⁹⁷ For prophets such as Isaiah and Ezekiel, the marriage metaphor is crucial to descriptions of the relationship between Yhwh and Israel.⁹⁸

The use of the marriage metaphor in *LAB* 40 differs fundamentally from its use in the biblical texts, but Brown does not comment on that. In Lamentations, the destruction of the daughter (Jerusalem) is caused by her sins, and in the prophets mentioned above, the barren woman (Israel) is no longer a virgin. Seila, by contrast, dies a virgin, and she mourns her own death before it occurs. Seila's death is therefore not a case of divine punishment, but is rather esteemed as valuable to God. I therefore propose that, in this literary context, the imagery of virginity and marriage signals that Seila functions as a representative of the Jewish people. Moreover, since she has kept her virginity, she embodies the people in an ideal way, that is, in a way that is never fulfilled by the people in the biblical texts. Thus, the sexual imagery highlights the official role of Seila's character in the *LAB*.

The juxtaposition of Seila's lament with her response to Jephthah adds complexity to her character. She thus expresses that she is both willing and not willing to die.⁹⁹ Moreover, by lamenting, she sets an example for her posthumous commemoration and thereby initiates her transformation into the object of an official decree. The notice that the wise men of the people could not respond to her (40.3) is an indication of her powerfulness as a speaker. However, it is immediately made clear that God is the source of this power: 'Behold now I [i.e. God] have shut up the tongue of the wise men of my people for this generation so that they cannot respond to the daughter of Jephthah...' (40.4). Moreover, with regard to the story, Seila's speech has no effect. As in the biblical story, Jephthah, or ultimately God, determines her acts. Her only independent moves are the demand for a respite and the ensuing departure to Mt Stelac, which could of course also be described as a reaction to her father's initiative.

96. Brown 1992: 112-15.

97. Jerusalem is called the virgin daughter of Judah (Lam. 1.15) and Zion (2.13). In *Pesikta Rabbati* 29.30B, the image of 'the virgin of Israel' is applied to the Temple.

98. Brown (1992: 114-15) mentions Isa. 54.1-8 and Ezek. 16.10. The general use of this imagery has been much discussed, e.g. by Brenner 1995.

99. Jacobson (1996: 961) ignores the complexity of Seila's willingness when he finds the portrayal of the daughter as 'a willing, indeed happy, martyr' in the *LAB* consistent with that in the biblical text (11.36) and later in *Ant.* (5.265). So too does Murphy (1993: 167), who interprets Seila's willingness solely in terms of piety and courage. Although he observes (168) that the lament is based on the 'tension between the usefulness and the tragedy of Seila's death', he draws no conclusions as to how the lament affects the characterization of the daughter.

God

The *LAB* gives a unified portrayal of God. In contrast to the biblical narrative, no definite split between speech and silence, between presence and absence or between action and passivity exist. Rather, God often acts through speech. Although God by no means dominates the text in quantitative terms, Israel's deity is the subject of the pivotal events of the story.

The narrator makes no explicit comments about God's characteristics. Yet God is twice associated with anger. Both times, the emotion appears as the motivation for the event that follows. Before strengthening Jephthah (no. 6), God 'repented of his wrath' (39.8) and before establishing the outcome of Jephthah's vow (no. 8), God 'was very angry' (39.11). This anthropomorphism is taken to its greatest extreme in the former case, where the logical implication is that God has in some way erred.¹⁰⁰ That divine intervention involves anger is in accordance with the overall pattern found in the *LAB* as a whole.¹⁰¹ The suggestion of divine fault, however, goes against the general tendency of the *LAB* to vindicate God.¹⁰²

The speeches of the people feature indirect indications of God's character. In the introduction, the people state that '[T]he Lord has departed from us and now is not with us' (39.1). In the negotiation with Jephthah, God's forgiveness of the people's sin is offered as an example for Jephthah and thus used as an argument to make him accept their offer (39.4). In Jephthah's and the people's common prayer, finally, God is directly addressed: 'Look, Lord, upon the people that you have chosen, and may you not destroy the plant that your right hand has planted...and may you not hand us over before those who hate you, Lord' (39.7). These examples show that, from Israel's perspective, God is potentially both destroyer and redeemer.¹⁰³

As in the cases of Jephthah and Seila, the character of God appears most extensively through the faculty of speech. God has two major monologues, which both concern the sacrifice:

Behold Jephthah has vowed that he will offer to me whatever meets him first on the way; and now if a dog should meet Jephthah first, will the dog be offered to me? And now let the vow of Jephthah be accomplished against his own firstborn, that is, against the fruit of his own body, and his request against his only-begotten. But I will surely free my people in this time, not because of him but because of the prayer that Israel prayed (39.11).

100. As I noted earlier (in 'The Mood and Voice of *LAB* 39–40'), Jacobson finds the expression peculiar. On basis of theological considerations, the objection is illegitimate.

101. Murphy 1993: 227.

102. Murphy (1993: 223) finds God to be the most important character in *LAB*. He describes the work as a 'narrative theodicy, a defence of God's ways'.

103. Jephthah's statement in 39.9 indicates that he serves as the instrument of God's destruction: 'God has brought you forward that I may destroy you'.

Behold now I have shut up the tongue of the wise men of my people for this generation so that they cannot respond to the daughter of Jephthah, to her word, in order that my word be fulfilled and my plan that I thought out not be foiled. And I have seen that the virgin is wise in contrast to her father and perceptive in contrast to all the wise men who are here. And now let her life be given at his request, and her death will be precious before me always, and she will go away and fall into the bosom of her mothers (40.4).

These speeches fulfil two functions. To begin with, God reflects on the behaviour of the other characters. God partly plays the role often held by the narrator, which is played down in the *LAB*, that is, the role of making meta-narrative comments. How the other characters' actions affect God is what forms the basis for the judgments made. God condemns Jephthah, who because of the vow runs the risk of offering an unclean sacrifice and thereby of committing a serious offence against God. By contrast, God praises Seila, since her death is deemed 'precious' to God.

The second function of the speeches is to be an arena for divine action. In the first speech, God effectively counters Jephthah's vow, by specifying its target and by promising to redeem the people in spite of it. God thereby eliminates two crucial elements of uncertainty in the text. Moreover, God disavows the connection between Jephthah's vow and the victory against the Ammonites. The second speech partly confirms and partly stands in tension to the former speech. On the one hand, the imperative, 'Let her life be given at his/her request', repeats the divine decision to let Jephthah's vow be 'accomplished against his own firstborn'. The character of God is here constructed as the one who reacts to human irreverence. On the other hand, the speech establishes the sacrifice as part of the divine plan.¹⁰⁴ This makes God the ultimate subject of the sacrifice and by implication clears Jephthah of all responsibility for it. In order to secure the completion of the divine plan, God controls the action of the other actors as well, for example, by stopping the wise men from responding to Seila's testimony. The people's notion of God as their redeemer and destroyer is thus confirmed by the divine speeches.

Israel's deity is obviously the strongest actor in the ensemble, whose word overrules that of Jephthah.¹⁰⁵ Yet, on the basis of *LAB* 39–40, the initiative

104. According to Murphy (1993: 225–26), the notions that God plans history beforehand and that God's word never fails are recurrent in the *LAB*.

105. Murphy (1993) makes two statements on God as a character in the *LAB* that need comment. First, he finds that 'God is the most important character' (223) and, secondly, that 'God is a "round" character who suffers inner conflict caused by this contradiction between the desire to destroy an intransigent humanity and faithfulness to the promises' (227). I agree with Murphy that, quantitatively and qualitatively, God has an exceptional position in the work as a whole. God is present in every part of the work and possesses qualities otherwise reserved for the narrator. However, the 'roundness'

for God's two crucial acts does not come from God.¹⁰⁶ The empowering of Jephthah is an answer to his and the people's prayers, and the election of Seila as a sacrificial object is a counter action to Jephthah's vow. In the narrative, however, God attempts to establish the opposite, namely, that everything was part of God's own plan. In Greimas's terms, this demonstrates an ambiguity with regard to God's function in the story, i.e., whether God serves as the helper of Jephthah and of the people or as the sender. In his capacity as helper, God appears as a reactive subject, and as sender, as the ultimate power behind the action. This ambiguity was noted above in the biblical text as well. In the *LAB*, the different functions of God cannot, however, be attributed to separate passages. Moreover, there is no linear transformation in God's character from one role to the other.

Conclusions on LAB 39–40

The story of the *LAB* is more integrated than the biblical story as a result of deletions at the beginning and at the end and of crucial additions that explain the causal relationships between events, most notably God's decision concerning the outcome of Jephthah's vow. The narrative's emphasis on the sacrifice is even more pronounced in the *LAB* than in the book of Judges. This is achieved through the repeated use of prolepsis directed towards the sacrifice, through the elaboration of the return-to-Mizpah scene, and above all, through the addition of the *LAB*'s longest scene, Seila's lyrical lament.

As in the biblical narrative, there is no singular driving force behind the events in the *LAB*. Whereas some ambiguities have been dissolved, new ones have also been created. Jephthah is directly blamed for his impious vow and simultaneously weakened as a subject. Seila's willingness to let herself be sacrificed is repeatedly emphasized and elaborated, although the explicit protest expressed in her lamentation complicate the picture. The people are less compliant both towards God and towards Jephthah. At the same time, Jephthah leads them in their prayer of penitence. Finally, God appears as the

of God is a theological and psychological interpolation, which is not explicitly demonstrated in the text, especially not in chs. 39–40. Seila's character can be described as complex, e.g., because of the tension between her willingness to be sacrificed and her protest against it. Jephthah's character likewise exhibits complexity, e.g., in the tension between the narrator's idealization of Jephthah and God's condemnation of him. Although obviously an important actor, Israel's deity remains rather static and does not come out very clearly as a *character*.

106. According to Murphy (1993: 224), God is defined through divine–human interaction in the *LAB* as a whole.

most powerful actor, who determines Seila's fate by making her the target of Jephthah's vow and by rendering the wise men speechless before her. Nevertheless, God's actions are primarily reactions to the initiatives of others. Making God the one most responsible for the sacrifice seems somewhat paradoxical in the context of the *LAB* as a whole, where the tendency is rather to vindicate God.

The narrator of *LAB* keeps a lower ideological profile than the biblical narrator. The function of commentator is filled instead by God, predominantly, and by Seila, to a lesser extent. God's condemnation of Jephthah's vow concerns specifically the risk that he might sacrifice something inappropriate, such as a dog. The sacrifice of the daughter, in contrast, is deemed 'precious' in the words of the deity. Seila gives legitimacy to the sacrifice by interpreting it in the light of religious tradition.

The characterizations of Jephthah and Seila indicate a rather low esteem for Jephthah and a high one for Seila. Jephthah's background is not at all as ambiguous as it was in the biblical text with regard to, for example, gender and ethnicity. He appears as the least of the minor judges in the *LAB*, and the harsh divine rebuke puts him in the same category as idol-worshippers. Jephthah features as a much less aggressive and self-assertive speaker than his biblical counterpart and he speaks more to his own kin than to his enemy. He unreservedly follows the exhortations offered by Israel and Seila; his diplomatic outburst has no effect on the Ammonites; and his vow proves to be his only efficient speech-act, although only as a result of divine intervention. Finally, this thoroughly dependent leader almost disappears in the second half of the narrative.

Seila becomes a full-fledged character in the *LAB*. In contrast to Jephthah, she receives favourable judgment both implicitly through comparison with Cenaz and Deborah and explicitly by the deity. The complexity of her character is shown in that she both argues in favour of the sacrifice and bemoans it. By means of her lamentation, she initiates the commemoration ritual that will become established after her death, and it is intimated that she plays an official role as a representative of Israel. Although, like her biblical counterpart, her actions are circumscribed by patriarchal limits, she transcends these limits through her speech.

The God of *LAB* 39–40 features as the angry redeemer and destroyer, who comments on the actions of the other characters and on their interior motives and also alters radically the course of events. Although God is sovereign with regard to power, the initiative God takes originates elsewhere. The complexity of the character of God lies precisely in the tension between being a character like the others and being clearly set apart from them in terms of power and knowledge.

Introduction to Jewish Antiquities

In contrast to the *LAB*, the historical context of *Ant.* is rather unproblematic. Its author, Josephus, served as the commander-in-chief in Galilee during the Jewish War, 66 CE.¹⁰⁷ He surrendered to the Romans and gained Roman citizenship after only two years of captivity and received pensions from three Flavian Emperors.¹⁰⁸ These financial and social circumstances make up the fundamental conditions of Josephus's authorship.

Ant. is the largest of Josephus's four preserved works.¹⁰⁹ Its twenty books cover the entire history of the Jews from creation to the destruction of Jerusalem. As Josephus's second attempt at historiography, it both overlaps and stands at odds with the *Jewish War*, written some ten years earlier (c. 79 CE).¹¹⁰ Most scholars agree that *Ant.* was written primarily for a Gentile audience and that its purpose is apologetic.¹¹¹ This is also in accordance with the explicit declaration in *Ant.* 16.174-78.

107. Schürer 1973: 43 n. 2. Josephus was born in Jerusalem in the first year of Caligula's reign, 37/38 CE. The exact date of his death remains uncertain. L.H. Feldman (1992: 982) and Schmuelevitz (1971: 252) suggest 100 CE or later. Through his father he belonged to an aristocratic priestly family, and through his mother he was related to the Hasmonaean dynasty. With regard to the biography of Josephus, no major differences feature in the accounts of Schürer (1973: 43-46), L.H. Feldman (1992: 981-82) and Schmuelevitz (1971: 252-53).

108. Vespasian, Titus and Domitian.

109. The *Life* (93/94 CE) is the first autobiography preserved from antiquity and appears as an appendix to the *Jewish Antiquities*. Formally, Josephus wrote it as a reply to charges of misconduct during his time as a general in Galilee. *Against Apion* is an explicitly apologetic work in two parts, through which Josephus responds to various anti-Jewish charges.

110. The works overlap in terms of their scope; both cover the post-biblical period until the destruction of the Second Temple. The discrepancies between *Ant.* and *JW* include both details in the historical account as well as general outlook. Whereas *JW* was written at the explicit request of the emperor (Schmuelevitz 1971: 258), several scholars (e.g. Cohen 1979 and Schwartz 1990) have suggested that Josephus wrote *Ant.* as an act of repentance. This view has, however, been strongly opposed by Mason (1998: 66). In my opinion, it seems incredible that Josephus would alter his perspective of writing so drastically, while still enjoying the privilege of the imperial pension.

111. Schmuelevitz (1971: 258) proposes that it might have been written in order to prove the antiquity of the Jews. Schürer (1973: 48) suggests, somewhat more vaguely, that its purpose would have been 'to elicit from the cultivated world respect for the much calumniated Jewish people'. L.H. Feldman (1998a: 132-62 and 1998b: 543-44) is of the opinion that both non-Jews and Jews made up Josephus's intended audience, although the former group was his primary target. According to Mason (1998: 101), rather than a defence, Josephus's aim in writing *Ant.* was 'to provide a handbook of Judean law, history and culture for a Gentile audience in Rome that is keenly interested in Jewish matters'. Although this description of the work may be adequate, it hardly rules out an apologetic intent.

With regard to genre, Josephus had many both Jewish and non-Jewish models for *Ant.* at his disposal.¹¹² In the text (*Ant.* 1.10-12), he explicitly refers to the Septuagint as a justifying precedent for rearranging the biblical narrative. As a translation, however, the changes of the LXX are much smaller than those in *Ant.* Moreover, *Ant.* regularly makes use of other sources besides the biblical text and it has an explicit aim.¹¹³ What makes *Ant.* unique among the Jewish sources is that it covers not only the biblical, but also the post-biblical history of the Jewish people.¹¹⁴ In contrast to Pseudo-Philo's *LAB*, which was clearly written as a supplement to the biblical text, *Ant.* does not presuppose any knowledge of the Hebrew Bible.

Although *Ant.* constitutes a specific interpretation of the biblical text, it engages neither in proper commentary, like the Dead Sea pesharim, nor in the exposition of a quoted verse, like the genre of midrashim.¹¹⁵ Philo's influence on *Ant.* is visible in several instances, although in his capacity as philosopher he distances himself further from the biblical text than Josephus the historian does.¹¹⁶ Louis Feldman suggests that the Aramaic targums probably provide the closest analogue to *Ant.* among Jewish sources and that both *Ant.* and the targums could be described as paraphrases.¹¹⁷ In my opinion, however, Josephus's variations of the biblical text are too great to justify the label paraphrase.

Josephus was not the only one to endeavour to write a national history for outsiders. Among the non-Jewish texts, Josephus praises, for example, the Egyptian and Babylonian chroniclers for their correctness in the treatment of the material (*Against Apion* 1.28), although he does not appear to follow their method of writing.¹¹⁸ Greek historians, by contrast, are severely criticized by Josephus (e.g., *Ant.* 8.253, 260-62; *Against Apion* 1.16, 73) for their misuse of sources. Nevertheless, his method of writing has strong affinities to some of them, most markedly with Thucydides.¹¹⁹ Following Feldman, I thus

112. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 14-73.

113. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 15.

114. It is obviously more comprehensive and systematic than the book of Chronicles, or the pseudepigraphic *Jubilees* and the *Genesis Apocryphon*.

115. L.H. Feldman (1998a: 16) uses Porton's (1979: 113) definition of the Midrash.

116. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 16. Philo's influence appears clearly with regard to the allegorical understanding of the Temple Cult reported in *Ant.*

117. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 17.

118. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 18-19.

119. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 23, 177. Josephus shows his admiration for Thucydides explicitly in *Against Apion* 1.18. The influence could also be indirect through Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who wrote a piece on Thucydides' style and whose *Roman Antiquities* stands as one possible model for *Jewish Antiquities*. In terms of both literary style and ideological content, Josephus displays acquaintance with a large number of Greek authors besides Thucydides. Of particular weight are, according to L.H. Feldman

conclude that Josephus used no single model for his *Jewish Antiquities*, but rather combined features of the many similar texts with which he came into contact.¹²⁰

How, then, were the works of Josephus received by Jews and non-Jews? By and large, the classical writers neglected him.¹²¹ Among Jews, opinion on Josephus ranges from rejecting him as a traitor, who gave a distorted account of the history of his people, to viewing him as the pragmatic Pharisee, whose submission to the Romans served to secure the survival of the Jews.¹²² Presumably due to this divided opinion of him, little attention is paid to his works in Jewish tradition, although exceptions do exist.¹²³ In Christian tradition, on the contrary, Josephus's influence has been remarkable. Church fathers, such as Origen, Tertullian and Jerome, considered him to be the primary source for confirmation of the biblical narrative.¹²⁴ His much-contested testimony on Jesus and John the Baptist in *Ant.*, the so-called *Testimonium Flavianum*, was particularly valued.

During the Middle Ages, Josephus was respected as an authority on a number of diverse fields, such as biblical exegesis, astronomy and military tactics. The fact that there existed more editions of *Jewish Antiquities* than of any other historical work in Greek in the period of the Renaissance and later is a quantitative measure of his popularity.¹²⁵ In terms of influence, Martin Luther's use of Josephus cannot be overlooked.¹²⁶ Finally, Josephus has also influenced modern literature, for example, the works of Corneille, Racine and Voltaire. Among devout English Protestants, Josephus's writings were the only permitted reading matter apart from the Christian Bible as late as the twentieth century.

It cannot be ascertained beyond doubt what biblical text Josephus used as a source for his work. In all probability, he had access to three textual tradi-

(1998a: 171-217), Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle.

120. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 23.

121. A single reference is made to Josephus by Porphyry in the third century, in his discussion of the Essenes (L.H. Feldman 1992: 995).

122. Schmuelevitz 1971: 262.

123. Josippon's tenth-century Hebrew paraphrase of the *Jewish War* exerted influence on e.g. Rashi and the thirteenth-century Franco-German Tosafists. Josephus was also mentioned by the fifteenth-century Abrabanel and the sixteenth-century Azariah dei Rossi, according to L.H. Feldman (1992: 995).

124. L.H. Feldman 1992: 995. Several Church fathers also attribute 4 *Maccabees* to Josephus, of which he is, according to Schürer (1973: 55), most certainly not the author.

125. L.H. Feldman 1992: 995.

126. In the infamous article 'On the Jews and Their Lies', Luther cites Josephus in order to argue that the suffering of the Jews can be explained by their involvement in the death of Jesus (L.H. Feldman 1987: 64-66).

tions—Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic—and he used these eclectically.¹²⁷ For my analysis of *Jewish Antiquities*, I use the Loeb Classical Library edition (1926–1965), edited by Henry St J. Thackeray *et al.*, which presents an eclectic text, based on the edition of Niese and Naber (1885–95).

The Story of Ant. 5.255-70

The Jephthah story in *Jewish Antiquities* is shorter than the biblical story, but it adheres more closely to the biblical original than the version found in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*. No new actors appear, but Israel is initially referred to as ‘the Hebrews’. The following list of narrative propositions serves as a summary:

1. The Hebrews abandon God and the law (5.255).
2. The Ammanites attack the Hebrews (5.255).
3. The Hebrews pray to God for redemption (5.256).
4. God turns to the Hebrews with favour (5.256).
5. The people of Galaditis negotiate with Jephthah about the leadership (5.258-60).
6. Jephthah declares war against the Ammanites (5.262).
7. Jephthah swears a vow to God (5.263).
8. Jephthah defeats the Ammanites (5.263).
9. The daughter meets Jephthah (5.264).
10. The daughter negotiates with Jephthah for a respite (5.265).
11. Jephthah sacrifices the daughter (5.266).
12. The Ephraimites attack Jephthah (5.267).
13. Jephthah defeats the Ephraimites (5.269).

The alterations to the biblical story made in *Ant.* affect the roles of the deity, of Jephthah and of the daughter. With regard to God’s role, the mutuality of the controversy between God and the people in the beginning is not kept. The Hebrews display hubris towards God and the law. Contrary to the biblical text, however, God does not sell them to their enemies.¹²⁸ Moreover, God does not strengthen Jephthah in preparation for the war. Thus, God’s specific activity and participation are reduced, and this represents a considerable variation on the Deuteronomistic pattern.¹²⁹ A single

127. With regard to the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges, his use of the biblical narrative might indicate the availability of targums for volumes 1–5 (L.H. Feldman 1998a: 23-36).

128. It is debatable whether Israel’s contempt for God and for the law should be regarded as proper event or as condition. Although protracted in time, it appears as the cause of the series of events that follow.

129. Instead of an interactive process, in which the acts of the people immediately

event—the sudden move to moderation (no. 4)—signals that God is the *destinateur* of the story. As in the biblical story, the event concerns a change of divine attitude, which proves decisive for what follows. Yet, whereas in the biblical story the result of this change in attitude for the people is ambiguous, in *Ant.* it is unequivocally positive.¹³⁰

With regard to Jephthah, three changes can be observed. First, the expulsion from home does not feature as an independent event in the story but merely as a reason for denying him leadership (no. 5). Secondly, the Ephraimite attack (no. 12) is not directed towards Jephthah as a personal threat. This indicates that both the early and the late victimizing of Jephthah are played down. Thirdly, Jephthah concludes the Ammanite negotiation with a declaration of war (no. 6). Although the dispute is as unsuccessful in the story of *Ant.* as in the biblical one, the addition of this new speech-act enhances the force of Jephthah's initiative.

As for the daughter, *Ant.* decisively reduces her role. Her exhortation to Jephthah to proceed with the sacrifice is omitted, which means that she does not urge him on as actively as she does in the biblical narrative. Furthermore, *Ant.* includes only her request for a respite, not her actual departure and return. She thereby becomes a much more passive subject. Finally, there is no commemoration ritual in her honour, which radically reduces the significance of her death.

The story of *Ant.* is shorter than the biblical one, and not as integrated as that of the *LAB*. As in the biblical account, the sequence of events can be divided into two story-lines, where the controversy between God and the people (nos. 1-4) serves as an introduction to the biography of Jephthah (nos. 5-13). The non-participation of God in the second story-line increases the gap between the two parts of the story. As is the case in the biblical story, the people are referred to differently in the two parts. In the first four events they are consistently called 'the Hebrews'. In what follows, they are once referred to as 'the inhabitants of the country' (5.256) and from then on only indirectly. However, the unity of the story is emphasized by the fact that the main complication in the first story-line—the Ammanite attack (no. 2)—is resolved in the second, through the victory (no. 8).

lead to reactions by the deity, the same events occur with no direct involvement on God's part. This downplaying of God's activity is in line with the genre of *Ant.*, i.e., national/military history.

130. This preannouncement of what is about to happen is not an event in itself but serves as a comment by the narrator of the divine change of attitude (no. 4). The corresponding event in the story of the *LAB* is expressed more explicitly, both with regard to ideology and narrative. There, God's change of mood is described as repentance, and moreover, it immediately results in his strengthening of Jephthah.

In the biblical story, events concerning the daughter (nos. 9-11) and the Ephraimites (nos. 12-13) are described as consequences of the victory, with the daughter's sacrifice more closely connected to victory than the Ephraimite rebellion. In the story of *Ant.*, it is the other way round. The lack of divine response to Jephthah's vow makes it harder to discern the effect of the vow on the outcome of the war.¹³¹ This would imply that Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter stands as an unnecessary mistake on Jephthah's part. Thus, the events concerning the daughter do not appear to be essential to the story. The Ephraimite attack, however, is well motivated and closely tied to the Ammanite war.¹³² In *Ant.*, the Ammanite war includes the taking of booty and the Ephraimites contend that Jephthah has kept the spoils and the honour of the victory for himself.

Jephthah's central position receives more emphasis in the story of *Ant.* than in the biblical one. The declaration of war is added to Jephthah's list of actions. More significantly, there is less ambiguity about whether God or Jephthah takes the initiative, although this ambiguity is not completely resolved. God's only act consists of a change of attitude. The deity does not provoke the Ammanite attack, does not provide Jephthah with strength and does not assist him in the war. Finally, the roles of other actors are reduced. The daughter and the Gileadite negotiators appear as peripheral as the Ammanite king or the Ephraimite attackers. No interaction occurs between actors that does not involve Jephthah.

The Time of Ant. 5.255-70

If the story of *Ant.* follows the biblical one rather closely, more differences can be noted with regard to the time of the narrative and they can all be demonstrated through the narrative's order and rhythm.

In terms of order, the narrative of *Ant.* is more straightforward than the biblical one, mainly due to the fact that analepsis is less frequent.¹³³ As in the biblical narrative, however, analepsis is used to achieve emphasis and to

131. The significance of the vow is ambiguous: on the one hand, it is condemned by the narrator as contrary to the will of God or the law, while, on the other hand, the sacrifice of the daughter is made as the payment for victory and liberation.

132. In its account of the Ephraimite war, *Ant.* includes the occupation of the fords of Jordan and the massacre of 42,000 but omits the shibboleth test.

133. In the narrative of *Ant.*, two actors do not report the same event in similar ways, whereas in the biblical story this was used as a means of emphasis, e.g. in the introduction. Moreover, in *Ant.* the expulsion of Jephthah is reported only once, in Jephthah's speech, where it serves to explain his refusal to accept the offer of leadership, whereas in the biblical narrative it is first reported by the narrator and later recapitulated in the speech of Jephthah.

create a sense of reference. Both the Ammanite king and the Ephraimites give challenging views on the background as well as on the purpose of the war. This leads Jephthah to legitimize the war forcefully, and in the case of the Ammanites, to connect the narrative of this specific war to the larger narrative of Israel's past (although not in as many words as in the biblical narrative).

Prolepsis occurs on the same occasions in the narrative of *Ant.* as in the biblical narrative (the vow, 5.263, and the daughter's speech, 5.265). Yet, *Ant.* differs from its biblical counterpart by being more explicit: the daughter announces that she will die. In the account of the sacrifice, the event towards which the prolepsis points, no uncertainty remains regarding the daughter's fate. Thus, in *Ant.* prolepsis does not immediately create suspense or replace an elliptic account of the event itself, as it does in the biblical narrative.

In terms of rhythm, like the biblical narrative, *Ant.* moves primarily between summaries and scenes. However, all the scenes are presented in a summarized form through indirect speech and they are thus less 'mimetically pure' than in the biblical narrative or in the *LAB*.¹³⁴ The introductory controversy between God and the people is transformed into a summary, the two negotiation scenes with the Gileadites and the Ammanites are much reduced and the return-to-Mizpah scene is somewhat abridged. In contrast, the dispute with the Ephraimites is elaborated and stands as the longest scene in *Ant.*¹³⁵ Thus, the narrative speed is generally faster in *Ant.* than in the biblical narrative, and the emphasis has moved towards the end.

In the biblical narrative, the narrator paused three times to comment on the daughter in the return-to-Mizpah scene and only once to comment on Jephthah's background. In the narrative in *Ant.*, the ratio is the opposite. A single brief pause concerns the daughter (5.264), whereas two longer ones involve Jephthah's present status (5.257-58) and his background (5.259), and the final, most extensive pause deals with Jephthah's inappropriate behaviour with regard to the sacrifice (5.263). The final pause represents a unique way of treating the sacrificial event. Neither in the biblical narrative nor in the narrative of the *LAB* does the narrator comment explicitly on the sacrifice. The emphasis on the sacrifice is achieved indirectly by means of the order and rhythm of the biblical narrative. In the *LAB*, the emphasis on the sacrifice is more obvious than in the biblical account, above all through the addition of the major lamentation scene. In *Ant.*, however, the narrative places no specific emphasis on the sacrifice, and the narrator's pause is then necessary to explain an otherwise incomprehensible event.

134. This point relates to the 'narrative mood', which will be discussed below.

135. In terms of genre, again, it is consistent that Josephus elaborates on the only war scene told with any detail in the biblical text.

The Mood and Voice of Ant. 5.255-70

The narrative in *Ant.* differs most obviously from that in the biblical text and that in the *LAB* through its mood, and more precisely, through the aspect of distance. In *Ant.*, the narrator prefers *diegesis* to *mimesis*. The speech of the characters is 'narrated' or 'transposed' rather than 'reported'. This means that the characters are not directly quoted and that the entire text is filtered through the narrator. Moreover, the events are narrated without detail, for example, the procedure of the shibboleth test is omitted (and when the daughter welcomes her father, her outward appearance is not described). It is consistent with the great distance between the narrator and the narrated events that the focalization should remain external throughout the narrative.

It follows from the diegetic mood of the narrative that its voice, the narrator, is generally more visible than in the book of Judges and the *LAB*.¹³⁶ The narrator's presence becomes particularly obvious through extensive normative comments. Furthermore, the ideological function of the narrating instance appears more clearly in comparison with the biblical narrator.¹³⁷

For example, the behaviour of the Hebrews is harshly condemned, although indirectly through the use of a specific Hellenistic terminology. Whereas the biblical narrator speaks of 'evil' and 'sin', the narrator of *Ant.* uses the categories of 'disorder' and 'pride' (5.255) in relation to both God and the law. In addition, Jephthah's background is described in a more flattering way in *Ant.* (5.257-59) than in the biblical text. The exiled Jephthah hires mercenaries instead of going out with 'empty men', and the description of his mother as a 'harlot' is avoided altogether. The daughter is presented in terms of the same social and sexual categories as in the book of Judges, that is, as Jephthah's 'only daughter, a virgin yet' (5.264). Yet, the threefold repetition of 'virgin' is avoided and, accordingly, the sexual status of the daughter in *Ant.* does not appear to be a major issue. Furthermore, the narrator implicitly constructs Jephthah as a victim by saying that he 'fell foul of a calamity' and by contrasting this event to his earlier 'fair achievements' (5.264).¹³⁸ Finally, the sacrifice is explicitly renounced as opposed to both God and the law (5.266). The narrator thus vents the same kind of criticism of Jephthah as was earlier pronounced on the Hebrews.

136. The narrator of *Ant.*, like those of Judges and the *LAB*, can be categorized as both extradiegetic and heterodiegetic.

137. The narrative function of the narrator is more evident in *Ant.* due to its mood. Of the other four functions proposed by Genette, only the ideological function is of relevance for *Ant.*

138. Brown (1992: 119 n. 83) sees this language as a reference to the shipwreck of the Greek literary figure Idomeneus.

The narrator's ideological stance is not consistent. On the one hand, the narrator appears anxious to give as favourable a picture of Jephthah as possible, which would be in line with Josephus's possibly apologetic purpose in writing this work. On the other hand, ungodly or unlawful behaviour is criticized, whether the perpetrator is the people as a collective or its leader.

Characterization in Ant. 5.255-70

Jephthah is the only fully developed character in the narrative of *Ant.* In comparison to her biblical counterpart, the daughter's role is reduced and God features merely as an impersonal force.

Jephthah

In the gallery of actors, Jephthah's centrality is even more accentuated in *Ant.* than in the book of Judges. With regard to distribution, his only absence comes in the introduction (5.255-56), which is greatly reduced in comparison with the biblical text. Moreover, the biblical uncertainty with regard to Jephthah's participation in the Ephraimite war (Judg. 12.4-6) is removed. In *Ant.* Jephthah is the explicit subject of the counter attack (5.259). With regard to relationships, it has already been shown in the discussion of the story that Jephthah is the centre of the interaction between the actors.

Three comments by the narrator deserve more detailed analysis. First, the narrator presents Jephthah by the singular epithet 'a mighty man' (ἀνὴρ δυνατός). This Greek phrase has weaker connotations to male prowess than the corresponding Hebrew description (גִּבּוֹר חַיִּל).¹³⁹ More importantly, the appellation is externally motivated, which indicates that it is not a personal feature. The narrator derives Jephthah's strength from the 'valour of his forefathers' (5.257) as well as the 'troop of mercenaries which he maintained himself' (5.258). 'Valour of his forefathers' indicates social respectability whereas 'troop of mercenaries which he maintained himself' suggests military, and indirectly economic, power. In contrast to the biblical narrative, Jephthah's exile does not signal ethnic, social and economic deprivation or marginalization, but rather an increase of power.

The second comment by the narrator concerns Jephthah's lineage, and is given as an explanation of his expulsion by his brothers (5.259). Instead of the degrading epithets applied to his mother in the MT and the LXX,¹⁴⁰ the narrator euphemistically circumscribes the situation: 'For, because he was not their full brother but unconnected on his mother's side, who had been

139. *Ant.* does not adopt the versions of the LXX, which both lack a noun equivalent to ἀνὴρ. The A-text has 'powerful in strength' (δυνατὸς ἐν ἰσχυρί), and the B-text has 'exalted in power' (ἐπηρμένος δυνάμει).

140. Both versions of the LXX have 'prostitute' (γυναικὸς πόρνῃς).

inflicted upon them by their father through his amorous desire, they had cast him out, scorning his helplessness...’ As in the biblical text, Jephthah is cast out because he has a different mother than his brothers, and the narrator of *Ant.* blames the anonymous father for yielding to his ‘amorous desire’. This indicates that the father is morally at fault, but it does not necessarily render the fruit of his desire socially illegitimate. At least no such stigma is explicitly attached to Jephthah.

The third comment must be deemed as rather severe, since it appears in a context of repeated idealization of Jephthah. After the account of the sacrifice, it is remarked that it was ‘neither sanctioned by the law nor well-pleasing to God; for he had not by reflection probed what might befall or in what aspect the deed would appear to them that heard of it’ (5.266). Jephthah commits three offences: against God, against the law and against the people, but notably not against the daughter! The similarity between this explicit criticism of Jephthah, and the implicit criticism of the Hebrews in the introduction (5.255), indicates that in this case Jephthah has not acted as a leader, but like the unlawful masses. His fault is one of omission. As a leader who does not use his reasoning powers, Jephthah causes tragedy.

How do these comments on Jephthah compare with the general tendency of character evaluation in *Ant.*, and, more specifically, with that of the other figures from the book of Judges? L.H. Feldman lists a number of criteria used in *Ant.* to show that biblical heroes are equivalent to pagan ones.¹⁴¹ These include four qualities related to the background or the constitution of the figure (good birth, precociousness, handsome stature and wealth) as well as five mental qualities (wisdom, courage, temperance, justice and piety). Accordingly, the first two comments about Jephthah involve improvements of his ancestry as well as of his financial status. The critical third comment indicates that Jephthah lacks two of the five virtues (wisdom and piety).¹⁴²

Five of the biblical judges are treated in *Ant.* Ehud, named Jude (Ἰούδης) in the *Ant.* (5.185-97), is presented as daring and strong (5.188). Unlike Jephthah, however, Jude’s strength is a bodily feature.¹⁴³ He holds the office of governor for an impressive eighty years, and the narrator completes the account of his reign with the general praise that he was ‘a man...deserving a meed of praise’ (5.197). Deborah (5.200-210) receives neither praise nor

141. L.H. Feldman 1998b: 546-50.

142. L.H. Feldman 1998b: 185. Contra to Feldman, I find that Jephthah also displays a lack of temperance, i.e., moderation, in his speech to the enemy. See below the analysis of Jephthah as a speaker.

143. The information in the biblical text that Ehud’s right hand was shrivelled is circumscribed in *Ant.*—‘being superior with his left hand and therefore deriving all his strength’ (5.188)—due to the negative view of left-handed people among the ancients. L.H. Feldman 1998b: 140 n. 6.

criticism. Her name is explained to mean 'bee' (5.201) and she is reduced to a mere prophet. Instead, Barak, whose name is purported to mean 'lightning' (5.201), rules in her place for forty years. Gideon (5.213-32) is the most highly praised judge in *Ant.* Like Jephthah, his genealogy is improved in *Ant.*, which presents him as 'one of the foremost among the tribe of Manasseh' (5.213). In his encounter with the Ephraimites, which will be discussed in detail below, he is qualified not only as a 'man of moderation' but also as 'a model of every virtue' (5.230). The narrator's final word about Gideon's forty-year reign is that he specifically administered 'justice' and that his words had 'binding weight' (5.230). The portrayal of Samson (5.276-317) belongs to the more impressive ones in *Ant.*¹⁴⁴ He is introduced as having a father 'among the most notable of the Danites' (5.276) and a mother 'remarkable for her beauty' (5.276). In an extensively reasoned conclusion, the narrator finds that Samson must be admired for his 'valour', 'strength' and 'high spirit' as well as for his 'wrath', and that his final succumbing to Delilah does not overshadow the virtues shown during his twenty-year rule (5.317).

In comparison to the other judges in *Ant.*, the narrator's assessment of Jephthah's qualities is rather bleak.¹⁴⁵ Jephthah is the only judge who is directly criticized by the narrator, and, in contrast to the evaluation of Samson, no extenuating circumstances are implied. Jephthah is never directly commended for possessing any of the five major virtues. The basis of his 'strength' lies outside his character, in his soldiers and in his ancestors. In addition, Jephthah's reign appears to be the shortest of those of the judges in *Ant.*

Because of the diegetic mood of narration in *Ant.*, where the characters' speech is always accounted for by the narrator, Jephthah's capacity as a speaker is less evident here than in the biblical text or in the *LAB*. In his encounters with the enemy (the Ammanite king and the Ephraimites), Jephthah's speech is rendered indirectly, i.e. transposed. In the dialogues with his kin (the Hebrews, his daughter), his speech is narrated; the narrator merely conveys the function and the approximate content of the speech. The account of the vow consists of a combination of these two forms of speech representation, i.e. to transpose and narrate speech.

The negotiations about leadership are very brief. The people of the country come 'begging him to support them and promising to confer his command upon him for all time' (5.258). In contrast to the biblical text, the people beg rather than address Jephthah through imperatives. This is in line

144. L.H. Feldman 1998a: 462-89.

145. Brown (1992: 118) ignores the critical dimension of the narrator's characterization of Jephthah when she states, 'Jephthah is presented in *Ant.* as an outstanding military leader and statesman'.

with a tendency in *Ant.* towards abstraction and indirect report. In comparison to the biblical narrative, however, their far-reaching offer makes the position of the people appear more humble. Still, Jephthah 'declined their request, reproaching them for not having aided him when he was flagrantly wronged by his brethren' (5.258). What is new here is the idea that he was 'flagrantly wronged'. In the biblical text, Jephthah's speech indicates that he is the object of hate, whereas in *Ant.* he is the object of injustice. In the context of negotiation, the latter motivation, injustice as the explanation for Jephthah's expulsion, makes a stronger case for Jephthah as a subject. Instead of bemoaning his own personal tragedy, as he did in the biblical text, Jephthah can reproach his opponents for their lack of support. Although their offer of leadership over them is neither reformulated nor confirmed through oaths, Jephthah finally accepts it. In terms of justice and power, Jephthah thereby achieves a role reversal. The victim answers the supplications of his oppressors, and by this act, his superiors become his subjects.

Jephthah's confrontation with his daughter is reduced to a minimum of three verbal acts in *Ant.* First, he 'wails in anguish at the greatness of the blow' (5.264). The biblical text's specific mourning practice of tearing one's clothes is here replaced by an expression with less explicit Jewish connotations. Secondly, he 'chid his daughter for her haste in meeting him, seeing that he had dedicated her to God' (5.264). The sentence contains a paradox. Jephthah rebukes his daughter as he did the Hebrews earlier, although her offence, her 'haste', is trivial. At the same time, however, it is made clear that Jephthah himself is the cause of the blow by dedicating her to God. In this case, he is the subject, not the object, of injustice.

The daughter's response contrasts with Jephthah's speech in its lack of explicit emotion. Rather than protest, she affirms the necessity of the sacrifice in addition to requesting a respite. Agreeing to this respite is Jephthah's third verbal act, which ends their dialogue (5.266). Once again, Jephthah yields to the proposal of his counterpart. Vis-à-vis his daughter, Jephthah is, however, the offending party. His acceptance of her request could be interpreted as a form of compensation, which does little to alter effectively the balance of power between them.

Jephthah initiates negotiations with the Ammanite king when he sends him an embassy 'to remonstrate with him on his raid' (5.261). In return, Israel is 'reproached' for its exodus and 'required to quit Amorea, as the primeval heritage of the Ammanite king's forefathers' (5.261). To this, Jephthah offers a lengthy response, which mirrors the previous line of his enemy in many ways:

Jephthah replied that they had no just grievance against his people's ancestors on the subject of Amorea and ought rather to be grateful to them for having left them Ammanitis, which Moses might have taken to boot; and, bidding him quit that land of theirs which God had won for them and of

which three hundred years later they were in possession, he declared that he would battle with them (5.262).

As in his dialogue with his daughter, Jephthah's reasoning is logically inconsistent. On the one hand, Jephthah proclaims that Israel is the offended party. On the other, he does not refute the accusation of past aggression. Rather, he states that Moses, had he wanted to, could have acquired the entire land and that Israel's present right to the land is based on long possession and on the fact that God had conquered it, not on original inheritance. In contrast to the biblical narrative, *Ant.* gives no evidence of the unjust treatment that Israel might have suffered before its conquest. The claim to innocence in *Ant.* therefore appears to serve as a mere pretext for an Israelite attack.

Jephthah's negotiation with the Ammanites is more a demonstration of strength than a serious attempt to legitimize the war. The (ironic?) exhortation to be grateful serves to belittle the enemy and to bolster his own position. The final declaration of war shows that he has kept the initiative throughout the negotiations. The causal link between the negotiations and the war is made more obvious. As in the biblical text, the diplomatic effect of the negotiations is non-existent. What Jephthah does achieve through his speech, however, is to present himself as a formidable foe. Whereas the biblical text concludes the negotiations with the observation that the Ammanite king did not listen, *Ant.* concludes them with Jephthah's dismissal of the envoys.

The Ephraimites attack Jephthah because, they aver, he did not tell them about the expedition against the Ammanites and because he reserved the booty and the glory for himself. These charges trigger Jephthah's longest and most detailed speech in *Ant.*:

Thereto he replied first that they were not unaware that their kinsfolk were beset and that when called upon for aid they had not come, whereas they ought, even before being asked, to have learnt of the matter and sped to arms; next that this was an iniquitous enterprise of theirs, after not having dared to face the foe, to rush upon their kinsmen; and he threatened, God helping, to be avenged on them unless they showed themselves reasonable (5.267-68).

Jephthah makes four points in response. First, he denies the Ephraimite version of what happened. As in the biblical text, words stand against words. Interestingly, however, Jephthah actively refutes only their first charge, that of negligence. Secondly, Jephthah goes further and argues that the Ephraimites themselves were responsible for gaining knowledge of the matter and that they ought to have come to his aid without being called. This ostensibly unreasonable claim has affinities with the exhortation to be grateful in the previous negotiation. Both statements could be understood as provocations of the enemy. Moreover, the statements imply that neither the

Ammanites nor the Ephraimites have shown due respect towards the most powerful party, i.e. Jephthah. According to Jephthah's line of reasoning, it would be preposterous—that is, inconsistent with the hierarchical order—to expect that the superior Jephthah would go to the subordinate Ephraimites begging for help.

Jephthah's third point is the double accusation that the Ephraimite attack is unjust and an act of cowardice. Once again, Jephthah finds himself the offended party. Moreover, he offers a new explanation of the conflict: it was due to the lack of courage, not of knowledge, that the Ephraimites stayed at home during the expedition. The Ephraimites are thus constructed as the opposite of Jephthah, as cowards by comparison to him who defeated the Ammanites. Finally, Jephthah threatens them with revenge unless they prove 'reasonable'. This amounts to a last warning to the Ephraimites and it is close to a declaration of war. As was the case during the negotiations with the Ammanites, no diplomatic outcome is reached. The negotiations are described by the narrator as a failure—Jephthah did not persuade them.

A comparison of Jephthah's response to the Ephraimite threat to that of Gideon in *Ant.* 5.230-31 reveals the inefficiency of Jephthah's speech. Faced with the same accusation of negligence, Gideon does not deny it but instead blames the deity. Moreover, he implies that he is ready to share the booty with the Ephraimites. The effect is immediate: the Ephraimites are pacified and no civil war breaks out. The narrator of *Ant.* lauds Gideon and points out that he 'did the Hebrews a greater service than by his military success; for he rescued them from civil strife when they were on the brink of it' (5.231). The narrator's introductory description of Gideon as 'a man of moderation' thus proves appropriate. No such comment accompanies Jephthah's speech. Rather than striving for appeasement, Jephthah apparently enflames the conflict. As a speaker, he does not give proof of the moderation that he demands from others.¹⁴⁶

The vow is Jephthah's shortest speech, which he utters after the dismissal of the Ammanite envoys and immediately before the attack:

Then, after praying for victory and promising to sacrifice, should he return to his home unscathed, and to offer up the first creature that should meet him, he closed with the enemy... (5.263).

The account of the vow contains a mixture of narrated and transposed speech. First, Jephthah prays for victory. Then, and somewhat in tension with his prayer, he promises sacrifice in return for a safe homecoming. Finally, he specifies the nature of the sacrificial object. *Ant.* nowhere comes near the complete formula of the vow found in the biblical text, and the use of the

146. L.H. Feldman's (1998b: 181) statement that 'Jephthah possesses the virtue of moderation' is based solely on the occurrence of the verb *σωφρονῶσιν* in Jephthah's speech.

neuter gender to describe the sacrificial object increases the vagueness of the promise.¹⁴⁷ The 'first creature' (πᾶν ὃ τι καὶ πρῶτον) could be a person or just as well an animal. The elusiveness of the vow in *Ant.* reduces the impression of rashness on Jephthah's part. In Saussure's terminology, the range of signifieds that would fit Jephthah's sign has increased. Yet, paradoxically, his offer has at the same time become less far-reaching. Therefore, the vow appears, to a lesser degree in the narrative of *Ant.* than in the biblical text, as a means by which to buy divine assistance. In *Ant.*, Jephthah challenges God, not through self-assertiveness, but, possibly, through his lack of piety.

In terms of independence, the Jephthah of *Ant.* is a character of strong initiative. In contrast to the biblical text, there is no explicit indication that Jephthah serves as an instrument of the divine, since God neither strengthens him before the battle nor assists him during it. In return, Jephthah addresses the deity only once, when he makes the vow. He does not approach God in prayer nor does he invoke the deity as a witness in his speeches, as he did in Judges.¹⁴⁸ The only hint of a connection between the two actors is implicit: the note in the introduction that God was about to help the Hebrews.

Jephthah's relationships with the other actors also demonstrate increased independence. It is not said that he fled when his brothers expelled him, but only that he 'was living' in 'Galaditis', 'receiving' people and 'paying them wages'. Jephthah is cast as the wealthy warlord rather than the deprived victim. The conclusion of the negotiations with the people of Galaditis also points to a stronger and more active character. *Ant.* gives no account of Jephthah's instalment as the head of the people; it is not suggested that Jephthah's leadership actually depended on their support, which is the case in the biblical narrative. Rather, in *Ant.* Jephthah immediately departs from the negotiating table to the battlefield (5.260) in order promptly to take charge of affairs (5.261). Jephthah's verbal dealings with his enemies leads to war; he almost declares war on Ammon formally and he threatens the Ephraimites with revenge. Although Jephthah acts in response to external aggression, he regains the initiative through his speeches. The sheer number of acts attributed to him in the account of the Ammanite war is an indication of Jephthah's status as an independent character.¹⁴⁹

147. I agree with L.H. Feldman (1998b: 182-83) that both MT (using a relative pronoun of undetermined gender) and LXX (using the masculine gender) to a higher degree imply that the expected sacrificial object is a person with the capacity to choose whether to come out or not.

148. Jephthah invokes God as a witness both in the negotiations with the Gileadite elders (11.9-10) and with the Ammonite king (11.27). After the agreement with the elders, Jephthah speaks of all these things to Yhwh in Mizpah.

149. The same applies to the account of the Ephraimite war (5.269).

[H]e closed with the enemy, defeated them outright, and massacring pursued them..., crossing into Ammanitis, he destroyed many cities, carried off spoil, and delivered his countrymen from a servitude... (5.263).

Transformation is alien to the Jephthah of *Ant.* He is constructed as a mighty man throughout the text. Neither exile nor leadership appears to affect any change in his character. Finally, neither the sacrifice nor the Ephraimite war poses any real threat to his status.

The Daughter

The role of the daughter is rather peripheral in *Ant.* In comparison to the biblical narrative, she is the subject of fewer acts and her speech is briefer. The narrator pays her no specific attention and the ritual of commemoration is omitted altogether.

The narrator in *Ant.* juxtaposes two biblical epithets to describe the daughter. She is Jephthah's 'only daughter, a virgin yet' (5.264). As in the biblical text, she is defined in relation to her father and in terms of sexual categories. However, whereas the biblical narrator returned to comment on the daughter three times in this scene, the narrator in *Ant.* does so only once. With regard to her sexual status, *Ant.* lacks the explicitness of the biblical account.¹⁵⁰ Furthermore, at the moment of confrontation, she is presented as coming alone and without the conventional signs of celebration. Cast in this way, the daughter is not part of any female collective or tradition and is given no apparent motive for coming to meet her father.

Whereas the narrator makes no explicit evaluative comment about the daughter, the dialogue between the daughter and her father invites a comparison with two similar situations in *Ant.*, the near-sacrifices of Isaac (1.232) and Jonathan (6.126-28).¹⁵¹ The daughter reacts calmly to Jephthah's criticism; 'she learnt her destiny without displeasure, to wit that she must die in return for her father's victory and the liberation of her fellow-citizens' (5.265). As in the biblical narrative, the daughter accepts the necessity of her death, although in *Ant.* this is formulated in political rather than in theological categories. In contrast to Judges, however, the daughter does not actively exhort Jephthah to carry out his vow.

Isaac's response to the news of his impending death at the hands of his father Abraham is more enthusiastic. He receives it 'with joy' and the narrator describes him as 'brave-hearted' (1.232). He assures Abraham of his willingness to die, even if this were the decision of his father alone. Finally, he hurries to the altar and his presumed death which, through the intervention of God, never occurs. Jonathan, like Jephthah's daughter, is initially the

150. This is evident e.g. in the comment that she 'had not known a man' (Judg. 11.39).

151. L.H. Feldman 1998b: 189.

object of his father's vow (for eating the honey). Unlike her, he retorts that the vow was an 'imprecation' (6.126). In what follows, however, he asserts that he will not seek to be spared. Moreover, he finds his coming death 'very sweet', since it is precipitated by his father's piety and the military victory. The narrator comments favourably on Jonathan's behaviour by describing his surrender as 'noble and magnanimous'. The people immediately rescue Jonathan from his father's word, which, in the end, is degradingly labelled as a 'curse' (6.128).

The comparison of these passages shows a basic similarity in that they all stress the willingness of the child. However, whereas Isaac and Jonathan speak of their deaths in clearly positive terms, the reaction of Jephthah's daughter is described by a negation and, indirectly, by narrated speech. Moreover, the narrator lauds both Isaac and Jonathan for their attitudes of submission (although Jonathan actually does voice a protest), whereas the daughter is passed over in silence. Thus it appears that the narrator veils both the character of Jephthah's daughter as well as the impact of her sacrifice. This is in line with the general tendency in *Ant.* to reduce and discredit the roles of biblical women.¹⁵² More specifically, in *Ant.*, daughters are of interest only when they mirror their fathers by their actions.¹⁵³ To turn Jephthah's daughter into a heroine would divert attention from the main male character.¹⁵⁴

Two points can be made with regard to independence and transformation. First, the daughter's acceptance of the sacrifice is not demonstrated in action. *Ant.* includes the request for a respite, which is her only unquestionably independent act, but omits her actual departure, her mourning and her return from the mountains. The daughter's stay in the mountains is reported

152. L.H. Feldman (1998b: 564-65) lists the 'Derogatory View of Women' as one of the factors that influenced Josephus in his rewriting of the Bible, i.e., the writing of *Jewish Antiquities*. The belittling of Queen Salome Alexandra (1.111-12) and that of Deborah (5.200-210) serve as major examples of this attitude. L.H. Feldman (1998a: 188-92) discusses Josephus's attitude to women in more general terms, giving examples not only from *Ant.* but also from *Life* and *Jewish War*. Earlier (but hardly comprehensive) treatments of the view of women in Josephus's works feature in Stagg and Stagg (1978: 45-48), Bailey (1987: 155-57) and Brown (1992: 15-16). Sterling (1998: 104-71) offers a thorough analysis of how Josephus treats the book of Ruth and concludes that 'Boaz is elevated and Naomi and Ruth are lowered' (129).

153. Amaru 1988: 169. Amaru's general point (1988: 143-70) is that Josephus's portraits of women are modelled according to five stereotypes, where even the heroines are simplified, e.g., constructed around a single virtue.

154. L.H. Feldman 1998b: 189. Contra Brown (1992: 122), I do not find that a comparison between Jephthah's daughter and Isaac in *Ant.* supports the idea that the former is a 'model child'. Brown does not do justice to the differences shown above. However, this is not to say that the behaviour of Jephthah's daughter is not consistent with the Stoic ideal of accepting one's fate and the general Graeco-Roman as well as Jewish ideal of obedience to one's parents, which Brown also appeals to as arguments.

instead by the brief impersonal phrase, lit. 'after this (time)' (μετὰ τοῦτον). Secondly, the daughter's speech indicates that the sacrifice has significance for the entire people; however, the narrator's omission of the commemoration ritual weakens this point.¹⁵⁵ Jephthah's daughter undergoes no transformation of status in *Ant.* She is a more passive and one-dimensional figure in *Ant.* than in the biblical text.

Conclusions on Ant. 5.255-70

Like the biblical text, *Ant.* features a tension between the story and the narrative with regard to its centre. The Ammanite and the Ephraimite wars are logically more closely connected as the two central events, whereas the purpose of the sacrifice remains obscure. In the case of the sacrifice, the narrative's order and rhythm do not indicate unambiguously where emphasis lies. The use of prolepsis and pause gives emphasis to the sacrifice, whereas the development of the scenes foregrounds the Ephraimite war. Thus, *Ant.* solves one problem of coherence (the Ephraimite war), while in fact making another one worse (the sacrifice).

The driving force in the narrative of *Ant.* is undoubtedly Jephthah himself. Although God's changed attitude towards the Hebrews in the beginning of the narrative is made clearer than in the biblical text, the deity neither strengthens Jephthah before the battle nor aids him during it. Thus, there is no uncertainty with regard to who is responsible for the vow; Jephthah is under no divine influence when he swears it. Furthermore, Jephthah himself sets off the fighting by declaring war on the enemy rather than delaying it through prolonged negotiations. Accordingly, the influence of the people and the daughter is also reduced. The leaders of Galaditis make their appeal to Jephthah from a lowly position, approaching him as beggars rather than as negotiators. The daughter does not exhort Jephthah to execute his vow, and the narrative does not include any account of her departure to and return from the mountains.

The narrator's explicit judgment on the narrated events is very clear: the sacrifice is condemned as contrary both to God and to the law. In an extensive comment, moreover, the narrator explains the tragedy as the result of deficiencies in Jephthah's character, specifically, his lack of piety and wisdom.

155. I do not agree with Brown (1992: 121), when, comparing Jephthah's daughter with Iphigenia and quoting Lattimore (1964), she states: 'As in the saga of Iphigenia, she holds it within her power to shape the story so that her sacrifice "becomes not merely an act of bloody brutality inflicted by overwhelming force, but a choice of honor"'. Brown exaggerates the daughter's independence and makes no distinction between crucial events (the story) and the legitimizing of these events by the characters' speech (the narrative). Rather than shaping the story, Jephthah's daughter makes, in my opinion, a virtue of accepting events beyond her control.

In view of the comprehensive characterization of Jephthah, however, the picture becomes more uncertain. On the one hand, Jephthah features as the least esteemed judge in *Ant.* and he is even rebuked by the narrator. On the other hand, his background is cleared of all taints. He also appears as a more independent subject than his biblical counterpart and his speech serves more consistently to demonstrate his power in a provocative way. As a result, the Jephthah of *Ant.* features as an erring but mighty man. The narrative takes little interest in his daughter and reduces her to an even more anonymous object than she is in the biblical text.

3

THE ORATORIO

Oratorio is the artistic genre that has generated most interpretations of the Jephtha narrative. More than one hundred works dealing with Jephtha and his daughter were composed between the mid-seventeenth and the mid-eighteenth centuries.¹ They fall into two main categories. There are, on the one hand, short narrative works with few characters and, on the other hand, long dramatic ones with many characters. Today, only two oratorios are still played with some frequency; Giacomo Carissimi's *Jephte* from the beginning of the period (1650) belongs to the former category. This thirty-minute piece features only three actors—Jephte, his daughter and Historicus. Although some variation is achieved through the selection of quotes from the biblical text, it can hardly be considered a rewriting of the narrative. George Friedrich Handel's *Jephtha* from the end of the same period (1751) belongs to the latter category. This three-hour work includes a number of new actors and represents a radical reinterpretation of the narrative. Yet neither the choice of topic nor the form can be considered unique. Rather, as the last of Handel's numerous oratorios, *Jephtha* belongs at the height of the general development of the genre.

Introduction to Jephtha

The motifs of Handel's oratorios are all taken from the Hebrew Bible or from the deuterocanonical works, with the sole exceptions of *Theodora* and *Messiah*.² In as many as four cases, they are even based on the book of Judges.³

1. Sypherd 1948: 112.

2. Twelve oratorios feature motifs from the Hebrew Bible, three from the deuterocanonical works and only one from the New Testament (*Messiah*). However, the latter actually includes more texts from the Hebrew Bible, e.g. from the Psalms, than from the New Testament (Smither 1977: 351).

3. Those from the Judges include, beside *Jephtha*, the oratorios of *Deborah*, *Samson* and *Joshua*, of which the last features a love story between Othniel and Achsah from Judges 1.

How can this consistent choice be understood in the historical context of eighteenth-century England? Ruth Smith suggests a few relevant factors.⁴ To begin with, the literate public was well acquainted with biblical narratives, since they met them both through readings in church and through paraphrases in popular magazines.⁵ The Bible was praised for its 'sublime quality', and there are numerous examples of eighteenth-century manuals that recommend the use of the Bible for literary composition.⁶ Scholarly works also exhibited an appreciation for the Bible as literature.⁷ Moreover, the relevance of the Bible was enhanced by the recurrent analogy of ancient Israel to modern Britain, found in both theological tracts and secular literature, such as Milton's *Samson Agonistes*.⁸ In the oratorios too, this analogy was facilitated by certain tendencies in the librettists' treatment of the biblical material.⁹

Handel's audience was by no means a homogenous group. Broadly speaking, it could be described as split between two camps.¹⁰ On the one hand, there was the aristocracy, which demanded sheer entertainment in the form of modern opera. On the other, there was the increasingly affluent Puritan middle class, which wanted non-dramatized moral productions in accordance with their beliefs. The oratorios thus had to fulfil the sometimes contradictory roles of both *divertissement* and religious edification, a balancing act which Handel successfully managed.¹¹ The controversies about Handel's oratorios

4. Smith 1995.

5. E.g. in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (Smith 1995: 121, 126).

6. According to Smith (1995: 108), many of these were reinforced by the first-century treatise on rhetoric, *On the Sublime*, then attributed to Longinus.

7. The style of the Pentateuch, for example, was considered as '[s]trong and masculine' and the biblical poetry was deemed as 'less artificial...more nervous, lively, and expressive than ours' in Husband's preface to *Miscellany of Poems*, quoted by Smith (1995: 119).

8. Smith 1995: 215. Along the same lines, Smither (1977: 351) proposes that the subject matter appealed to Handel's audiences due to the possibility of identification, by which the British audience perceived a parallel between themselves and the Israelites through their nationalism, their heroic leaders and the special protection given by God. Although I find it somewhat hazardous to speculate on the psychology of collectives, Smith's evidence can be used to support Smither's proposal.

9. Most significant of these in *Jephtha* are the portrayal of the Jewish people as a nation without tribal divisions as well as the emphasis on divinely given victories along with the omission of military defeats (Smith 1995: 233).

10. Smither, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music*, online.

11. Roston (1968: 181) argues that it was largely due to the 'Handelian compromise'—'the dramatisation of a sacred theme with the solemnity of church music'—that scriptural drama was revived in Britain. Cf. Young 1948: 49. Flower (1947: 215) gives a detailed account of the controversies surrounding the first oratorio, *Esther*. The advertisement in *The Daily Mail* (17 April 1732) serves as a good example of the situation:

were not merely a matter of taste; they also had financial and judicial implications. If the church or state authorities were offended, the oratorios risked being banned.¹²

In order to understand the transition from biblical prose to the scenic form of the oratorio, the influence from Greek drama is crucial. This influence is evident through, for example, the general display of a benevolent deity and through the tendency to present clear moral lessons.¹³ The librettist behind Handel's *Jephtha*, the Reverend Thomas Morell, held Greek drama in high regard and even attempted to establish theological links between these texts and the Christian Bible.¹⁴ There are also examples with more direct connections. Morell drew not only on the biblical text, but also on George Buchanan's sixteenth-century Latin drama *Jephthes sive votum* (*Jephthe ou le voeu*).¹⁵ Euripides' two plays about Iphigenia—*Iphigenia at Aulis* and *Iphigenia in Tauris*—have in all probability also contributed to the libretto.¹⁶

Within the corpus of Handel's oratorios, *Jephtha* occupies a prominent place.¹⁷ It is his last oratorio¹⁸ and Morell features as the librettist for the fourth time. Several themes or character types from previous works are reused in *Jephtha*. The choice of a national leader in a context of oppression is a theme from Morell's first libretto, *Judas Maccabaeus* (1747). *Alexander Balus* (1748) features the collusion of private and public interests in the life of a ruler, so crucial to the characterization of *Jephtha*. Even more significant are perhaps the parallels with Morell's third libretto, *Theodora* (1750), a story about two Christian martyrs under Diocletian's persecution. To begin with, both oratorios explore the theme of human subjection to destiny—of obedi-

'N.B.—There will be no action on the stage, but the House will be fitted up in a decent manner for the Audience.'

12. Staged performances of biblical dramas were for a long time prohibited in Britain, e.g. through the Blasphemy Act of 1605. Smith 1995: 113.

13. Smith 1995: 57, 60.

14. Smith (1995: 57) quotes Morell: 'It has been proved by many writers...that the choicest contemplations of Gentile philosophy were derived, originally, if not immediately, from the sacred scriptures and Jewish church.'

15. From this work, which is modelled as a Greek tragedy, Morell takes an angel and the names of two of the new actors, Iphis and Storgè (Smith 1995: 340 and Sypherd 1948: 15-16).

16. It has not been proved that Morell actually used Euripides' plays as sources, although much evidence points in that direction. Nott (1996: 200), among others, observes that the roles of Morell's five characters exactly match those of Euripides in *Iphigenia at Aulis*.

17. Dean (1959: 599) describes it as a 'masterpiece', despite certain defects. Young (1947: 166) labels *Jephtha* as Handel's '*summa summarum*'.

18. An English version of *The Triumph of Time and Truth* appeared after *Jephtha* but contains very little new music. Dean 1959: 589.

ence to God even when it leads to death. Secondly, the female character Theodora shares with Jephtha's daughter, Iphis, the development from innocence to responsibility.¹⁹ Early models for the grieving mother, Jephtha's wife Storgè, feature in at least three of Handel's works, in *Athalia* (1733), *Hercules* (1745) and *Belshazzar* (1747).²⁰

Narratology has been developed in order to analyse narrative texts. This means that some narratological concepts will not be immediately applicable to the genre of oratorio. In these cases, I will use narratology as a platform from which to ask specific questions.²¹

The analysis that follows is primarily based on the libretto. The musical score is considered to some extent with regard to the rhythm and characterization of the oratorio. As the source for my analysis, I use the vocal score edited by Vincent Novello (1849).

The Story of Jephtha

The story of the libretto is decisively shorter and less complex than that of Judges, although four new actors are introduced: Jephtha's brother Zebul, Jephtha's wife Storgè, the daughter's beloved Hamor, and an angel. The daughter is named Iphis and the deity is referred to as Jehovah, Heaven or God. The majority of musicological critics criticize Morell harshly for ruining the biblical drama.²² Yet it must be said in Morell's defense that he merely followed common exegesis in the eighteenth century.²³

19. Despite the thematic resemblances, Dean (1959: 596) finds that the musical differentiation between the two young women is very distinct.

20. Young 1947: 140. Nicotris of *Belshazzar* criticizes her son for impiety (no. 26) and is torn between hope and despair (no. 50). *Athalia*, although distinguished as a woman of power, has nightmares and sees, literally, 'scenes of horror' (nos. 10, 11). Dejanira, in *Hercules*, also waits and despairs (no. 8), but (unlike Storgè) tries to sweep away her worries (no. 14).

21. The oratorio lacks, for example, a narrator of the kind found in narrative texts. However, the chorus, and sometimes a character, can serve to fulfil the equivalent narrative or ideological functions. These kinds of theoretical adjustments will be discussed as they appear.

22. Smither (1977: 342) finds that the changed ending 'effectively negated the libretto's tragic, dramatic impact'. According to Dean (1959: 592), Morell 'fails, and comes near to wrecking the oratorio...in his treatment of the vow and the tragic end'. Sypherd (1948: 116) states: 'Fortunately for us, the wonderful music more than offsets the mediocrity of the text.' To my knowledge, only one voice (Nott 1996: 194) has ever been raised in defence of the libretto.

23. The interpretation that the daughter in fact survived derived from a grammatical observation of Ibn Ezra, elaborated by David Kimchi and passed on to Christian interpretative tradition by Nicholas of Lyra. See Gunn 2005.

The action opens with Zebul's pleading with the people to repent and their corresponding pledge to do so. It continues with brief negotiations that lead to Jephtha's acceptance of Zebul's offer to lead the people. Inspired by the Spirit of God, Jephtha then swears an oath to Jehovah that what, or whoever, shall first greet him when he returns home, shall belong to God, or be offered as a sacrifice. When he hears about the Ammonite refusal to agree to a diplomatic solution, Jephtha goes out to attack them and he defeats them with the help of an army of the Cherubim and the Seraphim. On arrival at Mizpah, the victorious Jephtha first meets his daughter Iphis. Jephtha despairs of his fate but resists the attempts made by Zebul, Storgè and Hamor to make him spare Iphis. She, on her part, declares her willingness to die and (indirectly) urges the priests to proceed with the sacrifice. The suspense is resolved through the advent of an angel, who explains that Iphis need not actually be sacrificed but should instead be dedicated to God for the rest of her life. The mourning is thus transformed into celebration.

The story can be summarized in the following list of narrative propositions, of which only five events (nos. 4-8) match the biblical account. The figures within brackets refer to the musical numbers, in which the events take place.

1. Zebul urges the people to repent (3).
2. The people pledge repentance to Jehovah (4).
3. Zebul negotiates with Jephtha about the leadership of the people (5).
4. Jehovah strengthens Jephtha (15).
5. Jephtha makes a vow to Jehovah (15).
6. The Ammonites refuse Gilead's terms (23).
7. Jephtha defeats the Ammonites (24).
8. Iphis greets the victorious Jephtha (37).
9. Zebul, Storgè and Hamor urge Jephtha to take back the vow (45).
10. An angel interrupts the sacrifice (55).

With regard to the beginning, Morell merely retains a fragment of the introductory controversy in Judges. There is no direct account of any reciprocal rejection, namely, the people's sin and the wrath of Jehovah; and, in Morell's work, Israel's specific repentance recorded in the biblical account is transformed into a verbal promise, uttered by the chorus. Thus, the conflict between Jehovah and the people is merely implied, whereas the explicit confrontation here occurs between Zebul and the people.²⁴ The fact that Zebul later negotiates with Jephtha deepens the unity of the story. The story in the oratorio cannot, as in the biblical one, be broken down into two story-lines. Furthermore, there is no specific Ammonite attack to motivate

24. It is consistent with the fact that God does not appear as an actor that there is no equivalent of the implied divine forgiveness, which comes across in the biblical account.

the course of action. Instead, the eighteen years of Ammonite oppression serve as a general background. The main issue for the libretto's introduction is the election of a military leader, whereas in Judges, it is the apostasy of the people.

A significant change at the centre of the story concerns Jephtha's vow. In the libretto the promise (apodosis) contains not one, but two, options, either sacrifice or dedication. As a result, the conditions governing the entire course of events are dramatically altered. The vow no longer appears as something absolute. Two further changes are made with regard to the war. To begin with, Morell turns the Ammonite refusal of Gilead's offer into the explicit catalyst of the war. Moreover, Jephtha wins the war with the support of the Cherubim and the Seraphim.

The most radical changes involve the ending.²⁵ After the confrontation between Jephtha and his daughter Iphis, the final event of the libretto is the angel's interruption of the sacrifice, explaining the intent and consequence of the oath. Thanks to the ambiguity of the vow, it is not necessary for Iphis to be sacrificed as a burnt offering. Instead she will be dedicated to Jehovah through life-long virginity. However, no concrete act of dedication occurs in the libretto. As a consequence of the aborted sacrifice, the daughter neither asks for a respite nor spends time in mourning on the mountains. Finally, the ensuing Ephraimite war of the biblical story is omitted.

Several questions arise with regard to the logic of Morell's story. On the one hand, the libretto's story is more united and homogenous than the one in Judges. Two sets of possibilities are raised and resolved: victory or defeat (in war) and sacrifice or dedication (of Iphis). Both conflicts are positively resolved, that is, improved in the terminology of Brémond.²⁶ This departs from the biblical story, where the outcome is much more ambiguous. On the other hand, it appears logically peculiar that Jephtha neither understands the intent of the vow nor remembers his two different options.²⁷ The angel functions here as the authoritative exegete of Jephtha's words. The tragedy of the story proves to be a simple verbal misunderstanding.²⁸ Thus, when

25. Originally, the oratorio ended with the chorus 'Theme Sublime' (61). Handel added ten musical numbers, supposedly to make the third part long enough (Dean 1959: 617); however, these numbers contain no events in the qualified sense.

26. See Chapter 1, 'A Standard Story'.

27. This may be so for the exegete in retrospect, but not for the audience who does not know the work beforehand. Although somewhat illogical, it remains dramatic, which must count as the overarching goal within this specific genre. (I am indebted to David Gunn for this comment.)

28. Nott (1996: 199) argues convincingly that the ending mirrors the deist tendencies of eighteenth-century Britain to find 'reasonable' interpretations of biblical stories. However, from a narratological point of view, there is no doubt that the changed ending softens the severity of the tragedy.

Jephtha vows in the libretto, not much is at stake. This does not mean that the ending is altogether happy, however, since it involves sudden separation for Hamor and Iphis.

It belongs to the genre of oratorio that events are told rather than shown. This explains why speech-acts are used even more frequently in the libretto than in Judges. All five new events are speech-acts. In fact, the only non-discursive event in Morell's *Jephtha* is the battle against the Ammonites.

With regard to the function of the actors, the four new ones—Zebul, Storgè, Hamor, and the angel—all belong, in the terminology of Greimas, to the category of the helper actant.²⁹ This means that their function is to be helpmates to Jephtha.³⁰ However, at the level of the story, it is only the angel who plays a vital role, by radically changing the outcome. The significance of Storgè and Hamor lies mainly in mirroring and contrasting Jephtha and Iphis.³¹

Like the daughter in the biblical story, Iphis takes initiatives to further the course of events but, whereas the biblical daughter directly exhorts her father to proceed with the sacrifice, the Iphis of the libretto indirectly urges the priests to do so. The libretto thus eliminates that element of conflict between Jephtha and Iphis. Since the sacrifice never occurs, I do not count this speech-act of Iphis as an event proper.

The fact that none of Jephtha's enemies is dramatized enhances the impression that the intrigue is rather abstract. All the actors belong, as it were, to the same side of the war. The dominant negative force of the libretto is a part of the main subject himself, Jephtha, due to his misapprehension of his own words. The only enacted opposition to Jephtha consists of Storgè's rebuke (42) and the trio's (Zebul's, Storgè's and Hamor's) attempt to dissuade him from making the sacrifice (45). Although they do not succeed in this, the angel implicitly justifies their criticism by actually stopping the sacrifice. Therefore, I regard the trio's protest as an event in the story.

Jehovah's function as the *destinateur* of the story has been elaborated in three ways in the libretto. To begin with, Jephtha subjectively experiences how God's Spirit strengthens him before he offers up his vow. Secondly, the divine assistance in battle is made concrete through the army of the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Lastly, the angel is sent to Jephtha as a redeeming messenger from Heaven.

29. Zebul and Hamor are mentioned in the story of Abimelech (Judg. 9.28, 30), the first as an official of Shechem, the latter as its forefather.

30. Zebul replaces the Gileadite elders as negotiator. However, his position vis-à-vis Jephtha is much humbler than the one the elders held in the biblical story.

31. See below 'Characterization'.

The Time of Jephtha

Before treating the order and rhythm of the oratorio, I shall briefly consider its formal structure.³² The oratorio is divided into three parts, which roughly correspond to the phases of preparation, climax and resolution.³³ In the first part, Jephtha takes up the leadership of the people, swears the oath and is confronted with the Ammonite refusal. The victory over the Ammonites can be assumed to have taken place in the interval between the first and second part. In the second part, Jephtha and Iphis meet, and in the third, the angel arrives to resolve the situation. Thematically, the oratorio wavers back and forth between the two poles of happiness and mourning. At the centre of the first part (scenes 4-5), Jephtha and Storgè alone formulate these stand-points.³⁴ The beginning of the second part is devoted to reports on the victory, whereas its second half concerns the shock of the impending sacrifice. The third part reverses this contrast already in its first scene, where the angel transforms grief into celebration.

With regard to order, the ratio between analepsis and prolepsis in Morell's narrative is the opposite of that of the biblical one. In the libretto, analepsis serves as a means by which both to supply background information and to narrate the central events. Zebul creates the scenario of the story by parenthetically mentioning the long years of Ammonite oppression and he supplies a crucial event in the story by retroactively telling Jephtha of the Ammonites' negative response. Hamor's more detailed accounts of the Ammonite refusal as well as of the victory also appear in the form of analepsis. Whereas the multiple analepses of the biblical narrative served to emphasize the account of war, the rare occurrences in the libretto instead signal a reduced emphasis on the war.

The libretto abounds with allusions to the future fate of the actors. Some of these can be described as vague hints, while others may count as full-scale prolepses. Hints appear in the first act, when Jephtha twice expresses his invincibility.³⁵ An allusion to future happiness characterizes the oratorio's only duet, sung by Iphis and Hamor (in the third scene of the first act).³⁶

32. The aspect of frequency is not relevant to the oratorio.

33. Krummacher 1986: 108. The three parts also match the phases of Brémond's standard story. See Chapter 1, 'A Standard Story'.

34. Apart from the overture and Zebul's introduction, dialogues and choruses frame these scenes.

35. First, in the air of the second scene (6): 'Virtue my soul shall still embrace/ Goodness shall make me great/Who builds upon this steady base/Dreads no event of fate', and, secondly, in the *accompagnato* of the fourth scene (15): 'What mean these doubtful fancies of the brain/Visions of joy rise in my raptur'd soul'.

36. 'These labours past, how happy we/ How glorious will they prove/When gath'ring fruit from conquest's tree/We deck the feast of love' (14).

Storgè's ominous dreams create a contrast.³⁷ Although the object of her vision never becomes explicit, there is an escalation of disquietude in the air that follows.³⁸ Iphis dismisses her mother's premonitions and affirms the position of her father.³⁹ However, her ambiguous opening lines stand in tension to the repeated conviction of a happy ending: 'Say, my dear mother, whence these piercing cries/That force me, like a frightened bird, to fly/My place of rest' (21). I take the 'piercing cries' of the mother to allude to the father's vow, and the information that Iphis is forced 'to fly [her] place of rest' to her final dedication to Jehovah, through which she has to bid farewell to her parents forever. Thus, the overt and the covert allusions point in different directions, which increases the suspense of the story.

Immediately after the confrontation between the father and the daughter, Jephtha hints at Iphis's fate by speaking of an unspecified separation.⁴⁰ Storgè, in contrast, puts aside the enigmatic discourse and addresses Jephtha as his daughter's killer.⁴¹ In the next scene, Iphis accordingly labels herself a 'grateful victim'.⁴² In the beginning of the third act, finally, Jephtha speaks explicitly of the sacrifice.⁴³ The ensuing air, however, contains an allusion to the actual ending, where Iphis, through the interaction of an angel, is dedicated to Jehovah.⁴⁴ While the overt prolepsis points towards a tragic end, the covert allusion indicates a happy one. Jephtha thus inverts the ambiguity of Iphis's air in the first act.

The suspense of the drama is thus created through the many divergent anticipations of its end. Moreover, suspense is enhanced through the esca-

37. 'Some dire event hangs o'er our heads/Some woeful song we have to sing/In misery extreme; O, never never/Was my foreboding mind distress before/with such incessant pangs' (19).

38. 'Scenes of horror, scenes of woe/Rising from the shades below/Add new terror to the night/While in never-ceasing pain/That attends the servile chain/Joyless flow the hours of light'.

39. 'Heed not these black illusions of the night/The mocking of unquiet slumbers, heed them not/My father, touch'd with a diviner fire/Already seems to triumph in success/Nor doubt I but Jehovah hears our pray'rs' (21). Iphis's belief in her father's view of the future is confirmed anew in the air that follows (22): 'The smiling dawn of happy days/Presents a prospect clear/And pleasing hope's all-bright'ning rays'.

40. '...Be gone, my child!... Fly! be gone/And leave me to the rack of wild despair!' (39).

41. 'Of all our love, this one dear child, for thee/To be her murderer? No cruel man' (42). Storgè's prolepsis continues in what follows: 'Ere in a daughter's blood/So fair, so chaste, so good/A father's hand embrued'.

42. Her air closes with the words: 'With content I shall resign/And not murmur or repine/Sinking in the arms of death'.

43. 'A father, offering up his only child/In vow'd return for victory and peace' (51).

44. 'Waft her angels, through the skies/Far above yon azure plain/Glorious there, like you, to rise/There, like you, forever reign' (53).

tion from vague allusion to complete prolepsis. It falls to the mother to express anxiety and to speak openly about death, while the father is the last actor to recognize the consequences of his own oath. In contrast to the biblical narrative, in which the past is contested, it is the future that is contested in the libretto.

Who proves to be right, then? Paradoxically, the question has no obvious answer. Jephtha certainly wins the war in accordance with his 'visions of joy' while Storgè's nightmarish 'scenes of horror' do not come true. However, Iphis's hopeful aspirations are not fulfilled. Contrary to the words of the duet, she and Hamor do not find a common future. The intervention of the divine messenger results in a third option, dedication, which goes beyond death as well as ordinary life. This option is outlined in the oath, although none of the actors alludes to it. The finale is thus a celebration of the death that never happens, rather than of the fate that the daughter actually goes to meet.

The rhythm of the narrative of the oratorio varies greatly from that of Judges. Viewed as a dramatic text, the libretto consists entirely of scenes. From a narratological point of view, musical numbers such as choruses, airs and strictly instrumental pieces constitute pauses. Whereas the oscillation between a summary and a scene distinguishes the biblical narrative, a corresponding movement between scene and pause distinguishes the oratorio. Summaries appear in the libretto at another narrative level than in the biblical text, that is, in the speeches of the characters rather than in the words of the narrator.⁴⁵

The libretto severely reduces three of the four major scenes in the biblical narrative.⁴⁶ Only the return to Mizpah is retained and developed. This strengthens the conclusion drawn from the previous analysis of order that the writing of history is not an issue. Moreover, the libretto follows the biblical narrative in highlighting the confrontation between the father and the daughter. In a number of new scenes (in the second half of the second part), Jephtha and his co-actors struggle with the implications of the vow. The climax of the narrative, however, has been shifted forward to the scene in which the angel appears and interrupts the sacrifice. Furthermore, the new ending means that no ellipsis occurs. Whereas the biblical narrative mentions the completion of the sacrifice, the sacrifice is abolished altogether in the oratorio, and thus the tragedy is turned into comedy.

There is a frequent usage of pause, which, in the biblical narrative, served mainly as the narrator's device for characterization of the daughter. In the

45. Examples of summary in the libretto are the recitatives sung by Zebul in the beginning of the first part (2) and by Hamor in the beginning of the second (25).

46. The controversy between Israel and Yhwh and the Ammonite negotiation are reduced to summaries. The Gileadite negotiation is transformed to a simple negotiation between Jephtha and Zebul and radically shortened.

oratorio, the pause is the dominating figure of rhythm; a recitative of fifteen seconds is often followed by an air of three minutes. Thus, it is not the events *per se*, but the experience of these events that is highlighted in the oratorio. Iphis has by far the largest number of airs, which indicates a drastic expansion of her role.⁴⁷ Finally, two of the three instrumental numbers carry narrative significance. The symphonies that precede Iphis's greeting of Jephtha (35) and the arrival of the angel (57) both function to prolong suspense at crucial points in the narrative.

The Voice of Jephtha

There is no narrator in the oratorio.⁴⁸ Instead, the characters and the chorus fulfil both the narrative and the ideological function.⁴⁹ Both the characters and the chorus alternate between being part of the action and the commentary. Consequently, the narrative function cannot be distinguished as belonging to a higher level of narrating, and therefore, the 'norm' of the oratorio's text is not as easily established as that of the biblical prose narrative.

Zebul accomplishes three things in his role as narrator (2), which corresponds perfectly to the function of the biblical narrator. To begin with, he provides the narrative and the ideological context of the intrigue, namely, the Ammonite oppression. Secondly, he introduces the main character through submitting his prior knowledge (though he reduces the ambiguity of the biblical text). Thirdly, Zebul discreetly implies that a conflict exists between Jehovah and the people. The divine rage recorded in the biblical narrative is here reduced to a refusal to vouchsafe a leader. The people are correspondingly described as 'distressful'. The air that follows, in which Zebul explicitly exhorts the people to abandon their apostasy, implies two narratologically significant but paradoxical changes. To begin with, Zebul's perspective changes from that of insider to that of outsider. Secondly, he shifts from commenting on, to participation in, the action.

Hamor's account of the victory (23) is necessary for narrative reasons, since the battle cannot be enacted. However, the account is also ideologi-

47. Of twenty-three arias, Iphis has seven, Jephtha, Storgè and Hamor have four each, Zebul has three and the angel has one. The role of the daughter will be discussed below under 'Characterization'.

48. The notion of the narrative mood becomes somewhat redundant, since the oratorio is a dramatic 'text'. With regard to the aspect of distance, it would of course lie close to the pole of mimesis since it consists mostly of scenes, although the characters' lines do include narrating, i.e., diegesis. The aspect of perspective (focalization) cannot be explored due to the lack of a narrator.

49. Genette proposes three other functions of the narrator that are not operative in the oratorio: communication, directing and attestation. See Chapter 1, 'The Voice of Judges 10.6–12.7'.

cally significant since it contributes to legitimizing the victory. Israel's terms of peace are described as 'most just and righteous', and their General is said to have followed the signal of the Lord and the heavenly host. The enemy, by contrast, refused the offer 'with scorn' and is portrayed as 'proud'.

According to both Smither and Dean, the choruses in this oratorio consist mainly of emotional commentaries that are detached from the action.⁵⁰ They thereby resemble the chorus in the ancient Greek drama. With regard to their narrative function, however, it is possible to find at least three types of chorus. In the first type of chorus the choir stands apart from the action and comments on it from the outside. These choruses concern the military effort of Jephtha, the angelic armies and God (24, 26, 34). In the second type of chorus, the choir participates in the drama, playing the collective role of the Israelites. This happens when they renounce idolatry (4) and when they pray for divine support in the war (18). These choruses are speech-acts that, in the broadest sense, might be regarded as variations of Jephtha's vow. The rest of the choruses constitute a heterogeneous group of emotionally intense addresses to Jephtha and Jehovah by different, and sometimes unspecified, collectives. The semi-chorus of boys (i.e., Iphis's companions) is a repetition of Iphis's prior honorary greeting of Jephtha, which displays no other knowledge about the situation than she expresses. If this were to be regarded as a comment from an omniscient external position, it would be an example of the most cruel irony, which I doubt. The chorus of the priests (56) addresses God through a confession of powerlessness, as they find themselves caught between the law and the oath. The final chorus of the second part (50) is yet another lamentation over the enigmatic ways of the deity. By contrast, the second chorus in the final part (61) celebrates divine mercy and faithfulness. Finally, the very last chorus is a collective invitation to the house of Gilead to rejoice in the Lord's blessing of those who fear him (71).

Above all, the chorus contributes to a diverse portrayal both of the deity and of the people. Through their comments, God's power is admired. Through their addresses, God's action or non-action is lamented or celebrated. Through the active interaction of prayer or confession, the people exhibit an attitude of both subservience and hope before Jehovah's authority. It is only in his capacity as an instrument of God (24, 38) that a character such as Jephtha is commented on or addressed. The narration of the characters further emphasizes the legitimacy of the war, the appropriateness of Jephtha as God's tool and the positive relationship between God and Israel. The marked interest in God, who is not even an actor in the oratorio, sharply contrasts with that of the narrator in the biblical text. This interest serves in the narrative to make God's function as sender more obvious, and, ideologically, to make God's actions more legitimate. Thus,

50. Smither 1977: 348 and Dean 1959: 596.

the oratorio features a far more explicit theological discourse than the biblical text does. Moreover, the latter's accentuated interest in the issues of family relationships, sexuality and fertility is not matched by the oratorio's choruses, nor by the narration of its characters.

Characterization in Jephtha

Apart from speech and action, the music is crucial to the issue of characterization. The libretto and the musical score stand as parallel series of language signs that together form a whole. Tensions as well as correspondences between these two facets of the text will be observed.

Of the four main characters of the oratorio, it can be noted that Jephtha and Storgè, Iphis and Hamor in many ways function as inverted mirrors of each other.⁵¹ Zebul will not be discussed despite a large number of appearances, since he functions as something of a technical device for narration.

Jephtha

The title of the oratorio announces Jephtha as its main character. Although in quantitative terms, his prominence is by no means as complete as in the biblical text, he nevertheless participates in more than half of the scenes.⁵² He occupies a central place in the web of relationships, not so much through his actions as through his monologues and through being the object of other characters' actions or speeches.

Zebul introduces Jephtha in the first scene. The perspective is that of someone who knows him well through personal experience (2):

[A]nd who so fit a man,
As Gilead's son, our brother, valiant Jephtha?
True, we have slighted, scorn'd, expell'd him,
As of a stranger born: but well I know him;
His gen'rous soul disdains a mean revenge.

The complex series of ambiguous epithets used in the biblical text is here greatly reduced, not to say eradicated. There are three significant changes from the King James' Version, which is the text that Morell used. To begin with, references to male and female sexuality have been played down. The connotations of extraordinary masculinity through the epithet mighty man of valour is downgraded to the less explicit 'a man...valiant Jephtha'. The connection to illegitimate female sexuality through the parallel expressions son of a harlot/strange woman is made invisible, or at least much less stigmatized, through the expression 'of a stranger born'. Secondly, the ethnic

51. In the first part, e.g. Storgè laments the departure of Jephtha, while Iphis encourages her beloved Hamor to leave.

52. Jephtha features in seven of the thirteen scenes.

and social discrimination due to the exile and the association with vain men is abolished altogether. Rather, Jephtha is unambiguously called 'Gilead's son' and 'our brother'. Finally, Zebul describes Jephtha's psychological qualities positively; he is a 'generous soul', who 'disdains a mean revenge'. Zebul's account of their common childhood has the character of a confession ('we have slighted, scorn'd, expell'd him'). No recrimination on Jephtha's part is implied. Although Zebul's function here corresponds to that of the biblical narrator, the contents of their presentations differ greatly. In terms of background, Jephtha is a much less dubious figure in the libretto than in Judges.

The other characters offer further descriptions of Jephtha. Iphis draws an altogether idealized portrait. In the first air she calls her father 'the hero' and exhorts her beloved Hamor to be like him.⁵³ In the dialogue with Storgè, she defines her heroic father as divinely equipped and thus naturally successful.⁵⁴ When Iphis greets Jephtha after the victory, she juxtaposes his dual roles as the leader of the nation and the head of the family: 'Hail, glorious conqueror! Much lov'd father. Hail!' (36). Her estimation of him is not even affected by the news of the oath. Jephtha still remains her 'dearest father' (47). Storgè and Hamor confirm the view of Jephtha as a loved one.⁵⁵ When they learn of the vow, however, they voice strong criticism. Storgè calls him both a 'murderer' and a 'cruel man' (42) and urges him to take back 'the impious vow' (45). Hamor does speak of Jephtha's 'cruel purpose', but reverses his standpoint in the end.⁵⁶ No sign of any such reconciliation can be traced to Storgè.

What do Jephtha's own words say about his character? A similarity between the libretto and the biblical text lies in the fact that Jephtha is, above all, a speaker. There is, however, a great difference between these two texts, both with regard to the content and effect of his speech. In the book of Judges, Jephtha features as a rhetorically skilled negotiator, for whom the verbal conflict is often an introduction to a physical confrontation. In the libretto, Jephtha lacks enemies.⁵⁷ Only once does he appear as negotiator (5). Although the outcome is similar to that of the biblical account, the deal is closed in a completely different way. Jephtha needs no persuasion and his counterpart, Zebul, displays a much humbler attitude than the corresponding Gileadite elders. The conformity and lack of intensity in the musical score at this point confirm the formality of the negotiation.

53. 'Proclaim thee worthy to be call'd his son' (11).

54. In Iphis's effort to comfort Storgè she utters: 'My father, touched with a diviner fire already seems to triumph in success' (21).

55. Storgè speaks of a 'painful separation' from Jephtha as he marches to the front line (7). Hamor speaks as a son of Jephtha's 'ever-watchful care' (9).

56. In Hamor's final lines to Iphis he states: 'Dear! Though great Jephtha were to honour me/Still with the name of son' (66).

57. The Ephraimites are not present and Jephtha has no direct verbal exchange with the Ammonites. He is simply 'briefed' on the situation by Zebul (23).

The librettist also diminishes the severity of the confrontation between Jephtha and his daughter. Although Jephtha blames Iphis for the situation ('Thou hast undone thy father'), the force and emphasis of his accusation are milder than in the biblical text.⁵⁸ The conflict between father and daughter is displaced, primarily upon his wife Storgè. She responds to Jephtha's lamentation with a counter-accusation and by wishing him dead (42). In the quartet that follows, Storgè, Hamor and Zebul align, in words as well as in music, against Jephtha.⁵⁹ Jephtha's determination to uphold the vow and ignore the pleas of the three others is enacted musically through, for example, the sharp rhythm of his line: 'I'll hear no more, her doom is fix'd'.⁶⁰ The musical complexity of four interacting personalities together with the emotive explicitness of the words is unique in the corpus of Handel's oratorios.⁶¹ In the third act, Jephtha directs his emotions toward nature personified.⁶² His agitation is here indicated musically by the 'violent gestures' of the orchestra.⁶³

Piety is the feature that dominates Morell's Jephtha as a speaker. It has three different expressions—triumphalism, struggle and thankfulness—which in their turn correspond to the three phases of the oratorio (preparation, climax and resolution). In the musical score, the emphasis lies entirely on Jephtha's struggle, where his individuality truly blooms.

In the first part, Jephtha repeatedly maintains that his strength is completely dependent on God, both with regard to the mobilization before, and the celebration after, the battle. This dependence is most obviously shown in the musically plain recitative that leads up to the vow (15):

Strange ardour fires my breast; my arms seem strung
With tenfold vigour, and my crested helm
To reach the skies. Be humble still, my soul.
It is the spirit of God; in whose great name
I offer up my vow.⁶⁴

58. In the biblical text, the daughter brings Jephtha 'to his knees' and becomes 'his disaster'. See Chapter 1, 'Characterization in Judges 10.6–12.7'.

59. Smither 1977: 344.

60. Dean 1959: 609. Moreover, he finds that 'the stern octaves' of the orchestral coda symbolize the 'remorselessness of Jephtha's resolution'.

61. According to Young (1947: 139), the quartets in *Radamisto*, *Semele* and *Jephtha* appear 'incredible at an age when such extravagantly truthful demonstrations of human frailty and perplexity were regarded as improper interpolations in an evening's enjoyment'. In a later work (1948: 197), he calls the quartet the 'finest ensemble...in the oratorios', and compares it with those of Mozart's operas.

62. 'Hide thou thy hated beams, O sun, in clouds/And darkness, deep as is a father's woe' (51).

63. Dean 1959: 614.

64. Other examples of this are the sound of alarm (23), the praise of Hamor and Zebul (32), and the war account (33).

In the second part, Jephtha's air of victory, 'His mighty arm' (33), is likewise thoroughly conventional in musical form, scored in F major and with the typical fanfares.⁶⁵ It is not until the return to Mizpah that the characterization of Jephtha becomes vivid, most specifically through the climactic Da Capo air, 'Open thy marble jaws' (40), and the long recitative, 'Deeper and deeper still' (49).⁶⁶ The wide range of Jephtha's experience is demonstrated through the fluid tonality in the recitative, in which the music passes no less than fifteen keys.⁶⁷

In this part, the libretto lacks the nuanced dynamics of the musical score, although tensions do exist. Jephtha utters no explicit word of rebuke or bitterness toward Jehovah. Rather, the role of heaven is simply that of a recorder of the vow.⁶⁸ In sharp contrast to the character in the biblical text, Jephtha readily admits both to responsibility and to guilt when he states: 'Ere I the name of father stain/And deepest woe from conquest gain' (40).⁶⁹ Yet parallel to such unequivocal statements, Jephtha also speaks of himself as a victim. In a recitative addressed to Zebul, Hamor, and to 'my dearest wife', he finds himself 'Thrown from the summit of presumptuous joy/Down to the lowest depth of misery' (41). Moreover, in his final recitative, 'Deeper and deeper still' (49), he paradoxically concludes that it is the vigour of Jehovah (in contrast to 'Chemosh, and such fabled deities') that seals Iphis's fate. Like his daughter in the biblical text, Jephtha implies in the same recitative that the Gileadite victory is a sign of God's acceptance of the vow. Yet God's complicity is never directly suggested.

Where does Jephtha's struggle finally lead him? His last air at the opening of the third part—'Waft her angels through the skies' (53)—is a request that Heaven take good care of his promised gift. Thus he still professes faith in the deity. Musically, the air stands as 'an oasis of G major, between two profoundly tragic episodes in E minor'.⁷⁰ In my view, the music thus reinforces the idea of the libretto that hope may prevail amidst the chaos. As regards Jephtha's role at the end, it can, however, be debated whether or not the libretto and the musical score point in different directions. Jephtha's final words are the brief praise of the *arioso* (60), 'For ever blessed be thy holy

65. Krummacher 1986: 110. Jephtha's air of presentation, 'Virtue my soul shall still embrace', also keeps close to the conventional. Smither (1977: 343) finds it 'not an extraordinary number' and Dean's (1959: 602) estimation of it is 'disappointing'.

66. According to Krummacher (1986: 110), it is in line with Handel's other oratorios that characters are presented as types, only to be developed gradually.

67. Dean 1959: 610.

68. 'Recorded stands my vow in heaven above' (45). 'Heaven heard my thoughts, and wrote them down' (49).

69. 'It is too shocking. Yet have I not vow'd?... My only daughter! So dear a child/Doomed by a father! Yes: the vow is past' (49).

70. Dean 1959: 614.

name/Lord God of Israel', which has been described as a sign of 'relief'.⁷¹ This stereotypical statement of thankfulness is completely consistent with the pious attitude expressed in the two earlier parts. In the context of the eighteenth-century oratorio, however, it is remarkable that Jephtha does not participate in the celebration in the last scene through an individual air of farewell. It has been suggested that by omitting an air of farewell Handel vents his criticism of Morell's libretto.⁷² According to a narratological analysis, the intention of the composer is irrelevant. Yet it must count as significant that at the end Jephtha is reduced to a minor character, to a shadow.

With regard to the characterization of Jephtha, two narratologically significant conclusions can be drawn from the musical score. First, the emphasis rests heavily on the second act. This means that Handel concentrates on Jephtha's internal struggle—Jephtha's individual characteristics are seen in his capacity as the mourning father and as the struggling thinker, but not as a political negotiator or a successful warrior. Secondly, the fact that Jephtha is 'written out' of the oratorio in the last part indicates that, as a character, he comes to a tragic end. He is literally silenced in the drama and loses his position as protagonist.

In terms of independence, there is no uncertainty as to where the initiative lies. It has been made even clearer in the oratorio than in the biblical text that it is the divinity who directs the action. A contradiction is thus created between Jephtha's dependency on God in the first part and the severity of his self-criticism in the second. If Jehovah directly inspired the vow, why does Jephtha take complete responsibility for its consequences? Jephtha here exceeds the biblical Job in piety by consistently refraining from blaming God.

Iphis

Iphis plays a much larger part in the oratorio than Jephtha's daughter does in the book of Judges. Although Jephtha has the largest numbers of appearances, Iphis has the most intense interaction with at least two actors, Hamor and Storgè. Moreover, her significance is underscored musically in that she sings more airs than any other character.

It is fundamental to the characterization of the daughter that the librettist names her. Several intertexts are thus invoked.⁷³ The most immediate is

71. Dean 1959; Smither 1977.

72. Both Dean and Parland repeatedly make sweeping generalizations about the theological outlook of Morell and Handel, sometimes based on biographical notes. In my view, these are often entirely speculative, e.g. in Parland (1999: 46) and Dean (1959: 616).

73. In Greek literature there are many occurrences of similar motifs, i.e., of fathers who swear vows that lead to the death of their daughter. One such example is Sophocles'

Buchanan's play *Jephthes sive votum*, from which her name is taken. In resemblance to her forerunner, Handel's Iphis comforts her mother Storgè, bids farewell to nature and asks the priests to make haste with the sacrifice.⁷⁴ However, Buchanan's Iphis finds the vow unjust and does not accept her fate until after a long argument with Jephtha and Storgè.⁷⁵ Moreover, no angel rescues her in the end.

The fate of Handel's Iphis is more like that of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon, who is the main heroine of Euripides' two plays—*Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Iphigenia at Tauris*.⁷⁶ In the former, Agamemnon does not swear a vow but is bound, by the pronouncement of the seer Calchas, that he must sacrifice Iphigenia in order to appease the goddess Artemis. At the moment of sacrifice, however, Iphigenia is rescued by Artemis and brought to Tauris to become her priestess.⁷⁷ Iphis and Iphigenia (of both plays) are alike in their role as sacrificial objects promised by their fathers as well as in their dedication to the service of the deity. Moreover, they resemble each other in the jubilant welcome they give to their father, in the final acceptance of the sacrifice and also in the way in which they argue in its favour.⁷⁸ The Iphigenia of *Iphigenia in Aulis* differs from Iphis in that she initially criticizes her father and pleads for her life. In *Iphigenia at Tauris*, Iphigenia's criticism is more far-reaching and also includes the goddess. Here she differs from Iphis in the independence she displays by organizing her escape from Tauris. Thus it seems that the inter-texts function rather superficially to define the role of the daughter as a sacrificial object. With regard to characterization, both the complexity and the initiative of the forerunners sharply contrast the unconditional obedience of Handel's Iphis.

tragedy *Antigone*, in which king Creon vows that anybody who tries to bury his son will be killed. The two sisters Antigone and Ismene represent two different strategies of dealing with patriarchal authority. Antigone advocates defiance, whereas Ismene advocates obedience. In contrast to Handel's play, the father eventually withdraws his vow. This does not, however, prevent Antigone (together with her beloved Hamon and her mother Eurydice) from dying.

74. These are the obvious parallels that I find between the oratorio and Buchanan's play (strophes 170, 1626 and 1758). Smith (1995: 340) proposes other verbal similarities.

75. 'Car je ne me sen point coupable aucunement, Pour avoir merite ce cruel traitement.' Buchanan, strophe 1548.

76. Sophocles and Aeschylus, among others, also treat the legend of Iphigenia, but no one so comprehensively as Euripides according to Rose (1970).

77. This event is accounted for in both plays (Euripides: I, 147; Euripides: II, 287). As in Gen. 22, an animal is supplied instead of the child at the very moment that the sacrificial instrument is raised.

78. Both argue that one life is a small price for the liberty of the people and that the divine will cannot be opposed. Euripides: I, 128-30, and Handel, 45.

Iphis is introduced in the oratorio from the perspective of her beloved Hamor, in the third scene (9):

Happy this embassy, my charming Iphis,
Which once more gives thee to my longing eyes.
As Cynthia, breaking from th'involving clouds
On the benighted traveller; the sight
Of thee, my love, drives darkness and despair.

Two observations can be made. First, the comparison between Iphis and Cynthia (another name of Artemis)⁷⁹ strengthens the connection to Euripides' play further. Secondly, Hamor describes Iphis in terms of the function she fulfils for him. This means that the reader/listener is told what the sight of Iphis does to Hamor, not what characteristics she has in herself. Later on his language becomes even more objectifying, for example, when he calls her 'my glorious prize...my sweetest joy, possessing' (27). In this regard, the presentation of Iphis in the oratorio and the biblical text are alike; in both cases she is socially defined in relation to a male character. The differences between the two narratives lie both in the identity of this male figure and in the degree of explicitness regarding the sexuality of the woman.

No other actor utters any comments about Iphis until after the confrontation between her and Jephtha. In the pivotal third scene of the second act, both Storgè and Hamor emphasize her innocence and how much they love her.⁸⁰ Jephtha's addresses are not as unequivocal as the others'. On the one hand, he describes Iphis as a non-subject, that is, as already dead: 'A victim to the living God. My daughter/Alas! It was my daughter! and she dies' (41). On the other hand, he finds her a powerful subject (49):

Deeper and deeper still, thy goodness, child
Pierceth a father's bleeding heart, and checks
The cruel sentence on my falt'ring tongue.

In this case, the roles of the father and the daughter are exchanged and the latter becomes the judge of the former. This is a far cry from Jephtha's immediate reaction following their confrontation, both in the oratorio and in the biblical text, in which he sees his daughter as the cause of his tragedy.

The biblical narrator's emphasis on the daughter's virginity does not feature in the libretto until the advent of the angel in the last part, when Jephtha is instructed (58): 'Thy daughter, Jephtha, thou must dedicate/To God, in pure and virgin state for ever.' These instructions are repeated in the air that follows, which is addressed to Iphis (59):

79. Artemis is named Cynthia after the island Cynthos, where a temple in her honour was located.

80. Storgè calls her 'this one dear child' (42) and Hamor speaks of her as 'the innocent and beauteous maid' (43).

Happy, Iphis, all thy days
 (Pure, angelic, virgin state)
 Shalt thou live: and ages late
 Crown thee with immortal praise.

A significant addition—‘angelic’—is here put in parentheses. The adjective is combined with ‘pure’ and ‘virgin state’, thus making the three terms appear to be synonymous. What is conveyed here is the idea that a non-sexual woman—Iphis—is closer to the divine sphere than other humans. Moreover, the angel promises that Iphis will always be remembered. As is the case with the yearly ritual mentioned in the biblical account, it is not exactly clear why she is celebrated. Is it because of her courage, her obedience or, in fact, because of her virginity? To judge from the immediate context, the praise refers to her virginity.

I have already stated that Iphis plays a major part in the oratorio. What, then, does she achieve? Her first act is to rebuke Hamor for his preoccupation with love when there is a war to fight. Iphis here fulfils the active role, parallel to Jephtha’s role in relation to Storgè, which pushes for separation in order to achieve a higher good. Yet she motivates Hamor’s march to the front line at the cost of belittling herself; her offer to be his ‘due reward’ (11) is an echo of Hamor’s objectifying presentation of her.⁸¹ Her second act is to comfort Storgè from her ‘ghastly dreams’ in the first part (21). That the daughter takes care of the mother’s anxiety (for the daughter) amounts to a reversal of the expected roles.

The following two acts of Iphis are both directed towards Jephtha. To begin with, she commands her maidens to prepare her for his return by adorning her ‘like a stately bride’ (28). This indicates, in my reading, that the act of welcoming Jephtha is not merely a family affair, but that she also fulfils a public function. In line with this, she gives Jephtha an eloquent greeting, which contrasts sharply with the daughter’s silence in the biblical text.⁸² Moreover, in the libretto, it is Iphis herself who calls for her father’s attention and initiates his gaze: ‘Behold thy daughter and her virgin train’ (36). Thus, although Iphis, like the biblical daughter, is the object of Jephtha’s looking, the former character is cast as more active and self-conscious.⁸³

Iphis uses the same theological argument as the daughter in the biblical text after the confrontation with Jephtha—‘Heaven spoke its approbation by success’—to legitimize the sacrifice. Iphis goes further, however, and supplies a second argument that anachronistically could be labelled as an example of

81. This is repeated in the air that follows (12), in the line ‘Sure conquest shall be thine’.

82. In the air that follows, e.g., she uses metaphors such as ‘the cheerful light’ and ‘the spring that rains’ to describe Jephtha.

83. See Chapter 1, ‘The Mood of Judges 10.6–12.7’.

'utilitarian ethics'. 'For joys so vast, too little is the price/Of one poor life. But oh! accept it, Heaven' (47). Again, Iphis belittles herself for altruistic reasons, that is, for a national cause. Iphis proclaims herself to be a 'grateful victim', who before her sacrifice tries to comfort not her mother this time, but her 'country, friends and dearest father'.

In the last part of the libretto, Iphis prepares her exit in three different ways. First (54), she urges the priests to proceed with the sacrifice. In contrast to the biblical text, the planned execution of the vow has been shifted from Jephtha to the priests. This change contributes to the tendency, observed earlier, to diminish the severity of the conflict between Jephtha and Iphis. In the air that follows (55), Iphis bids goodbye to the world. Finally (68-69), Iphis dissolves her engagement with Hamor and sets him free of his obligations. In my reading, Iphis succeeds in something that Jephtha fails to do, that is, to reverse a speech-act. In a drama on the implications of a vow, the daughter gets the last word, doing the very opposite of her father.⁸⁴

The acts of Iphis can be described as forming a chiasmic structure, although not completely symmetrical. At the centre are the acts directed towards Jephtha, the adornment (28) and the greeting (36). In the next layer are words of comfort, to her mother (21) and to the rest of the people (47). The duet with Hamor (14) corresponds to Iphis's next-to-last recitative (54) and air (55), in that both numbers concern her expectations for the future. Finally, her first and last words (11 and 69) are addressed to Hamor and both involve the necessity of separation. Within this structure, it becomes obvious that, for the most part, males surround Iphis and that the point of departure for their interaction is the interest of the males or the nation. This pattern is also retained in the unique scene between Iphis and Storgè, where Iphis tries to make her mother go along with the war plans of her father.

In the musical score, the development of Iphis is not so drastic as that of Jephtha. Smither finds that Iphis, in the first half of the oratorio, is simply characterized as 'an uncomplicated and happy girl'.⁸⁵ All her musical numbers have a suggestion of dance rhythm, such as the *bourré* and the *gavotte*, and the symphony (35) that precedes her welcome of Jephtha is a *siciliano*. After the news of the vow reaches her, the individuality of her music increases, thus achieving 'nobility' according to both Smither and Dean, although they do not mention how.⁸⁶ Iphis's first air after she has learned of her doom, 'Happy they' (48), includes sharp harmonic changes. The phrase 'with content' is repeated three times, musically expressing the anguish that the words deny.

84. Although one of these promises is directed to God and the other to a man, they belong thematically or phenomenologically to the same category.

85. Smither 1977: 346. Dean (1959: 596) finds her a 'happy young girl in love'.

86. Dean 1959: 596 and Smither 1977: 347.

According to Krummacher, Iphis reaches a peak of expressiveness in the air 'Farewell ye limpid springs' (55).⁸⁷ This air can be divided in two parts. The first is a slow variation of the *siciliano* form (earlier used in Iphis's air of welcome, 35) in E minor, which adheres to the Baroque formula for sighing. The second and shorter part, which begins with 'Brighter scenes I seek above', is faster and set in E major. A recurrent musical theme is the ascending scales, reaching the high E at 'above'. The juxtaposition of mourning and triumph in the two parts of this air indicates some complexity in the characterization of Iphis. However, it could also be argued that the exuberant joy in the latter part takes the sting out of the grief in the former.

Two conclusions can be drawn from the musical score. First, the consistent use of dance rhythms indicates continuity in the characterization of Iphis. Although the 'happy girl' matures, dark features of the kind displayed by Jephtha in the air, 'Open thy marble jaws' (40), or by Storgè in the air, 'Scenes of horror' (20), are not incorporated. This graceful dimension of her music is, in my view, in line with the displaced conflict between her and her father in the libretto. Secondly, Iphis's music grows in individuality towards the end. A dynamic tension between the music and the libretto can thus be perceived. Iphis's musical peak coincides with the dramaturgical preparations for her exit, which never occurs.

Storgè

Storgè's contribution to the oratorio is concentrated around four appearances, in which she relates intensively to Jephtha and Iphis. She has as many airs as Jephtha, although her recitatives are fewer and shorter. Together with Hamor, her function is to provide a wider context for Jephtha and Iphis in order to make their characteristics appear clearer through contrast and similarity.

Having a name is fundamental to the characterization of Storgè, although not in the same way as it was for Iphis. To begin with, Euripides' and Buchanan's texts provided elaborated narrative frames to which Handel's Iphis could be compared. With regard to Storgè, the points of convergence with the single inter-text—Buchanan's play—are, however, fewer. Handel's Storgè resembles her predecessor through her nightmares and her dispute with Jephtha. Yet, Buchanan's Storgè is definitely fiercer in her criticism. She never reconciles herself to her daughter's fate and Storgè's wrath actually ends the play. In my view, Handel's Storgè is a domesticated version of Buchanan's. Secondly, Storgè's name serves as an iconic sign, which makes direct reference to the character's role in the text.⁸⁸ Storgè is formed from

87. Krummacher 1986: 130.

88. Cf. how Bal (1987: 68-88) applies Peirce's terminology to the function of names in Ruth.

the same root as the Greek verb *στέργω*, to love. Her role in the oratorio is thus to enact love.

Storgè appears without any introduction. The time of mobilization is, for her, the moment of separation from her husband (7):

'Twill be a painful separation, Jephtha,
To see thee harness'd for the bloody field.
But ah! how trivial are a wife's concerns,
When a whole nation bleeds, and groveling lies,
Panting for liberty and life.

Her part here is that of the loving wife. Her worries contrast sharply to the triumphant confidence displayed by Jephtha in his air, 'Virtue my soul' (6) that precedes her recitative. Yet Storgè's entry is not unequivocal. In her words, she rather sharply plays down her feelings in order to benefit the nation, labelling them 'trivial'; thereby anticipating the altruistic attitude displayed by Iphis later on in the story. Musically, however, Storgè's first air, 'In gentle murmurs' (8), has a dramatic potential that distinguishes it from Iphis's initial air, 'Take the heart' (12).⁸⁹

In gentle murmurs will I mourn,
As mourns the mate-forsaken dove:
And sighing wish thy dear return
To liberty and lasting love.

The part of the flute in this air anticipates and enhances Storgè's lamentation. Even though she does not at this point explicitly challenge the authority of Gilead's leader, her husband, the music indicates that her 'gentle murmurs' at his departure may not be all that gentle. Iphis later demonstrates a much more far-reaching acceptance of Jephtha's words than her mother does. In the recitative 'Ye sacred priests' (54), she juxtaposes her father's will and the call of heaven, and professes to obey it with 'humble resignation'. Storgè thus becomes a paradoxical model for Iphis's behaviour. Storgè's initial acceptance of the patriarchal order is imitated, while the undercurrent of anxiety and protest is ignored. The same is true concerning the theme of romantic love. It is introduced by Storgè in the form of mourning and sighing over separation. However, when it is developed by Iphis in the very next scene, the dark shades have been dropped.

Storgè's second appearance occurs in the scene that follows Jephtha's vow. This time Storgè expresses her fear of separation from Iphis (19):

Some dire event hangs o'er our heads,
Some woeful song we have to sing

89. According to Young (1948: 196), the syncopated, lively rhythm of Iphis's air suggests a happy entrustment rather than a painful separation.

In misery extreme; O never never
 Was my foreboding mind distress'd before
 With such incessant pangs.

Storgè's worries grow and thereby accentuate the contrast between her and Jephtha. Whereas Jephtha has 'visions of joy', Storgè speaks of 'scenes of horror' (20). At the same time, Storgè musically anticipates the later despair of Jephtha in that the air 'Scenes of horror' features a variation on the same theme that introduces Jephtha's air, 'Open thy marble jaws' (40). Since Jephtha has already departed for battle, only Iphis is left to attempt to comfort her. Iphis's lines frame those of Storgè and the daughter gets the last word through the air, 'The smiling dawn' (22). There is, however, no indication that Storgè is effectively consoled. The difference between the two is enacted by the choice of keys.⁹⁰

Storgè appears for the third time in the scene of Jephtha's return. No reunion between the spouses occurs. Instead, Storgè confronts Jephtha verbally with the absolute separation from Iphis that his vow implies (42):

(recit.)
 First perish thou: and perish all the world!
 Hath Heav'n then bless'd us with this only pledge
 Of all our love, this one dear child, for thee
 To be her murderer? No cruel man!
 Let other creatures die;
 Or heav'n, earth, seas, and sky
 In one confusion lie,
 Ere in a daughter's blood
 So fair, so chaste, so good,
 A father's hand imbrued.

At this stage, Storgè's anticipations appear to come true. In Jephtha's preceding defensive recitative, she is uniquely addressed by the epithet 'my dearest wife'. No corresponding tenderness can be found in Storgè's response quoted above. Rather, her first line can be understood as a curse ('Perish thou'), through which she wishes Jephtha dead. This indicates that the love between a parent and a child supersedes the one between wife and husband. There is no doubt that Storgè holds her husband responsible for the present situation. She even provides an explicit negative answer to the rhetorical

90. Parland (1999: 47) constructs a contrast between the mother and the daughter based on his interpretation of tonality (and of gender!): Storgè's 'exaggerated' air is set in F minor, 'the key of passion', whereas Iphis's 'delightful' air is set in E flat minor, 'the key of faith and hope'. Sadie (GDM, online) states that these conventions are hardly absolute, although tonality from the earliest operas has been used 'to colour and enhance the effect of dramatic incident'. In her study Steblin (1981) demonstrates the immense variations of these conventions among different composers, even in the same period.

question about the possible involvement of Heaven. It is here implied that Jephtha has misunderstood the will of Heaven. Moreover, Storgè uses cosmic metaphors to describe the outrage of the vow ('heav'n, earth, seas, and sky/In one confusion lie'). Musically, the sudden change to a slower tempo in 'Ere in a daughter's blood' corresponds to the tempo in Jephtha's line, 'Ere I the name of father stain' (40). This increases the effectiveness of Storgè's accusation, since she states what he already knows.

In the quartet (45) that ends this scene, Storgè directs two imperatives to Jephtha: 'Spare my child!' and 'Recall the impious vow'. The former re-emphasizes her parental love for Iphis and by implication criticizes Jephtha for not sharing that love with her. The latter re-emphasizes her theological condemnation of the vow. As I stated above, the quartet signals a peak of musical complexity, through which Storgè and the others verbally fight Jephtha. There is no obvious winner in this contest. Storgè's imperatives could be understood both as commands and as pleas.

Storgè's final appearance occurs in the last scene of the oratorio. This time she faces the real and absolute separation from Iphis (64, 65):

(recit.)

O let me fold thee in a mother's arms,
And with submissive joy, my child, receive
Thy designation to the life of Heaven.

(air)

Sweet as sight to the blind,
Or freedom to the slave,
Such joy in thee I find,
Safe from the grave.
Still I'm of thee possess'd,
Such is kind Heaven's decree,
That hath thy parents bless'd
In blessing thee.

Given the force of Storgè's concerns and protests in her second and third appearances, it is somewhat remarkable that she, at the moment of definitive farewell, must revert to a position similar to the one she held in her first scene. Once again, she instructs Iphis about subordination: 'with submissive joy...receive/Thy designation'. The fact that Iphis is 'safe from the grave' gives rise to Storgè's happiness, regardless of the impending separation. Her proclamation to be 'possess'd' by her daughter demonstrates the strength of her parental love for Iphis. In the final stanza, the distance between her and Jephtha is overcome. Storgè finds that Heaven blesses both parents through Iphis. Musically, moreover, the last air is an altogether happy one, set in E major. With regard to characterization, it is something of a surprise that the earlier passionate and furious mother expresses unmingled joy at the moment

of separation. However, this reaction is consistent with the idea of parental love that her name signals, that the well-being and the survival of her child overrules all other concerns.

Hamor

Hamor is the least significant of the four main characters. He has quite a lot to say but achieves very little. He addresses Iphis three times and Jephtha once. Both Jephtha and Iphis describe him in a stereotyped way. In the account of the war (32), Jephtha has nothing unique to say about Hamor's effort, but lets Hamor share the praise that he awards to Zebul. 'Zebul, thy deeds were valiant: nor less thine, My Hamor.' In the very last scene, where Iphis definitely bids him farewell, she addresses him as 'my faithful Hamor'.

Hamor receives no introduction. Instead, his first act is to introduce Iphis (9). In this situation he first appears as the impatient lover: 'O haste, and make my happiness complete.' After Iphis rebukes him for this, he becomes the impatient warrior instead: 'I go: My soul, inspir'd by thy command, Thirsts for the battle' (13). It is clear, however, both from his two recitatives in this scene and through the duet that follows, that the war is the prize he has to pay for their common future (14):

These labours past, how happy we!
How glorious will they prove
When gath'ring fruit from conquest's tree,
We deck the feast of love.

A thematic resemblance between Hamor and Storgè (in her first scene) lies in their corresponding attachment to the beloved and their placing family relations before the good of the nation. Musically, however, Hamor's unconcerned fancy in the air 'Dull delay' (10) is worlds apart from Storgè's controlled passion in her air, 'In gentle murmurs' (8). Nothing in the music indicates that he 'pants for bliss in vain' or suffers from 'piercing anguish'. The musical accent lies, rather, in the word 'adore'. Already at this stage, Hamor regards Iphis as an angel, to be worshipped at a distance. Through his lack of fervour, both with regard to the war and to his beloved, Hamor is presented as the opposite of Iphis. Hamor's second appearance, where he recounts the war (25), gives further evidence of this unimpassioned stance. The music does not seem to offer any support for Hamor's claim (in 27) that he has actually been 'for fame and love contending'.

Hamor's sole address to Jephtha occurs when he has gained knowledge of the vow and he raises the possibility of a drastic alternative (43):

If such thy cruel purpose, lo! your friend
Offers himself a willing sacrifice,
To save the innocent and beauteous maid.

Hamor is the last character to voice criticism of Jephtha. At the same time, he emphasizes that his friendship is still reliable, which he demonstrates by offering himself in the place of Iphis. This definitely qualifies as an act of ultimate loyalty to Jephtha. Moreover, it could be understood as an imitation of Jephtha's behaviour, through which Hamor attempts to beat him at his own game. However, Hamor's suggestion never becomes more than an attempt. It stands as a conditional clause but it does not come true. It is a failed speech-act in the sense that it has no effect and it is apparently not even noticed by any other agent. The irrelevance of his proposal is musically underscored by the fact that this air lacks a *Da Capo*, which means that there is no time for individual elaboration of the theme at this potentially dramatic point.

In Hamor's final appearance he bids farewell to Iphis (66, 67):

(recit.)

With transport, Iphis, I behold thy safety,
But must for ever mourn so dear a loss:
Dear, tho' great Jephtha were to honour me
Still with the name of son.

(air)

'Tis Heaven's all-ruling pow'r
That checks the rising sigh;
Yet let me still adore
And think an angel by,
While thus each charm and beauteous line
With more than human lustre shine.

Despite his previous aspirations, Hamor utters not a single word of protest and only a limited degree of grief at the moment of separation from his bride-to-be. Heaven checks even his 'rising sigh'. Hamor's acceptance of his fate is here underscored by the indifference of the music. Moreover, Hamor's loyalty to 'great Jephtha' persists. At the end, the possibility of parental love (from Jephtha) appears to triumph over the possibility of marital love (for Iphis), which establishes a correspondence between Hamor and Storgè.

Hamor's main contribution is to enrich the family context. He could be described as a miniature Jephtha for several reasons. First, he is the warrior who needs to be persuaded to go to war and is told to imitate the deeds of Jephtha. Secondly, he almost swears a vow but it goes unheeded and has no effect. Finally, Hamor expresses his hope that he might attain the status of Jephtha's son or son-in-law. That would imply an alteration of their relationship from metaphor to metonymy. Moreover, if Hamor were actually installed in that position, it would diminish the tragic impact of Iphis's dedication to Jephtha. However, in contrast to Jephtha, who is not released from his vow, Hamor is released from his promise to Iphis. According to my

interpretation, this indicates that Hamor is a weaker subject than Jephtha, his role model.

With regard to Iphis, Hamor embodies the hope of a conventional happy future. Hamor's function is to show that Iphis actually loses something when she is dedicated to Heaven. Hamor also mirrors Storgè in two ways, both in the initial attachment to his beloved, Iphis, and in the final privileging of parental over marital love. In terms of gender construction, it is significant that the would-be great male leader also shares a few of Storgè's stereotypical female characteristics. Furthermore, his position in between the other male and the female characters is illustrated by his voice, which is that of the counter-tenor. Yet no musical development of this character occurs. In my view, the plainness of Hamor highlights his function as context or as a mirror, through which the other characters can appear all the more clearly.

Conclusions on Jephtha

In line with the theological tendencies of its time, the story of the oratorio is not only shorter than the biblical one but has also been changed from a tragedy to a comedy. Its thematic unity lies in the movement between mourning and happiness. However, new incoherencies are thereby created. The angelic intervention and the fact that there are two possible ways of interpreting the vow reduce the suspense of the story to one of mere misapprehension on the part of Jephtha. Although the war against the Ammonites remains the logically central event in the story, it functions by and large as a background to the narrative. Through numerous prolepses, the order of the narrative points ambiguously towards its end. This is also the case with regard to the rhythm of the narrative. The only biblical scene developed in the oratorio is the return to Mizpah. The intervention of the angel is the event on which the narrative dwells for the longest time, whereas the musically most intense scenes concern Jephtha's struggle with the implications of his vow following his return. Thus, the oratorio accentuates even more clearly than the biblical text that the central event of the story (the war) is not the most emphasized part of the narrative.

Jehovah is undoubtedly the driving force of the oratorio. The deity strengthens Jephtha before he utters his vow, aids him with a heavenly army during the battle and intervenes through a deputy angel to rescue Iphis from the unnecessary sacrifice. Thus, there is no ambiguity with regard to the identity of the initiator. As Jehovah's instrument, however, Jephtha appears oblivious to this fact. In contrast to his biblical counterpart, he struggles with the notion of responsibility. Furthermore, the elements of conflict in the oratorio seem rather superficial. The most heated confrontation occurs between Jephtha and Storgè, not between Jephtha and his daughter as in

the biblical narrative. Yet the intervention of the angel proves Storgè right. All dramatized actors function as Jephtha's helpers.

The absence of a proper narrator does not mean that no explicit ideological stance is formulated. Rather, the chorus and the two characters, Zebul and Hamor, fulfil this function. In fact, at this level, the oratorio features a much more explicit theological discourse than the biblical text does. Comments concentrate mainly on the legitimacy of the war and thus on the aptness of its initiator (Jehovah) and its executor (Jephtha). The theme of sexuality, so obvious in the discourse of the biblical narrator, is here ignored.

The characterization of the four main actors, however, implies a much more nuanced ideology, especially with regard to gender. The oratorio's Jephtha harbours contradictions, like his biblical counterpart, but not for reasons of ethnicity, sexuality or social standing. Zebul and Iphis idealize him, whereas Storgè defames him. He acts in obedience to Heaven, yet he wrestles with the issue of human responsibility. He thereby develops from a conventional hero of war into a pious believer in the tradition of Job. Most ambiguously, however, the protagonist Jephtha is absent from the finale. The abortion of tragedy paradoxically leads to the dissolution of his character.

Iphis's primary ambiguity lies in her oscillation between subject and object, illustrated by Jephtha's assessment of her as both immensely powerful and absolutely powerless. Her initiatives paradoxically lead to both belittlement and enlargement of her role. Hamor's male gaze initially defines her, but in the end, she terminates their engagement. Iphis follows Storgè's advice to be subordinate, but contradicts her mother's concerns for the future. She accepts her fate as Jephtha's sacrificial object only to outlive him in the drama. In contrast to the effect of the vow on her father, the vow and its aftermath eventually transform Iphis into the stronger subject.

Storgè appears as the embodiment of motherly love. In that capacity, she adopts different strategies in relation to the patriarchal order. On the one hand, she teaches Iphis to resign in the face of men's rule. On the other hand, she ferociously remonstrates against the consequences of Jephtha's decrees. Although the latter strategy undoubtedly dominates Storgè's behaviour, Iphis imitates the former. In this case, the daughter acts in accordance with her mother's words and not according to the model that she has supplied. Whereas Storgè displays complexity, Iphis exhibits complaisance.

Hamor is cast as an unsuccessful imitation of Jephtha. He is persuaded to go to battle, he fails to swear an effective vow and he silently accepts Iphis's breaking of their engagement. The aspiration to become Jephtha's son or son-in-law shows that their relationship is one of continuity (metonymy) rather than of similarity (metaphor) and that locates him in the same inferior position vis-à-vis Jephtha that Iphis occupies. Hamor resembles Storgè in that he prioritizes his private concerns before the interest of the nation

and his parental relations come before amorous ones, although he lacks Storgè's passion. Through his plainness, Hamor enhances the individuality of the others and thus becomes a site of converging male and female differences.

These four characters demonstrate together that both femininity and masculinity are split between power and powerlessness, between subjectivity and objectification. Yet, whereas the biblical narrative closes with the commemoration of the female sacrifice amid the degeneration of male violence in the absence of the deity, the oratorio concludes with the celebration of female virtue and the rebuke of male error, effected specifically through divine intervention.

4

TWENTIETH-CENTURY LITERATURE

Artistic interest in the Jephthah narrative drastically decreased in the twentieth century. To my knowledge, only a small number of fictional works has been written on the theme.¹ The ones chosen for analysis in this chapter belong to the most ambitious treatments of the narrative. Moreover, they represent completely different outlooks, both with regard to ideology and to literary form. Elliot Lovegood Grant Watson's novel *A Mighty Man of Valour* (1939) was published in England close to the outbreak of the Second World War. Its rather anonymous author expresses vaguely anti-Semitic and clearly pro-Christian preferences in his concluding note, and accordingly, its narrator explicitly condemns the narrated events. Amos Oz's short story 'Upon This Evil Earth' (1981) stems from a prominent author in the modern state of Israel, who uses the biblical narrative to supply the present Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a historical context. In contrast to Grant Watson's, Oz's narrator carefully avoids direct condemnation and seeks instead to emphasize the universal aspects of Jephthah's fate.

1. In three cases, the historical setting has been changed to modern times. Richard Gandrup's *Jeftas Datter* (1922) is set in Denmark, where a professor of philology drives his daughter to suicide by forcing her to marry an old widower. Naomi Ragen's *Jephthe's Daughter* (1988) likewise deals with the issue of an arranged marriage, in the context of orthodox American Judaism (the book was inspired by a historical event, where a mother and her three-year-old daughter committed suicide from the top of a Tel Aviv hotel, according to the author's website, www.naomiragen.com/Jephthe). In Gertrud von le Fort's short story *Die Tochter Jephthas* (1964), situated in fifteenth-century Spain struck by the plague, Jephthah's daughter features only as a counter-motif, whereas the core of the narrative is entirely different. Two German novels have appeared. Vincenz Zapple's *Jephtas Tochter* (1920) transforms the narrative into a black-and-white drama, which emphasizes Jephthah's misfortune and, in spite of the title, largely neglects the daughter (Sypherd 1948: 110). Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jefta und seine Tochter* (1957) is an attempt to locate the narrative in its supposed historical context, and the political movements of the region are stressed.

Introduction to A Mighty Man of Valour

Grant Watson (1885–1970) has been described as a ‘20th century polymath and Renaissance man’.² He belonged to the same post-war intellectual and artistic circles in London, as Norman Douglas, T.S. Eliot and Joseph Conrad.³ He wrote more than thirty books, one of which was made into a film, and a large number of scientific articles.⁴ In his works, the boundary between science and art does not appear to be absolute. In reviews on his scientific writings, it has for example been stated that he ‘writes as a mystic’.⁵

Of Grant Watson’s specifically literary works, only his Australian novels have attracted scholarly attention.⁶ Roslynn Haynes makes a few observations about these novels, which also appear relevant to the present study. To begin with, the desert functions as a stage on which the characters enact their conflicts and desires.⁷ The characters’ responses to the desert then serve as an ‘index of their spiritual development’.⁸ Furthermore, the novels give expression of a clearly ‘anti-feminist stance’⁹ in that the female characters are incapable of relating to the desert in a spiritual way and in that they are presented as ‘more materialistic’ and ‘more dependent’, for example, than the male characters.¹⁰ Both these traits appear in *A Mighty Man of Valour*, which is one of three novels on biblical themes.¹¹

Although the intention of the author is of no interest to the present study, the final ‘Author’s Note’ does shed some light on the context in which the work was written. At the outset of the war, Grant Watson makes the following generalization about the Jews: ‘Jephthah was a Hebrew chief-

2. Steele 1990: 19. Grant Watson was a trained zoologist from Cambridge, who among other things practised psychoanalysis and travelled to Australia to study Aboriginal marriage customs (Green 1990: 27-28).

3. Green 1990: 31-33.

4. A register of Grant Watson’s published and unpublished manuscripts is available at the website of the National Library of Australia, 031212, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.ms-ms4950>.

5. Cape 1924: 146 and Cape 1932: 894. He has also been commended for his ‘accessibility’ and his capacity to evoke a sense of wonder, which clearly appear as literary qualities (Green 1990: 17, 19, 22).

6. According to Haynes (1999: 32), this is due to their ‘radical views on Aboriginal culture’ which now render them ‘respectably postcolonial’.

7. Haynes 1999: 35.

8. Haynes 1999: 35.

9. Haynes 1999: 32.

10. Haynes 1999: 40.

11. Apart from *A Mighty Man of Valour*, he also wrote *Moses: The Lord of the Prophets* (1929) and *Moonlight in Ur: A Romance* (1932).

tain long before those distinguishing characteristics, which now mark the Jews, had had time to develop.'¹² Although he does not specify whether the 'distinguishing characteristics' are positive or negative, the idea of tying personal features to an ethnic group is in fact an expression of prejudice. Further on, he identifies three religious impulses in his narrative, 'nationalism, mystically perceived *Realpolitik* and the foreshadowing of Christianity', which he also recognizes as tendencies of his time. Of these, Grant Watson denounces early Israelite religion, i.e. Jephthah's point of departure, as a 'primitive nationalism of blood and soil'.¹³

The Story of A Mighty Man of Valour

The story in Grant Watson's novel is longer and more detailed than the biblical one. Only five of the twelve named actors who appear in the novel contribute substantially to it.¹⁴ Apart from Jephthah and his daughter, who is named Vashti, these include Kanza (Jephthah's first man), Ozias (Jephthah's brother), and Jabin (the leading elder of the Gileadites). In contrast to the biblical story, God does not feature as an actor in this story.

A Mighty Man of Valour begins with the arrival of a Gileadite delegation at the camp of Jephthah, who is the warlord of the Tobians. In response to an Ammonite attack, the Gileadites request that the former outcast Jephthah should lead them in battle. Jephthah agrees on condition that he is also made the civil leader of the people. Following his appointment as judge, Jephthah's strategy of negotiation and his practice of abundant sacrifice draw heavy criticism. The protests culminate in a council, at which Jephthah succumbs to pressure and swears a vow to God that he will sacrifice whatever meets him when he peacefully returns home from the war. Immediately thereafter, Jephthah engages in the war and swiftly defeats the Ammonites.

After the victory, however, he spares the lives of some hermits and participates in their secret rites. This experience undermines Jephthah's conviction of the legitimacy of his cause. When he returns home victorious, the first person to meet him is his daughter Vashti. She exhorts him to fulfil his vow and asks only for a respite of two months, which she spends in the mountains. In yet another council, the people contest the vow and its

12. Grant Watson 1939: 281.

13. Grant Watson 1939: 282-83.

14. The named actors include Vashti's friends Ruth, Miriam and Sarah, Vashti's beloved Caleb, Miriam's beloved Hamalech, Ruth's beloved Berak, and the Gileadites Azor and Anath. Anonymous soldiers appear on several occasions with only slight significance. An anonymous woman makes a strong impact on Jephthah in ch. 14. The hermits play an important part in the story although none of them is named.

consequence. When Jephthah receives the news that the Ephraimites have attacked Gilead, he proceeds with the sacrifice of Vashti. Jephthah curses God and promises to extinguish Ephraim by means of the secret password (shibboleth) revealed to him by the hermits. The novel ends as his army marches to yet another war.

The story can also be summarized through the following list of narrative propositions:¹⁵

1. The brothers expel Jephthah (11).
2. Jephthah makes a covenant with God (37-38).
3. Jephthah becomes the leader of the Tobians (40).
4. The Ammonites attack Gilead (23).
5. The elders of Gilead negotiate with Jephthah about the leadership of the people (20-27).
6. Jephthah dispatches emissaries to Ammon and to Ephraim (48).
7. The people protest against Jephthah's leadership (63-77).
8. Jephthah swears a vow to God (79).
9. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites (99-102).
10. Jephthah spares the lives of the hermits (114).
11. Jephthah participates in the hermits' secret rite (125-32).
12. Vashti meets Jephthah (149).
13. Vashti exhorts Jephthah to fulfil his vow (155).
14. Vashti asks Jephthah for a respite (165).
15. Vashti departs to the mountains with her friends (170).
16. Vashti returns from the mountains with a single friend (208).
17. The people contest the legitimacy of the vow (231-39).
18. The Ephraimites attack Gilead (264).
19. Jephthah sacrifices Vashti (266).
20. Jephthah promises to extinguish Ephraim (267-69).
21. Jephthah curses Yhwh (273).

Grant Watson's manifold alterations of the biblical story combine to make his version a more tightly woven one by increasing the degree of interrelatedness between its different parts. These changes can be summarized in five points. To begin with, Grant Watson's story deals exclusively with the life of Jephthah. In contrast to the biblical story, the acts of Jephthah are not introduced by the dialogue between God and Israel. Rather, Jephthah's

15. There are several chapters in the novel in which no events in the qualified sense occur. Chs. 5 and 16 mainly feature dialogues between Vashti and Jephthah. Ch. 8 is focused on Vashti at Mizpah as she waits for the war to end. Chs. 11 to 13 deal with Vashti's stay in the mountains. Ch. 14 treats Jephthah's second, and unsuccessful, search for the hermits. These chapters are discussed below in 'Time' as well as in 'Characterization'.

background is expanded (with nos. 2-3). Consistent with this expansion, no deity actively engages in the action through the empowerment of Jephthah. Secondly, the repeated protests (nos. 7, 17) of the people effectively challenge Jephthah to the point of triggering both the vow and the sacrifice. Thirdly, the episode with the hermits (nos. 10-11) introduces a new turning point in the story. At the height of victory, Jephthah abandons the slaughter of his enemies and loses faith in his quest. This is the moment at which Jephthah's fortune is overturned. The following meeting with Vashti (no. 12), which constitutes the pivot of the biblical story, confirms rather than initiates Jephthah's decline.

The episode with the Ephraimites, fourthly, no longer appears merely as an epilogue. The dispatching of emissaries to Ephraim (as well as to Ammon, no. 6) signals problems within this inter-tribal relationship and also makes the connection between the two wars explicit.¹⁶ The Ephraimite strike against Gilead (no. 18) helps to trigger Vashti's sacrifice (no. 19), and Jephthah uses the hermits' secret password (from no. 10) in his promise to extinguish Ephraim (no. 20). Fifthly, Jephthah's vow (no. 8) is part of a longer series of speech-acts directed both towards the deity and towards the Ephraimites.¹⁷ At the beginning of the story, Jephthah enters a covenant with Yahweh by means of a vow (no. 2) and in the end, he terminates it by means of a curse (no. 21). Moreover, in contrast to the biblical story, Jephthah threatens the Ephraimites with death (no. 20) rather than the other way round.

The object of the story is to meet the military threat of the Ammonite attack (no. 4). Yet as soon as Jephthah achieves this goal, the situation begins to deteriorate. Three of Jephthah's relationships break down: with his daughter (through the sacrifice), with his God (through the curse) and with the neighbouring tribe (through the threat of war). For several reasons, the ending of Grant Watson's story is more emphatically negative than the biblical one. To begin with, Jephthah's losses also include the loss of his God. Grant Watson's story ends at the outset of the Ephraimite war, whereas the biblical one ends after Jephthah's defeat of the Ephraimites. Although Jephthah maintains his leadership in both stories, the situation is more uncertain and critical at the end of Grant Watson's. Finally, the enhanced element of repetition makes Grant Watson's story appear circular and incomplete.¹⁸ Thus,

16. I count the dispatching of emissaries as an event in the novel's story but not in the biblical one due to the fact that, in the former, it leads to change (it provokes protests, which in its turn triggers the war), which it does not do in the latter.

17. The crucial speech-acts of the biblical story are the vow (11.30-31) and the shibboleth incident (12.5-6).

18. I.e., the military attacks of Gilead (nos. 4, 18), the attainment of leadership (nos. 3, 5) the speech-acts of their leader (nos. 2, 8, 21) and the protests of the people (nos. 7, 17).

the narrative of Jephthah's judgeship is not limited to the specific war against the Ammonites and its aftermath but rather emerges as an excerpt from a situation of incessant warfare.

A *Mighty Man of Valour* features only humans in its gallery of actors.¹⁹ With regard to their function in Greimas's terms, no ultimate power directs the action from a distance. Instead, the Gileadite people stand as both the sender and the receiver of the object of the story, that is, the defeat of their enemy. The basic power struggle concerns how to gain influence over Jephthah, the subject, and the participants in the power struggle include mainly Vashti, Kanza, Jabin and Ozias. In the negotiation about leadership (no. 5), Jephthah sends Kanza to confront the Gileadites, led by Jabin. It is Vashti who proposes the decisive bargaining offer. In the two councils (nos. 7, 17), Jephthah remains silent when Kanza, Jabin and Ozias dispute which course of action their leader ought to take. When Jephthah finally speaks, he does so because of the heavy pressure exerted by the other actors.

Although Vashti is excluded from the council, she nevertheless plays a vital role in the power struggle. When Jabin cannot convince Jephthah to refrain from carrying out the sacrifice, he persistently urges Vashti to plead for her life, which she refuses to do. Furthermore, although they appear to stand on the same side (as Jephthah's supporters), the relationship between Vashti and Kanza is one of rivalry. The hermits' influence over Jephthah is of a different kind. Through non-violent resistance (no. 10) and through their ritual (no. 11), they trigger a process of self-doubt in Jephthah. Thus, they implicitly contribute both to the execution of the sacrifice (no. 19) and to the launching of the counter-attack against the Ephraimites (no. 20).

It is not obvious what function the actors around Jephthah represent, whether they serve as his helpers or his opponents. In the war against the Ammonites, all other actors, including Vashti, question Jephthah's strategy of passivity. Although Kanza defends him at the council, his contribution to the dispute spurs Jephthah into action. This means that both his own kin and his critics propel him to achieve the goal of the story; they all belong to the category of the helpers. However, they simultaneously push him to pronounce the vow, which is the prerequisite for his decline. With regard to the execution of the sacrifice, Kanza and Vashti side with him, whereas Jabin and, implicitly, the hermits resist him. The support of Kanza and Vashti proves destructive for Jephthah, whereas the opposition of the Jabin and the hermits could potentially have averted the disaster, had it not been too weak.

19. The Ammonites and the Ephraimites obviously oppose Jephthah. In comparison to the biblical text, however, they have been reduced to speechless and very distant entities. Apart from the war, no interaction between them and Jephthah occurs, e.g., no negotiations are reported.

Although Jephthah stands at the centre of the web of relationships both in the biblical story and in the story of the novel, the location of the initiative is somewhat uncertain in both cases. In the former, the ambiguity concerns primarily the extent of the deity's influence over Jephthah, whereas in the latter, a number of actors compete to gain authority over him. Moreover, in Grant Watson's story many interactions between the actors bypass Jephthah. He is not only silent, but also ignorant of the power struggle that takes place around him. Jephthah thus appears to be an even weaker subject in the novel than in the book of Judges.

The Time of A Mighty Man of Valour

With regard to order, there are three main categories of anachrony in *A Mighty Man of Valour*. The first category serves to set the stage for the narrative and to explain what would otherwise be incomprehensible gaps. These cases of analepsis concern crucial events in the story (nos. 1-4), which clarify specifically why, for example, Jephthah resides in the desert with a group of brigands or why he is reluctant to aid his own kin. The second category gives more detailed information about Jephthah's background, such as the character of his mother and of his wife.²⁰ These analepses add emotive nuances to the behaviour of, above all, Jephthah, and to some extent also Vashti.

The third category of anachrony functions to heighten suspense and includes both analepsis and prolepsis. Most of the examples of analepsis are concerned with the vow, but they also simultaneously point to the sacrifice by implication. Anonymous soldiers refer to the vow as an explanation of the brutality of the war (104). Jephthah himself vaguely remembers its terms on his way home to Mizpah, whereas he repeats it verbatim after his second and unsuccessful visit to the hermits (148, 225). Jabin speaks of it in a depreciatory manner.²¹ There are also a number of prolepses that directly point towards the sacrifice. Ozias generally criticizes Jephthah for exaggerating the practice of sacrifice, whereas Kanza recommends it (66, 70, 82). Jephthah himself wavers between visualizing a dog and the body of a young woman as the sacrificial object (148, 225). Vashti visualizes Jephthah's safe return from the war. Due to her limited knowledge, she cannot foresee the consequences of his return (134).

These occurrences of anachrony underscore the importance of the vow and the sacrifice in the narrative. That the evaluation of these events varies to such a large extent increases the uncertainty of what their consequences will be. In the same category, there are also examples of analepsis directed towards the ritual of the hermits. Jephthah broods on its significance, both

20. Analepsis to Jephthah's wife is found e.g. on pp. 36, 40, 93-94; to his childhood in general, on p. 216; and to his mother on p. 219.

21. Jabin calls it 'A mad, bad oath' (185).

alone and in the company of his daughter (146, 166-69, 250-51). This creates uncertainty as to how their ritual will affect Jephthah's future actions. In comparison to the biblical narrative, the second and third categories of anachrony are unique. In the novel, moreover, analepsis never serves the purpose of historiography, that is, it never connects the narrative of Jephthah to the larger narrative of Israel.

With regard to rhythm, the narrative movement in *A Mighty Man of Valour* lies above all in the oscillation between scene and summary.²² As in the biblical narrative, the Ammonite war is briefly summarized (100-103) and the sacrifice, although part of a scene, is likewise accounted for at great speed (one paragraph, 266). Thus, the narrative does not dwell on the logically central events of the story. Rather, the rhythm of the narrative emphasizes a number of new scenes, which are connected to the vow and the encounter with the hermits.

Jephthah and Vashti are engaged in dialogues in no less than five scenes (chs. 2, 5, 9, 10, 16). Sometimes Vashti features as Jephthah's counsellor, who gives specific advice with regard to the negotiations with the Gileadites or to the sacrifice. Most of the time, however, Vashti and her father speak of their common history. The scenes of the two councils (chs. 4, 15) are crucial since they provide the context for Jephthah's vow and for his decision to proceed with the sacrifice.

Jephthah's dealings with the hermits cover three scenes (chs. 6, 7, 14). In the midst of the war, he abandons the slaughter of the enemy in order to speak to their leader. Then, he secretly takes part in their ritual. Next, he unsuccessfully returns to their camp in order to silence his doubts. This non-encounter increases his despair and pushes him further towards the commitment to carry out the sacrifice.

Two scenes involving minor actors also shed light on the fate of Jephthah and Vashti. Berek, the fiancé of Vashti's companion Ruth, returns from the battle to the mourning young women and tells how the hermits saved him (ch. 13). To him, the encounter with the hermits meant life, when everybody thought he was dead, whereas to Jephthah, it meant loss at the height of victory. When Jephthah returns from his failed search for the hermits, he encounters a young woman (ch. 14). She mistakes him for an ordinary soldier and he perceives her to be a prostitute. Although he is completely enraged by her, he lets her live. A contrast is thereby created between the cursed anonymous woman, who is spared by Jephthah, and his beloved Vashti, who is sacrificed by him.

22. The narrative contains two cases of partial ellipsis. Jephthah's acceptance of the Gileadite offer of leadership occurs between chs. 2 and 3. Vashti's return from the mountains occurs between chs. 13 and 14. It is merely suggested by Sarah (208). Obvious descriptive pauses are rare. For the most part, they are intertwined with a summary.

Vashti's stay in the mountains covers three chapters (11–13), yet, the actual mourning is rather briefly summarized. The scenes that follow primarily involve Jabin's efforts to persuade Vashti to plead for her life and Berek's account of his stay with the hermits. In contrast to the biblical narrative, the negotiations with the Ammonites and the Ephraimites are not rendered dramatically.

The Mood of A Mighty Man of Valour

With regard to the aspect of distance, *A Mighty Man of Valour* lies closer to the pole of *mimesis* than that of *diegesis*. This means that the distance between the narrative and the story is small. This conclusion is based on the relative invisibility of the narrator together with the abundance of narrative information. An example of a 'connotator of mimesis' is the thorough description of the setting that opens the novel.²³ Another indication of *mimesis* is the general primacy of dialogue over narration in the novel. Moreover, dialogue or monologue is for the most part reported through direct quotation, rather than being transposed or narrated.

With regard to the perspective aspect, the narrative's focalization varies. Most frequent is the external position, in which the narrator omnisciently overviews the situation with regard to space, time, cognition and emotion.²⁴ The narrator specifically penetrates the thoughts and motives of two characters, Jephthah and Vashti, in a manner that they themselves could not do. During the negotiation with the Gileadites, for example, the narrative is focalized on Jephthah's desire for rehabilitation:

It is a rare thing that a man should experience that which he most desires—the extravagant turn of fortune which dreams and fantasies have conjured—the event which has been most secret in his soul, and so improbable that he would shame to mention so personal a consummation. In adolescent imagining, while he was yet an outcast in the wilderness, Jephthah had pictured the day, when those men who had most injured him, would come to ask forgiveness and assistance. And now, everything was fulfilled as he had fancied, dreamed and prayed, and all the powerful urges of his life, which had been

23. 'The light of dawn spread palely from behind the furthest ridges of the hills. In luminous grey it extended with decreasing intensity up towards the neutral blue of the zenith, where still a few stars remained...' (9).

24. 'The weeks passed into months, and still there was no sign of war against the enemy, but only the sending of messengers to the King of the Ammonites. The messages they carried and those with which they returned were known only to Jephthah, for he did not share his confidence with the other chiefs. At this they murmured and complained amongst themselves, for they had not expected him to use it in so exclusive and autocratic a manner. Messengers were also sent to the tribe of Ephraim whose lands were to the west of Jordan' (48).

pent within him, seemed to have flowed serenely out into the larger world of his activities (29).²⁵

Shifts to internal focalization do occur. The narrative is then mainly perceived from the position of Jephthah and Vashti. An example of such a shift features in the meeting between Jephthah and the hermits: 'Amidst the hot thoughts which rushed through Jephthah's mind, one thought grew cool, and cold as doubt, and touched with fear... What did he know—he, Jephthah? What was he sure of? God and his own salvation?' (111).²⁶ However, internal focalization also occurs from the positions of the leading figures Kanza and Jabin, as well as from those of the minor actors, Ruth and Miriam.²⁷

The perspective of this narrative differs from the biblical one in that it is no longer the plight of the father that is focalized exclusively. Both Jephthah and Vashti feature as objects of external as well as internal focalization by the narrator.

The Voice of A Mighty Man of Valour

What kind of voice narrates *A Mighty Man of Valour*? In general, the narrator is situated at a level above the world of the story (extradiegetic) and does not participate in its events (heterodiegetic).²⁸ More specifically, the narrator's presence in the narrative can be exposed through the description of the setting, the temporal summary, the description of the characters and the commentary. Of these criteria, the ideological profile of the narrator emerges above all from the latter two.²⁹ To begin with, the two main characters are, to say the least, unfavourably described. Jephthah features as a brutal religious fanatic³⁰ and Vashti as a naïve and infantile woman.³¹ Secondly, the

25. More examples of external focalization on Jephthah's thoughts can be found on pp. 174, 218-20, 265. A corresponding example with regard to Vashti features on pp. 172-73.

26. More examples of internal focalization from Jephthah's position can be found on pp. 113, 118-21, 147-48, 156, 210-15, 260, 263. Internal focalization from Vashti's position feature on pp. 34-35, 40, 92, 96-97, 149, 160-61, 230-31, 244 and 260.

27. Kanza (16), Ruth (98), Jabin (164, 176) and Miriam (227).

28. There are no clear examples of embedded narratives in the novel. Vashti's song (136-40) contains fragments, but no more, of an embedded narrative. Jephthah briefly appears as homodiegetic narrator when he remembers his youth in exile (38), although he tells the same story as the one told by the narrator.

29. Beside the ideological function, I find none of Genette's other non-narrative functions (directing, communication or attestation) operative in the novel.

30. In the council where the vow is uttered, for example the narrator gives the following description of Jephthah: 'Grown half oblivious in his fanatic ecstasy, he paused' (78). Moreover, the narrator ironically uses the parallel phrases 'religious zeal' (80) and 'pious zeal' (107) with regard to Jephthah.

31. The narrator emphasizes her bodily features (18, 136, 151), and describes her

narrator makes few but extensive comments on the object of the story, namely, the motivation, the accomplishment and the consequences of the Ammonite war. These comments belong to the category of judgment.³² Early in the novel, when Jephthah has attained his position as a leader, the narrator describes the religious and ideological stance of the Gileadites:

Among the nomad tribes that grazed their flocks and wandered, and sometimes settled, and sometimes moved farther, the men and women who had gathered under Jephthah's rule were no exception. Such petty nationalities were ranged from Moab to the northern mountains of Tob. Sometimes one or other would grow strong and large enough to occupy a desirable territory, this they would inhabit, establishing frontiers to be held for just so long as no stronger tribe came to disturb their claim...

Jephthah's band, which he was, with so much ardour, desirous of welding into a nation, was made strong in the belief that the god they worshipped was the abiding pledge of their advancement. They were a chosen people, and although many of them were as individuals selected by chance to follow the one leader, the distinction which they acquired in worshipping a god who was the abstract of their nationality, gave them cohesion and a sense of kinship. The very rigidity of their leader's rule bestowed advantage and confidence (45-46).

The critical outlook of the narrator is here demonstrated by the mention of the 'petty' nationalism, the arbitrariness of military dominance, the instrumentality of religious belief, and the 'rigidity' of Jephthah's rule. The account of the war gives further evidence of this view of Jephthah and Gileadites:

Throughout the day, his men advanced, slating and plundering, exulting in their victory and singing songs of praise to the Lord God. Jephthah, glorying in his triumph, would pay his debt to the full measure of his strength. Every worshipper of Baal or any priest or priestess of false deities he would kill by the sword; only those who worshipped the true God could hope for mercy. Let none of the idolaters escape! His men marched through a land given over to slaughter, justified by his command. Into fugitives who had thrown away their arms, they plunged their weapons, and their blood-thirstiness, feeding and bloating upon itself, made them like somnambulists, heavy and drunken in the lust of slaughter. With untiring urgency they turned their weapons into the living flesh, and wrenched them from moaning corpses. The sanction of Yahweh was on their deeds; they were obedient to his command (102).³³

mental capacities with e.g. the following adjectives: 'idle' (83), 'inconsequent' (206) and 'childish' (249).

32. Chatman 1978: 228.

33. Before the sacrifice, the narrator defines the flowing of blood as the core of Gileadite religion: 'This was the established order, the visible ritual of the blood, ex-

In this passage, the narrator connects religion with ruthlessness by describing the massacre as a human act of obedience to the deity and by excluding all possibilities of mercy being shown to adherents of other faiths. The narrator's criticism becomes most explicit in the simile of the warriors as 'sommambu-lists...drunken in the lust of slaughter'. In this context, the exhortation, 'Let none of the idolaters escape!', as well as the label 'true God' for Yahweh, appear as sharp ironies, on the verge of cynicism. The irony consists in the fact that the narrator, despite a thoroughly negative evaluation of the war, still gives voice to an enthusiasm over the war that resembles Jephthah's.³⁴

A similar irony concludes the account of the people's reaction to the sacrifice: '[A]nd although they were well aware that the sacrifice had not been properly completed, they did not dare to question it. Surely it was sufficient that Jephthah had struck the blow which vindicated the vow' (271). In accordance with the narrator's general views on the war expressed above, it would certainly be right to question the specific killing of the sacrifice. By the last sentence, therefore, the narrator implicitly accuses the people of cowardice.

Such comments and descriptions suggest that the ideological function of the narrator is to express a negative evaluation of the narrated story. In the historical context, in which the novel is written, this is hardly a surprising stance.³⁵ The explicitness of the novel's narrator contrasts with the silence of the biblical narrator.

Characterization in A Mighty Man of Valour

Jephthah and Vashti are by far the most elaborate characters of this novel, and will be treated more thoroughly below. Six other actors mostly serve as objects of comparison. The three male actors, Kanza, Jabin and Ozias, play important parts in the story; however, their features appear rudimentary and they undergo no development. Besides Vashti, Kanza is Jephthah's closest ally. On the one hand, he is Jephthah's most highly esteemed warrior³⁶ and on the other, he is feared and disliked for his harshness.³⁷ Precisely these

pression of the spirit. Often had blood flowed and soaked into the soil, often had the smoke ascended and the offering been dedicated. This was a thing most deeply understood within the corporate soul of all that congregation' (262).

34. There is no indication that a shift of focalization occurs in this passage.

35. The negative evaluation of the narrator may mirror anti-Jewish, anti-religious as well as anti-nationalistic sentiments, all of which flourished at the time of the publication of this novel.

36. According to the narrator (235) as well as in Jephthah's speech (43).

37. Jabin calls him a 'mad fool' (163), and Vashti bluntly states that she does not like him (43).

qualities cause him to be assigned to lead the negotiations with the Gileadites and they also contribute to the breakdown at the two councils. Kanza appears as an extreme representative of the ideology of war, against whose conviction Jephthah's doubts are contrasted. Jabin features as the old wise man, whose advice of reason and moderation remains unheeded (14-15). Persistently, but vainly, he argues against the sacrifice. Ozias is Jephthah's proud half-brother, drawn to Tob through mere necessity (14-15). His opposition to Jephthah's leadership is strong but ineffective, due to his participation in Jephthah's expulsion as well as to his reputation as a libertine (25).

Three female actors—Miriam, Ruth and Sarah—are very simply sketched.³⁸ Miriam is a sexually bold young woman, who grows bored and sulky during the time of mourning on the mountains.³⁹ Ruth is more virtuous than Miriam, torn between the joy of Berek's unexpected return and the sorrow of Vashti's impending death.⁴⁰ Sarah is Vashti's best friend and her equal. She has no ties to any man and stays with Vashti to the end.⁴¹

Jephthah

The primacy of the character of Jephthah is declared by the title—*A Mighty Man of Valour*—together with the quote on the title page to which the title alludes.⁴² In addition, the criterion of distribution clearly indicates Jephthah's centrality. Jephthah appears in every chapter of the book except ch. 5, which deals with what happens on the sidelines of the narrative.⁴³ The criterion of

38. The names of these female companions could possibly be read as inter-textual references. Such allusions, however, seem rather far-fetched. The Miriam of Exodus 15 leads the people in a dance of celebration, like Jephthah's daughter in Judges, but nothing in her appearance suggests sexual boldness. Ruth in the book of Ruth does in fact take the initiative sexually (3.6-13) and is distinguished by her absolute loyalty to her mother-in-law (1.16-17). In Watson's narrative, however, both Miriam and Sarah resemble the biblical Ruth more than the novel's Ruth does. Finally, the biblical Sarah (Gen. 16-23) is the mighty old matriarch, with which the novel's young girl Sarah hardly shares any features.

39. Miriam (97-98, 176) says things like 'A lot of girls alone, it's not natural' (181). The narrator does not directly qualify Vashti's two other companions, Ruth and Sarah. Ruth is marked by her virtuous longing after her fiancée Berak and her friend Sarah.

40. Berak takes leave of her 'with no more than a boyish kiss or two' (98). See also 176-77.

41. Sarah is the one who explains Vashti's character to Jabin (177).

42. The quote is from King James' version of Judg. 11.1: 'Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a mighty man of valour, and he was the son of an harlot.'

43. The waiting for the men to return from the council (3) or from the war (8) clearly takes place at the sidelines of the story (no events occur here). The mourning at the mountains (chs. 11-13) is more ambiguous. Although it constitutes a delay, it does not alter the outcome of the course of events.

relations also points to Jephthah's centrality, although not as obviously. Jephthah has the largest number of relationships. In contrast to the biblical narrative, however, some communication between the actors occurs independently of Jephthah, for example, the discussion between Vashti and Jabin and that between Vashti and her companions. Even though Jephthah is not present as a subject in these discussions, he is present as their primary object.

The narrator's direct description of Jephthah concerns three areas: bodily features, religious conviction and leadership qualities. Initially, Jephthah's appearance is presented as that of an ordinary soldier:

So far as attire went, there was nothing to distinguish Jephthah from his men, except the weaving of a gold thread into the black horse-hair band which bound his head-cloth. He was a man of early middle-age, carrying himself with resolute and conscious dignity (18).

Later on, the narrator emphasizes Jephthah's brutality by repeatedly describing him as a man literally covered in blood.⁴⁴ With regard to Jephthah's religious faith, the narrator is explicitly negative. Before Jephthah swears the vow, the narrator says that he was '[g]rown half oblivious in his fanatic ecstasy' (78).⁴⁵ Elsewhere, the narrator refers to Jephthah's 'religious zeal' as something that at times possesses him (80, 107). However, the narrator also indicates that Jephthah harbours doubt and weakness that stand in conflict with his rigid exterior. This contradiction is demonstrated in the meeting with the hermits, when Jephthah experiences a strong sense of 'unrelatedness', which he fights by conjuring 'memory pictures of his armed strength' (126).

Jephthah's religious doubts have implications for his leadership qualities. The narrator points out that his rule would hardly be maintained were it not for the support of Kanza.⁴⁶ Furthermore, the narrator supplies images of Jephthah's mental condition. When Jephthah returns from victory, his strength is likened to a 'great tree... whose roots were gnawed by the invisible worms' (146). This is an image of magnificence in decay, incomprehensible from the outside. When he returns from the unsuccessful search for the hermits, he is described as 'a man in a sand blizzard, who could not see his way, could hardly think, could only stumble and fall' (220). This image is

44. In the account of the war, the narrator states: 'In his hand he carried his blood-stained sword, and on his face and clothes, and on his bare arms were fresh and copious splashes of blood' (108). In the account of the sacrifice, the narrator states: 'His hands were warm and wet with the blood, which had flowed from her breast as he drew out the knife' (267). In the encounter with the hermits, we read: 'Jephthah turned his slow, blood-lusting glance upon them' (109).

45. Similarly, Jephthah shouts the command to fight the Ephraimites 'in an ecstasy of exultation' (265).

46. 'In Kanza's presence, Jephthah was the leader no man doubted; no self-doubt could lurk in that hard presence' (132). See also p. 146.

one of total blindness and despair, of someone who could not possibly function as a leader. The narrator uses sexually ambiguous categories to describe how Jephthah regains his control:

Drawing in his breath slowly through his nostrils, Jephthah let it out in a quick ejaculation and, freeing his wrist, stood back on a higher step, even on the raised turfs where Vashti lay. With that long inhalation he seemed, even in the moment, to have recovered his accustomed command over himself (268).

Through offering the sacrifice, Jephthah overcomes his self-doubt. He thereby regains his authority and, implicitly, his leadership role. From the context, it is clear that the sacrifice causes a release of tension in Jephthah, which the narrator describes in a sexually suggestive way. After his 'ejaculation' of breath, the man Jephthah simultaneously withdraws and ascends to a higher position, from which he can look down on the woman Vashti lying on the ground. The performance of the sacrifice changes Jephthah's. By killing his own daughter, he establishes his sovereignty over himself, over Vashti and over the people. The sacrifice thereby links death and control to male sexuality. The metaphor stands as an absurd confirmation of a gender stereotype, where masculinity is constituted through the extinction of life, as opposed to the reproduction of life associated with femininity.

How do the other actors view Jephthah? His soldiers describe him as 'hard' and 'vengeful', as someone who will never forgive his brothers (11). They also find him a 'good soldier', a 'just and particular man', who will not kill the prisoners of war without a hearing (104). Moreover, when they discuss his relations with the opposite sex, one of them states decisively that '[h]e is not the kind of man to be troubled by women', which indicates that, after the death of Vashti's mother, he kept women at a distance (14). Kanza esteems him highly, as 'no ordinary man' and 'pre-eminent among us' (236-37). Even his opponents, Jabin and Ozias, address him reverently, as their 'great' and 'supreme leader' (232-33). Nevertheless, they both voice strong criticism of him because of his arrogance and pride. Only one actor, Vashti, sees Jephthah's division between strength and weakness, which is so central to the narrator's portrait. She idealizes him as 'the noblest', the 'greatest' and 'the fountain source of law and order' (31, 259, 39), but she also realizes that he began his career in Tob as a 'brigand' and finds, towards the end, that her father is 'no longer leader, vigorous and alert, but like a stone, or like some stricken brute, numbed and overcome' (39, 244). One of the hermits regards Jephthah's brutality in war as a sign of weakness, and characterizes him as 'a blind man striking in darkness' (113).

When Jephthah comments on his own character, in speech and thought, there emerges a tension between his external appearance and his professed 'essence'. At the outset of the novel, Vashti's idyllic view of Jephthah converges with his own (34). In his account of his exile, he tells Vashti that he

'lived like a beast', who had to hide his 'true nature' (37-38, 39). At the first council, he faces the non-recognition of his leadership by rhetorically making the strategy of war a matter of character: 'The time of waiting is past. You shall have action... Do you not think that my nature is made for action rather than for waiting?' (74).⁴⁷ At the end, however, Jephthah struggles to make Vashti abandon the illusion of his supremacy, which he up to this point has encouraged:

Look on me well, Vashti, and see me for what I am: a common, ordinary man. Forget everything that I have told you, all the lying thoughts which hang around me. I am the son of a small chieftain and a woman who was not his wife, a harlot brought into the house against the proper custom. I am an outlaw who has blown a great bubble of pride which swells about him, and has obscured from sight the true things of humanity. Look at me well, and see me as I stand alone, and very small (258).

In the biblical narrative, the character Jephthah was a distinguished speaker and negotiator. This is not the case in *A Mighty Man of Valour*. The emphasis lies on verbal encounters with his kin rather than on confrontations with the enemy. Most frequently, Jephthah engages in dialogue with Vashti. During the initial negotiations with the Gileadites, he withdraws, together with his daughter, to reflect on his life and on the possibility of a drastic change (29-44). Spurred on by her questions, he tells her of his mother and of his forced exile. Finally, he asks her advice on how to answer the Gileadites and accepts, without reservation, her proposal to demand supreme leadership in exchange for military aid. On this occasion, Jephthah confides in Vashti. The next time they meet, their roles are somewhat reversed (87-97). Before Jephthah leaves for battle, he calms Vashti's fears about war by telling her of God's deeds in history, as well as about her mother.⁴⁸

The most crucial encounter between Jephthah and Vashti occurs when he returns from the battle (149-59). Jephthah is confused (he does not properly remember the vow) and he shouts that the dog is to be sent out from his house. In response, however, Vashti steps out. Jephthah then repeatedly commands her to move back. When she entreats him to look at her and to explain himself, he responds with an accusation: 'Alas, my daughter! Alas, you have brought me very low... You also are amongst those who trouble

47. Other examples are: 'All my acts mock my true being, and so have done, always and always...' (257) and 'I am too noble to speak my baser thoughts. Better to let Kanza speak for me' (31).

48. Jephthah refers to the Israelites' exodus from Egypt (90), the tower of Babel (91) as well as the election of Abraham (92). In an internally focalized passage, the narrator states that Vashti is impressed by her father's speech: 'The words of her father, in their sincerity, and in the power of faith which spoke them, gave her a sensation of slight pressure about her heart and an elation. Her mood of abstraction had been changed by his quiet fervour to a participating sympathy' (92).

me' (151).⁴⁹ At this point Vashti attempts to lift her father up, who is crouching close to the ground, and promises that she will never blame him. Given this total declaration of confidence, Jephthah manages, after many attempts, to tell her about his vow. Jephthah is shocked that his daughter does not beg for her life and that she both accepts and urges the execution of the sacrifice. Near the end of the encounter, Jephthah bemoans his own fate and blames it on the deity as well as on Kanza. To this end, he professes his non-identification with Abraham (Gen. 22):

His power shadowed me always, and His hand enclosed me, and I have moved as a man walking in his sleep. And when I communed with Him, He breathed into my mouth to make me mad... For who am I, a younger son, a bastard, an outcast from my people, to be like Abraham commanded to make sacrifice of my flesh, my only child? (157)⁵⁰

Thus, Jephthah handles the situation through denial, accusation, confession and excuses consecutively.

The next time they meet, which is their fourth dialogue (165-69), Vashti requests a respite and Jephthah answers, 'It shall be so...that at least I can grant' (166), which implies a sense of powerlessness. In what follows, Jephthah accounts for the mystique theology of the hermits. He tries to persuade Vashti that there is no need for her to die. Against the hermits' restrictions Jephthah even reveals their word of mystery, 'shibboleth', and its explanation: 'It means flood and the overflowing of great waters, fountains and well-springs, and the seed of man which begetteth life' (169). Vashti perceives the sexual dimension of Jephthah's speech and is taken back by it.⁵¹ However, Jephthah does not succeed in convincing Vashti of the legitimacy of the hermits' male creed. The dialogue ends with non-communication, and, on Jephthah's part, with resignation.⁵²

49. Jephthah's words are a direct quote of Judg. 11.35.

50. The target of the blame differs. Earlier in the chapter, Jephthah states: 'Great, terrible powers conspired against me, and against my God' (151). At the end, Jephthah finds Kanza to be most at fault for the development at the council: 'They [the council] also urged me, yet without him [Kanza] I would not have vowed so rashly' (159). The blame on God is further specified: 'He drove me to it. For this He raised me up to cast me down' (157).

51. There are three indications that this dialogue excites sexual tension on Jephthah's part: (1) to begin with, the narrator states 'Jephthah leaned earnestly towards her'; (2) in an internally focalized passage from Vashti's position, the images of her father and her beloved coalesce: 'Never had she seen so strange and intimate a look upon his face, and for no reason, but in a flash, came her memory of Caleb, and his sharpening of his sword...'; (3) the narrator describes Vashti's physical reaction to Jephthah's words: 'Vashti felt faint in the presence of his urgency' (169).

52. When Vashti asks, 'What has it to do with you, or with me?', Jephthah resignedly answers, 'Nothing, nothing at all' (169).

The fifth encounter between Jephthah and Vashti occurs after the second council, when father and daughter stand alone at the foot of the altar. The sexual connotations of their last conversation here become explicit through Jephthah's expressions of love: 'Oh Vashti, Vashti, my daughter, my beloved, my sister!... You alone of them all have I ever loved' (246-47). Jephthah continues to blame the situation on others, in particular on the men in the council and on God. Whereas Vashti's position is one of calm, Jephthah's is one of despair. Repeatedly, but in vain, he tries to make her accept his world-view, which features a treacherous deity and a destitute human creature.⁵³ Vashti accepts neither his image of himself nor his theology. At the very end of their encounter, the narrator indicates Jephthah's indecision by the remark that 'he would have led her away' (259) were it not for the quick return of the priests and the people.

Intense verbal confrontations take place between Jephthah and the Gileadites. Initially, Jephthah avoids an encounter with them and he delegates Kanza to treat them with 'his most viperish mood' (20).⁵⁴ When the parties meet in the first council, the atmosphere is fierce to say the least (60-82). Azor, Ozias and Jabin take turns to speak against Jephthah's leadership, only to face his silence. Finally, Jephthah explains to them that the delay in attacking their enemies is a conscious military strategy. All the same, he is provoked to begin the mobilization for war immediately. When the protests still continue, Jephthah swears the vow with the explicit purpose of silencing his antagonists.⁵⁵ In the second council, Jephthah once again faces severe criticism because of the sacrifice he vowed (228-43). As in the first chapter, he retreats to an absolute silence and lets Kanza handle his defence. Since Jabin dissolves the meeting, Jephthah never engages in a direct verbal encounter with his opponents but rather responds through action, that is, by sacrificing Vashti on the return of the people.

By means of the sacrifice, the conflict between Jephthah and the Gileadite people is abruptly reconciled. Jephthah then redirects his rage towards the deity as well as towards the Ephraimites. He defies the deity⁵⁶ and threatens

53. An example of the former is: 'See how He betrays me, most cruelly. He shrinks and dwindles before that other, who is remote and cold to all our suffering' (253) and of the latter: 'Look on me well, Vashti, and see me for what I am: a common, ordinary man' (258).

54. Jephthah later professes to Vashti: 'I am too noble to speak my baser thoughts' (31).

55. Immediately after the vow, Jephthah addresses the council with the words: 'That shall content you' (79).

56. "Thus you are answered", he muttered thickly, then springing to his feet, and casting down the knife and raising his clenched fists against the heavens, called again, "Thus are you answered... Thus, have I conquered you and bound you to my wheel" (267). "O most diminished God", he cried, "torturer of men, who uses all that they

the Ephraimites with extinction.⁵⁷ Thus he completely terminates two relationships that he had up to this point endeavoured to maintain through prayers and negotiations. It should be noticed that Jephthah, who remained silent during most of the confrontations with his own people, emerges as the most eloquent speaker when his counterparts are not present.

In Jephthah's confrontation with one of the hermits, a verbal role reversal takes place (109-17). Jephthah begins as the harsh interrogator of a prisoner of war and ends it as the fretful novice before the monk. His questions range from the mundane to the metaphysical, to the existential and to the personal realms.⁵⁸ Whereas the hermit remains calm before Jephthah's threats, Jephthah grows angry and hesitant.⁵⁹ More and more, the hermit takes over the interrogation and focuses it on Jephthah's faith and on his personal motives. As a result, Jephthah refrains from using force and lets them all go. Furthermore, he pledges to participate in their secret ceremony. Thus, a routine interrogation of some prisoners causes Jephthah to question fundamentally the ethos of the war. The role reversal is confirmed at their second meeting, where Jephthah speaks only in response to a direct address.⁶⁰ Jephthah's attempt to meet the hermits a third time, though unsuccessful, indicates that he remains bound to those whom he had earlier released. As far as Jephthah is concerned, his relationship with the hermits ends with an unintentional silence on his part.

Jephthah hardly features as an independent character in *A Mighty Man of Valour*. He accepts the leadership of the Gileadites only as a result of their pleadings and on the advice of Vashti. He goes to war as a result of the pressure of his own men at the council. To spite them, he also swears, and later executes, the vow. He participates in the hermits' secret ritual in response to their direct challenge. He promises to massacre the Ephraimites in revenge for their attack. His initial covenant with God and his final curse of God are responses to extreme situations. The former is a means of counteracting his humiliation at his expulsion by his brothers. The latter appears as a displaced expression of grief after killing his own daughter.

have loved and worshipped to fling them back into a pit of sorrows, I now abjure Thee, curse Thee and defy Thee... From henceforward I will worship my sword and that double-will which speak both life and death..." (273).

57. "Thus we shall answer Ephraim. Let there be such a war as men have never dreamed of. Let all be slain that dare oppose our will! No enemy shall escape from battles which are to come. Slay, slay, slay..." (267).

58. "What are you?" (109), "Is he known as Yahweh?" (110), "Why do you speak to me about suffering?" (110), "What do you know of me?" (113).

59. The hermit expresses the power struggle between them in words similar to those of Jesus before Pilate: "You can do nothing unless the power is given to you..." (110).

60. When the hermit asks if he has strength, he answers, "What man may dare, I dare" (126).

Jephthah's only truly independent acts in the entire narrative are the dispatching of emissaries to Ammon and to Ephraim, deeds that trigger heavy criticism and which in turn lead to his vow and his sacrifice. In contrast to the biblical text, there is no ambiguity as to whether the initiative for the vow lies with Jephthah or with God. Rather, the novel presents an altogether human drama, in which almost every other actor explicitly or implicitly pressures Jephthah.

Jephthah's character development is not straightforward. He begins as Gilead's most favoured son. His exile reduces him to the status of an animal. After years of struggle, he becomes the esteemed leader of the Tobian brigands. Suddenly, he takes on the leadership of the Gileadite people as well, but his religious zeal and his military tactics are much contested. At the peak of his success, he meets the hermits and is transformed into a spiritual contemplative. After the sacrifice, he emerges at last as a ruthless and destructive warrior, freed from all earlier constraints. The final three phases of his development can be described as a Hegelian movement. The religiously motivated warlord (thesis) turns into an introspective doubter (anti-thesis) and ends as an irreligious warlord (synthesis).

In comparison to the biblical narrative, two features of the novel appear unique. First, the novel shows much more fully how the events of the story affect Jephthah's character. Secondly, and more specifically, the novel connects the final stage of Jephthah's development with the release of sexual tension.

Vashti

After Jephthah, the most important character in the novel is Vashti, who appears in two thirds of its chapters. She spends five of these (2, 5, 9, 10, 16) in intense dialogue with Jephthah. Five others she passes with her friends, waiting for Jephthah to return from the council or from the war (3, 8) or mourning her approaching death (11–13). In the final chapter (17), she stands at the altar and speaks before the entire community. Her most important relationship is obviously to Jephthah, in whom she fully confides her fears and beliefs. She is also involved in intense relationships with Jabin and Sarah, whereas her interactions with Caleb, Ruth and Miriam appears minor by comparison.

The narrator's description of Vashti centres on her external appearance and on her significance for Jephthah, and treats her psychological features summarily. She is introduced along with Jephthah and Kanza, although at this point she has no part in the action. Whereas the portraits the narrator paints of Jephthah and Kanza are concise, hers is long and detailed:

For a child of fourteen, she was well developed. The glossy texture of her silken garments gleamed in the sun rays, which now sent their first, slanting beams across the scene, making the jewels about her neck and wrists sparkle

in small fiery lights. Her large expressive eyes watched every gesture of her father's. Keeping at some distance behind him, she moved unobtrusively, and, while the men were talking, often remained motionless in rapt observation. Yet sometimes it would have seemed that her attention had wandered, and from the fixed look in her eyes it might have been supposed that she was lost in day-dreams (18).

Concerning her appearance, the narrator's introduction is ambiguous. On the one hand, age and behaviour indicate that she is still a child. Her bodily features, her clothes and adornments indicate, on the other hand, that she is perceived as a woman, that is, as a female sexual being. Throughout the rest of the narrative, the narrator's remarks on her clothing indicate her status. Initially, her attire points to her distinguished position as the sole relative of the leader: 'Vashti as Jephthah's daughter was most resplendent in her silks and bracelets' (50).⁶¹ At the time of mourning, however, she rejects luxury in favour of 'the simple unbleached garment of any shepherd-girl'.⁶² In a passage internally focalized from Jabin's position, the way she is dressed is interpreted as an act of dignity. When the priests finally lead her to the altar, she is 'clothed in a white smock' (229). Although not explicitly stated, her attire signals her position as a sacrificial object.

With regard to Vashti's significance for Jephthah, the narrator's introduction assigned her the role of the silent but attentive observer of her father's activities. When she first appears as an actor, the narrator presents her by means of the platonic metaphor of heterosexual lovers, that is, as someone who lives in symbiosis with her father: 'His daughter, she was the other part, the other half of him, and she was there beside him, knowing and sharing, as surely she must share, this great, surprising, fortune' (29).⁶³ The narrator thus stresses that Vashti's function is to support her father morally. She is not presented as an individual in her own right. On a single occasion, at the farewell before the battle, the narrator implies that Vashti has sexual feelings for Caleb.⁶⁴ When Vashti realizes that Jephthah watches them,

61. Another example is when Vashti waits for Jephthah to return from the war and repeatedly looks at her 'fine clothes' (135-36).

62. The full quote reads: 'That she had changed her clothes, discarding all her silks and gold and silver, and now wore the simple unbleached garment of any shepherd-girl, pleased him. He could more clearly see her than when hidden and disguised in vanity. By the reserve and the dignity of her manner, she charmed him, touching his heart to an awakening love' (176).

63. The ambiguity between the child and the woman is made explicit in the next paragraph: 'Her voice, which was both child's and woman's, came with the childish question: "Must I go too?"' (29-30).

64. 'As her eyes followed his actions, she was half-conscious of a desire to touch his arms, and, as in imagination she felt them under her hand, she remembered her father's arms' (84).

however, her desire for Caleb becomes guilt towards her father. Although the narrator finds her guilt 'quite unreasoning' (86), the guilt about desiring another man is completely consistent with the idea that Vashti exists exclusively for her father's sake.

A final example of the point that Vashti's main task is to attend to her father's needs occurs in the account of the mobilization for war. The narrator describes how Vashti marches with Jephthah among his soldiers as the only woman. Through her mere existence in this all-male environment, she transcends, in some respects, the boundaries of gender.⁶⁵ Yet the purpose of her presence there is to serve her father. Nothing indicates that her presence before him would be to her benefit, as his heir or his apprentice. Moreover, the narrator emphasizes that she belongs to the community of women.

What, then, is suggested about her mental capacities? In contrast to the adult men and women, the narrator describes Vashti as 'idle' and 'full of curiosity' (83).⁶⁶ In her crucial confrontation with her father, the narrator remarks on her 'amazement...that she, so young and weak, could feel compassion for a man so strong and yet so troubled' (151). Apparently, she is capable of complex emotions; however, the narrator presents these as if they were an exception or an inconsistency. During her mourning on the mountains, her existential reflections are furthermore deemed as 'inconsequent' (206). Even towards the end, the narrator finds her attitude immature: 'This happiness of hers, this childish exultation in sacrifice, brave and beautiful as it might be, was not sufficient to balance that dire duality in love, which murdered love' (249).⁶⁷ Once again, the narrator does not portray Vashti in her own right but rather evaluates her in relation to Jephthah and in relation to how efficiently she meets his needs. Vashti's spiritual weakness corresponds to a general tendency in Grant Watson's work to devalue female characters.⁶⁸

The name Grant Watson gives to the daughter, Vashti, raises the question whether or not he is making a relevant allusion to the Persian queen in the first chapter of *Esther*. Three direct parallels between the two narratives appear immediately. First, in both cases dealings within the family have

65. The full quote reads: 'Then came the leaders, with the main body of the fighting men, carrying their arms. Among these Vashti [*sic*], as the only woman, accompanied her father during the day-time marches. This was her privilege and distinction, that, being his only child, she should occupy the position of both daughter and son... Taking the son's place during the day amongst the armed men, she would ride beside her father; but in the evening she would return to her women, as was fitting to the daughter of the chieftain' (46).

66. The latter quality proves decisive in her fatal welcome of Jephthah after the war: 'She could not wait like this, alone. Could not bear the suspense' (145).

67. The adjective 'childish' is recurrent with regard to Vashti (e.g., 30, 31, 41).

68. Haynes 1999.

repercussions for the wider community. Secondly, both characters are written out of the story, the one through jurisdiction, the other through sacrifice. Thirdly, the narrator in both texts stereotypically qualifies the female figures as 'beautiful' (Est. 1.11).⁶⁹ Significant differences must also be mentioned, however. Queen Vashti in *Esther* never speaks; she accomplishes her protests merely through action. The daughter Vashti, in contrast, acts in obedience to her father's vow, although, as a speaker, she also voices criticism of him. Thus it would seem that the name Vashti amounts to an indeterminated inter-biblical allusion, which is consistent with the naming, discussed above, of Vashti's companions Miriam, Ruth and Sarah.⁷⁰

The other actors often describe Vashti by comparing her to others. Jephthah finds Vashti different in character from her mother, that is, less attentive and submissive to their guests (41). Yet he repeatedly declares that she occupies the position of his beloved (154-55, 246). Sarah apparently speaks for the entire community when she states, as a compliment, that her friend resembles Jephthah (140). Jabin and Miriam, by contrast, offer severe criticism. According to Jabin, Vashti's similarity to Jephthah is purely negative; she parallels Jephthah only in obstinacy (226). Furthermore, he labels her 'a spoilt child, as wilful as ever' (203). However, he also sees and appreciates a spiritual development within Vashti and, through his protests against her sacrifice expresses sympathy with her tragic fate.⁷¹ Miriam is less enthusiastic. To Jabin, she describes Vashti as 'full of fancies' (193). In her own thoughts, she exceeds Jabin's judgment of Vashti as 'spoilt' and concludes that '[s]he too, in her way, deserved her fate' (227).⁷²

As a speaker, Vashti undergoes a clear development, both in relation to Jephthah and to her friends. In the first encounter with her father, she fea-

69. It could also be discussed whether the fact that the name of the biblical text is of Persian origin adds a dimension of foreignness to the novel's Vashti.

70. Stronger parallels may be observed between Grant Watson's Vashti and the biblical Esther. Both characters act in obedience to a male father figure (Jephthah and Mordocai respectively). External appearance is greatly emphasized (Esther undergoes a twelve-month-long treatment and wins the beauty contest, Est. 2.12). In the end, their actions have significance for the liberation of the entire people. The use of the name Vashti in Grant Watson's novel thus brings to the fore the two biblical characters Vashti and Esther.

71. When Jabin meets Vashti on the mountains, he makes the following reflection, which supports the point made above about her spiritual development: 'She was no longer merely the favoured daughter of an arbitrary chieftain, but already changed by an evasive and a deep reserve' (176). In the council, furthermore, Jabin rhetorically questions Jephthah: 'Have you no pity for one who is little more than a child, hardly a woman yet...' (243). After her death, finally, he addresses her with these words: 'Poor child...how vain was your sacrifice!' (275).

72. The voice of this passage belongs to the narrator, but it is internally focalized from Miriam's position.

tures primarily as someone who admires and listens to him. She makes him recount the story of his background and, in proposing a contract with the Gileadites (42), she demonstrates a perfect understanding of his innermost wish. In their second meeting, Vashti speaks of her own fears, although indirectly, by asking about her mother's feelings when Jephthah engaged in war (89). The confrontation between her and her father when Jephthah returns becomes a turning point. Vashti then demands to be seen, to know, and to be treated like an adult (150-55). From this position, she legitimizes the sacrifice theologically and, to Jephthah's astonishment, urges him to proceed with it:

Great victories are not bought lightly. Yahweh is great and wise, so you have often told me, and inasmuch as He has taken vengeance for your enemies, then let... Let this thing be done to me (155).

Vashti's argument is pragmatic. She simply states that there is a price to pay and implies that she is ready for it, although with some hesitancy. She thus challenges Jephthah by placing his earlier conviction of Yhwh's sovereignty against his present doubt. The next time they meet, however, Vashti makes something of a retreat. In poetical language, she demands a respite: 'The thought of death grows and changes. My body is weak like a plant that bows after a frost...my heart like a strangled bird in a snare... Let it not come too soon...' (165). In making this request, Vashti shows that she values her life. Nevertheless, she rejects Jephthah's persistent attempts to avoid the sacrifice through appealing to the hermits' faith in a deity who is beyond right and wrong. In contrast to their initial conversations, his stories no longer comfort her.

In their final dialogue, Vashti elaborates her understanding of the situation. As the sacrificial object, she regards herself as God's approved servant and as her father's pride.⁷³ She also identifies her experience of imminent death with Moses's experience before the burning bush (254-56) and describes it in religious, mystic terminology as an experience of oneness with the universe:

In the stillness of the mountains, my spirit became still; in the stillness, it seemed that I remembered, yet not clearly as we remember things on earth, yet in my heart remembered, that I had been even as the sun and moon and all the stars; and all were in me; and that myself extended and enclosed them all, and was itself at peace; and so those words had meaning...even as now, when I am close to you, and so at peace... (256).

73. Vashti professes to Jephthah: 'I know that God sees me, and would have me be what I am' and 'I am your victory' (248-49).

At this point, Vashti's speech suggests that she has attained the insight that Jephthah covets from the hermits.⁷⁴ She expresses peaceful reconciliation with the circumstances of life, whereas he still fiercely fights against them.

Vashti's conversations with her friends are brief. On the first two occasions, they concern her relationship to Jephthah.⁷⁵ On the mountains, they centre on her feelings in the face of the sacrifice. To Jabin, she recounts her mystic experience⁷⁶ and once again argues in favour of the legitimacy of the sacrifice.⁷⁷ She thereby provokes the old man, who finds her a proud epigone of her father. She also silences him by persistently maintaining her autonomy: 'You mistake me. I am myself, and that which I do, comes from my own thought' (197). To Sarah, she expresses both anxiety and trust (205-209). Although she acknowledges a certain fear of death, she urges her friend not to weep for her. Thus, Vashti impresses Sarah deeply.⁷⁸

With Jephthah's permission Vashti speaks to the community at the moment before her death:

People of Gilead, I die without reproach. My heart is spilled over towards you with my blood. I am like a flask which is emptied... I am content...deserted of myself and so content (266).

She makes a new effort to speak, with her heart pierced, but manages only to utter the words 'I am'. Her appearance in the public arena is brief and controlled by Jephthah, who kills her, thus bringing her speech to an end. Yet Vashti's profession of emptiness paradoxically signals self-assertiveness for two reasons. First, the thrice-repeated phrase 'I am' is a possible reference to the name of God (I AM THAT I AM) in her earlier account of Moses before the burning bush. This time, however, she is not identified with Moses, but with the Godhead itself. Secondly, by addressing the Gileadites, Vashti confirms that her fate is not simply a family affair but something that concerns the entire community. In her discourse, she appears

74. This is also supported by the narrator's comment that follows: 'Jephthah was silent for a while, charmed by her words, and feeling the impersonal which went beyond the woman or the girl, even beyond the Vashti, whom he knew to be his daughter' (256).

75. Before the first council, she criticizes as well as defends Jephthah (53, 56) and before his return, she worries about her looks (138-40).

76. 'My desires also are changed... They would seem as though they had gone out from me, and are in the streams and the plants and in the stones of the earth... In them are my desires, not in myself' (190).

77. 'My life was given to me by my father. It is his to offer as sacrifice' (195-97).

78. 'Sarah watched her, wondering and awed at the mysterious changes which the prospect of death had brought about' (209).

as both the object and, at least, the joint subject of the sacrifice, that is, as someone who spills her blood for the benefit of the people.

Speech is the most obvious indicator of the character Vashti's independence as well as of her transformation. In her primary relationship to Jephthah, she changes from being a listener and a childish admirer into a pronounced sceptic and a self-conscious interpreter of her own fate. Confronted with the old man Jabin, she refuses to heed his authoritative advice and attempts instead to convince him of her vision. In her fellowship with Sarah, their topics of discussion shift radically from outward appearances to religion. As in the biblical text, Jephthah ultimately determines the limits of his daughter's course of action.⁷⁹ Vashti's apparent autonomy lies in insisting that Jephthah fulfil his vow in opposition to his own doubts. Her honour is intertwined with that of her father. According to this logic, her life would be devoid of meaning should he forfeit his own honour.⁸⁰

Interestingly, the excursion to the mountains includes hardly any specific expressions of mourning for Vashti. Rather, her fellow companions sing, talk, play and weave baskets (173).⁸¹ All of them except Sarah grow tired and return to Mizpah prematurely. Jabin comes to question her, but does not express any sympathy with her. The meagre support given to Vashti by her friends makes her resolution to face death appear all the more independent. Thus, Vashti does what she has to do in her position as her father's daughter. Yet by opposing her friends, Jabin and Jephthah himself she paradoxically demonstrates more integrity in her speech than her father does in his. It is through her speech that Vashti's development towards greater maturity becomes obvious.

Conclusions on A Mighty Man of Valour

The story of *A Mighty Man of Valour* is longer but more integrated than the biblical story. Jephthah's encounter with the hermits (no. 10) features as a new pivotal point, after which the development of the story is one of deterioration. The order and rhythm of the narrative underscore the significance of this event, along with that of the vow and the sacrifice. A tension between the story and the narrative lies in the fact that the object of the story, the victory over the Ammonites, is already achieved one third of the way into the narrative. The Ephraimite war is logically connected to the main course of events through early negotiations (no. 6) and also by serving as the cata-

79. All Vashti's acts are somehow related to Jephthah: she proposes how he should deal with the Gileadites, she exhorts him to proceed with the vow and she demands from him a respite.

80. Douglas 1966.

81. The lack of mourning during Vashti's respite at the mountains is consistent with the novel's omission of the subsequent ritual to her memory in the biblical narrative.

lyst to the sacrifice. However, the narrative reaches no distinct resolution, since it ends before the actual battle against the Ephraimites.

The novel features no single or dominating driving force. A number of human actors here struggle for influence over the ostensibly divided subject, Jephthah. The course of events is triggered by the concrete initiatives of Jephthah's brothers, the Ammonites and the Ephraimites, that is, by the expulsion and by the two military attacks (nos. 1, 4, 18). Kanza on the one hand, and Jabin and Ozias on the other, verbally fight each other openly over the issues of war strategy and sacrifice. Vashti also voices her opinions to her father, but always in private conversations rather than in the community councils. The hermits exert an indirect influence on Jephthah, since their encounter with him causes him to doubt his faith fundamentally. Although the deity does not appear as an actor in the narrative, the role of religion should not be underestimated. Jephthah makes the initial covenant with God (no. 2) after his expulsion (no. 1); he makes his vow (no. 8) after the people's protests (no. 7); and his promise to quell the Ephraimites (no. 20) is part of his breaking the covenant (no. 21). Thus, although Jephthah is the obvious subject of the narrative, it cannot in fact be established which of the actors exert the most influence on him.

The narrator expresses a clearly negative judgment on the phenomena of nationalistic war and religious fanaticism. Once, this attitude is even vented by way of irony about the people's 'cowardice'. The overt criticism of the main characters, Jephthah and Vashti, points in the same direction. The mysticism of the hermits and the rationalism of Jabin feature as possible contrasts, although the narrator never explicitly expresses approval of them.

The negative evaluation of both Jephthah and Vashti becomes even more obvious if one considers all the aspects of characterization. Jephthah's complexity is evidenced through a number of contradictory identities, such as the fanatic worshipper of Yahweh, the unorthodox apprentice of the hermits, the confidant of his own child, the hesitant leader of his people and the bloodthirsty avenger of the Ephraimites. Yet these do not serve the purpose of raising sympathy. Rather, they emphasize the arbitrary and irrational nature of his leadership. The role of the daughter has been quantitatively expanded in relation to the biblical narrative. Even so, she is denied access to the power struggles of the public sphere. In line with the biblical narrative, she remains the sexualized social object, with the only difference being that this narrator emphasizes her outward appearance even further. She begins to develop spiritually, but this development is ended by the sacrifice. In the absence of the commemoration ritual, her sacrifice has apparently no meaning.

Introduction to 'Upon This Evil Earth'

Amos Oz (born in 1939) has been described as one of the most popular and important Israeli authors from the mid-sixties onwards.⁸² His large output includes novels, short stories, children's books and political essays. A leading figure of the Peace Now movement since 1977, he is strongly identified with the Israeli left.⁸³

Oz is one of the foremost depictees of tensions in Israeli society at large and in the kibbutz in particular, and critics have especially emphasized the political and social aspects of Oz's writing.⁸⁴ Yet its religious, philosophical and psychological aspects must not be neglected. According to Avraham Balaban, the thematic core in his works has to do with the soul's existential struggle and the overcoming of fundamental conflicts.⁸⁵ The world-view expressed in his works is also decisively connected to those of Jung, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer.⁸⁶ The influence of Jung becomes evident, for example, in the tendency to portray female characters as archetypal anima figures.⁸⁷ Esther Fuchs argues that Oz presents women as sexualized stereotypes in his early fiction and Nehama Aschkenasy detects a tendency in Oz to fabricate a second self, 'a mad double', for his female protagonists.⁸⁸

Where the Jackals Howl is Oz's debut (1965). It was extensively revised in 1976, when also 'Upon This Evil Earth' was added as the concluding story.⁸⁹ The work is a tightly woven collection of short stories with a number of interlocking motifs.⁹⁰ The jackal recurrently appears as a symbol of the dark and base side of nature⁹¹ and the title may also be an allusion to Jer. 10.22,

82. Balaban 1993: 3, 30 and Yudkin 1978: 330. Oz has also received literary awards such as the French Prix Femina and the Israel Prize for Literature, according to the website of the Jewish Virtual Library, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/biography/oz.html. A full member of the Academy of the Hebrew Language since 1991, he at present teaches literature at the Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

83. Balaban 1993: 2.

84. Balaban 1993: 3. Oz left home at age fourteen to live at Kibbutz Hulda.

85. Balaban 1993: 179-239.

86. Balaban 1993: 3-9, 27-30.

87. E.g. as representations of the Great Mother or of the Greek goddess Aphrodite (Balaban 1993: 66-67, 139-76).

88. Fuchs 1984: 319 and Aschkenasy 1988: 121-27. Aschkenasy also makes this point about three other Israeli authors, Berdichevsky, Agnon and Yehoshua. Balaban (1993: 66) finds the generalization that woman represents nature and man culture is 'most applicable' to Oz's world.

89. The present study is based on the English translation made by de Lange and Simpson (Oz 1981).

90. Balaban (1993: 241-50) discusses the structure of the first edition (1965).

91. Balaban 1993: 93.

where Jerusalem is described as 'a habitation of jackals'.⁹² All the stories are set in the same geographical region and feature rivalry over the land between settlers and nomads. As the only story situated in ancient times, 'Upon This Evil Earth' gives historical depth to this theme.⁹³ Furthermore, two interrelated and recurrent themes with utmost relevance to the present study culminate in the final story: the sacrifice of one's child for the sake of the nation and the incestuous attraction between father and daughter.⁹⁴

The Story of 'Upon This Evil Earth'

The story of 'Upon This Evil Earth' is nearly twice as long as the biblical one. Nine named actors appear: Gilead (Jephthah's father), Nehushtah (Gilead's wife), Pitdah (Gilead's concubine), Jephthah (Pitdah's son), Pitdah (Jephthah's daughter), Gatel (the Ammonite king)⁹⁵ and Nehushtah's three sons Jenin, Jemuel and Azur. As was the case in *A Mighty Man of Valour*, the deity does not feature as an actor in the story.

'Upon This Evil Earth' is set in the household of Gilead, where initially a *crime passionnel* unfolds. After charges of sorcery, Gilead one day expels his concubine Pitdah into the desert. By the next morning, however, he brings her back and impregnates her. His wife Nehushtah reacts by setting her sons against the concubine. Surviving Azur's attempt to murder her, Pitdah gives birth to Jephthah. When Pitdah finally dies, her son is left without the protection of her spells. He therefore makes a covenant with God and flees from his half-brothers and his stepmother to Pitdah's people, the Ammonites. Jephthah becomes a close friend of the boy-king Gatel, which arouses suspicion at the court. To test Jephthah's loyalty, Gatel asks him to go to war against his former kin, the Gileadites. Instead, Jephthah flees, again, and eventually becomes the leader of the Tobians in the desert.

When the Ammonites attack the Gileadites, the Gileadites approach Jephthah in the desert and beg him to come to their rescue. Jephthah agrees, on condition that he is given the office of judge. He immediately engages in fruitless negotiations with Gatel, which causes the Gileadites to criticize him

92. Yudkin 1978: 331.

93. As an example of the reception of the English translation of the work, Chernaik (1981: 1092), in an otherwise very enthusiastic review, denounces the last story as suffering from 'an excessively self-conscious style and symbolism'.

94. An example of the sacrifice of a child appears in 'The Way of the Wind', when Gideon Shenhav unnecessarily dies in a military accident attempting to impress his demanding father. The father's incestuous desire for his daughter is exemplified in the opening story, 'Where the Jackals Howl', where Matityahu Damkov tries to seduce his sixteen-year-old daughter Galila.

95. In Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, the Ammonite king is named Getal.

for his passivity. Jephthah interprets a dream of his daughter Pitdah as a divine sign to start the war. He swears an oath to God to offer as a burnt offering whatever meets him when he returns peacefully. Thereafter he swiftly defeats the Ammonites. Pitdah is the first to welcome him on his homecoming and Jephthah must therefore sacrifice her. She asks for nothing but a two-month respite, which she spends in the mountains with her friends. Upon her return, Jephthah carries out the sacrifice he vowed, and thereafter, the daughters of Israel bewail Pitdah every year. Jephthah finally provokes a war between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites and resigns the judge of Israel, after merely six years in office.

The following list of narrative propositions summarizes the story:⁹⁶

1. Pitdah practises sorcery (175).
2. Gilead drives Pitdah into the desert (175).
3. Gilead brings Pitdah back from the desert (175).
4. Nehushtah urges her three sons against Pitdah (175).
5. Azur attempts to kill Pitdah (176).
6. Pitdah gives birth to Jephthah (176).
7. Pitdah dies (187).
8. Jephthah swears loyalty to God (187).
9. Nehushtah urges her sons against Jephthah (188).
10. Jephthah flees from his home to the Ammonites in Abel-Keramim (190).
11. Jephthah becomes the close friend of Gatel (192-93).
12. Gatel challenges Jephthah to fight the Gileadites (196-97).
13. Jephthah flees from the Ammonites back into the desert (197).
14. Jephthah becomes the leader of the Tobians (206).
15. The Ammonites attack the Gileadites (206).
16. Jephthah negotiates with the Gileadites (206-209).
17. Jephthah becomes the leader of the Gileadites (210).
18. Jephthah negotiates with Gatel (207-208).
19. Jephthah swears an oath to God (212).
20. Jephthah defeats the Ammonites (213).
21. Pitdah meets Jephthah (214-15).
22. Pitdah requests a respite from Jephthah (216).
23. Pitdah departs to the mountains with her friends (216).
24. Pitdah returns from the mountains to Jephthah (216).
25. Jephthah sacrifices Pitdah to God (217).

96. 'Upon This Evil Earth' is an example of a repeating narrative, i.e., the story is narrated twice, first more briefly (168-70) and thereafter in a more elaborated way. The first version includes the following events: nos. 7, 10, 14, 17, 20, 25, 27 and 28. The commemoration ritual (no. 28) is the only event to appear exclusively in the first version. See below, 'The Time of "Upon This Evil Earth"'.

26. Jephthah incites Gilead to go to war against Ephraim (217).
27. Jephthah resigns from his position as judge (217).
28. The daughters of Israel lament Pitdah in a yearly ritual (170).

The events in 'Upon This Evil Earth' form three main groups based on the identity of its actors. Each group of events presents a domestic triangle. The conflict always results in the emergence of a fourth party, who plays a part, either as a subject or an object, in what follows. First (nos. 1-8), the wife Nehushtah and the concubine Pitdah rival each other for the favour of their man, Gilead. Jephthah's birth takes place in the context of this conflict. Secondly (nos. 8-20), the Gileadites and the Ammonites (as a collective or as represented by king Gatel) struggle to gain Jephthah's loyalty. Although Jephthah actively engages in battle on the Gileadite side, he establishes his prime allegiance with another party, the deity, through repeated speech-acts (nos. 8, 19). Thirdly (nos. 21-25), Jephthah stands against his daughter Pitdah with regard to the fulfilment of his pledge to God. Apparently obedient, Pitdah nevertheless seeks solace among others, namely, her female friends.

The final three events form a heterogeneous epilogue, where loose ends are tied together. Jephthah's inciting of Gilead to start another war, along with his resignation as their judge (nos. 26-27), is a continuation of the conflict begun in the second group of events. It is thereby confirmed that Jephthah's loyalty does in fact not lay with the Gileadites. The women's ritual of lamentation in Pitdah's honour (no. 28) concludes the events of the third group. By implication, it also concludes the events of the first group, since it deals with the significant role played by the concubine Pitdah's granddaughter and namesake. Thus, although three separate series of events can be distinguished, the story is well unified. The three groups of events are combined through enchainment, with each group of events setting the stage for the succeeding group.

Repetition is a key element in this story. Nehushtah twice urges her sons against her foes (nos. 4, 9). Jephthah twice becomes leader (nos. 14, 17), performs two negotiations (nos. 16, 18) and fights two wars (nos. 20, 26). The motif of expulsion and return occurs no less than four times: (1) Gilead sends Pitdah the concubine out into the desert and brings her back again (nos. 2, 3); (2) Gilead's sons expel Jephthah from home and later participate in an attempt to bring him back through negotiations (nos. 10, 16); (3) Gatel drives Jephthah from the Ammonite court, only to receive him back as his enemy (nos. 13, 20); (4) Pitdah the daughter departs to the mountains and returns to her home at Mizpah (no. 23). Although going to the mountains is her idea, it is a response to Jephthah's vow. The movements of Pitdah the concubine and Pitdah the daughter frame those of Jephthah.⁹⁷ Repeti-

97. Moreover, the religious practices of Pitdah the concubine and Pitdah the daughter

tion ties the central actors together and enhances the thematic unity of the story.

In relation to the biblical story, Oz has made two main changes. The first half of the story is new (nos. 1-13). What the narrator of the biblical text merely suggests through epithets—‘son of a harlot’, ‘son of another woman’—is elaborated into separate events in Oz’s story. This means that Oz’s story begins a generation before Jephthah (nos. 1-5). The fact that Jephthah’s ancestry is partly Ammonite explains his initial flight to king Gatel (nos. 11-13). Whereas the biblical story makes Jephthah part, although ambiguously, of the conflict between Israel and Yhwh, ‘Upon This Evil Earth’ places Jephthah in an exclusively human context, where familial ties are set against ethnic ones. However, Jephthah emerges in both stories from a background of conflict.

The second alteration of the story involves reducing the ambiguity of the conclusion. In contrast to the biblical story, the Ephraimites do not attack Israel. Instead, Jephthah incites Gilead to fight against their neighbours (no. 26), which completely changes both the purpose and the legitimacy of this second war. Jephthah’s final war effort undermines rather than establishes his leadership of Israel and also raises questions about his loyalty to the people. Jephthah’s resignation thus comes as no surprise (no. 27). Whereas in the biblical story, Jephthah maintains his leadership despite repeated challenges, in Oz’s story, Jephthah willingly steps aside after putting his people in great peril. On the basis of the ending, Oz’s story presents a tragedy more unequivocally than the biblical story gives us.

Given the alterations discussed above, the object of the story in ‘Upon This Evil Earth’ no longer appears to be simply military victory over the Ammonites. Rather, Oz’s story stands as a family chronicle spanning three generations, in which the purpose is to show Jephthah’s personal rehabilitation from dishonour. Consequently, Jephthah stands as the potential receiver and, implicitly, as the sender in the story as well. The Ammonite attack (no. 15) does not provide the catalyst of the action in ‘Upon This Evil Earth’. That event arrives midway through the story and functions primarily as a means for Jephthah to return to power. If the object of the story is Jephthah’s rehabilitation, the Ammonites, and later the Ephraimites, paradoxically feature as Jephthah’s helpers, whereas the function of the Gileadites is ambiguous. In expelling Jephthah, they oppose him, but in negotiating his return, they help him.

It is consistent with the goal of the story that his daughter Pitdah features as Jephthah’s opponent. Through confrontation with her, Jephthah’s fate

frame the entire story. Whereas the former is dishonoured due to her sorcery (no. 1), the latter is honoured (no. 28) due to the sacrifice.

takes a decisively negative turn. Furthermore, through his resignation as judge, Jephthah himself works against the fulfilment of the goal of the story. Thus, in relation to the biblical story, 'Upon This Evil Earth' dramatically alters the function of the actors. Being the instrument of nobody but himself, Jephthah's functional significance increases greatly: he is subject, receiver and sender. Most of the other actors are his opponents. Moreover, his apparent helpers and opponents respectively change places with each other so that the external enemies of Israel become Jephthah's allies in his personal quest, whereas he and his beloved daughter deal a severe blow to his quest for honour.⁹⁸

The Time of 'Upon This Evil Earth'

With regard to order, the narrative of 'Upon This Evil Earth' contains few examples of anachrony. The complete lack of analepsis can be explained by the fact that the story chronologically begins at an earlier stage, one generation before Jephthah. Thus, there is no need to supply any background information. Neither is the narrative of this particular judge connected to any larger narrative of the history of Israel, as it is in the biblical narrative. There are two cases of obvious prolepsis. Immediately after Jephthah's vow, Pitdah the daughter prophetically confirms that the condition of Jephthah's vow—military victory—will be fulfilled (212). To demonstrate the certainty of her claim, she orders that her bridal gown should be prepared, which is what she will wear when her father does in fact return (214).

Furthermore, by means of dreams, a number of increasingly precise allusions to the end are made. In his first dream, Jephthah is alarmed by the appearance of a bear-god, in whom rage and sexual arousal have merged (181). In the second, he witnesses this bear-god rape Milcom, the deity of his mother (186). Jephthah has recurrent dreams in which all the male actors of the narrative (Gilead, Gatel, Jenin, Jemuel and Azur) attempt to violate his daughter Pitdah (205).⁹⁹ For her part, Pitdah dreams that she performs her bridal dance. When she tells Jephthah of the dream, he beats her to make her reveal the identity of her bridegroom, which she refuses to do (208).¹⁰⁰ The theme of sexual violence thus becomes more concrete as

98. Nehushtah and her sons are obviously opponents. Gilead, the father, and Pitdah, the mother, are more difficult to fit into Greimas's scheme. Their actions are the prerequisite for the appearance of Jephthah. However, once their son is introduced, they do not contribute to the story any further.

99. In the prayer that immediately follows this dream, Jephthah asks God to supply the knife of the sacrifice, which confirms the allusion to the end.

100. On another occasion, the repeated description that Jephthah loved Pitdah 'savagely' frames a dialogue where he claims that he would not hurt her (203). The claim is

well as more closely applied to the relationship between the father and the daughter. The dreams prepare for the account of the final sacrifice as an encounter between newly-wed lovers: 'she a bride on her marriage couch and he a youthful lover stretching out his fingers to the first touch' (216-17).¹⁰¹

The narrative also contains one example of 'false' prolepsis. On the night of his flight from home, Jephthah fantasizes about his violent return with the Ammonite army. He would then kill everyone in the household except his father (190). This never happens. Instead, Jephthah returns to save the entire people and his first act is to put Gilead in chains and throw him into a pit (208). The occurrence of this 'false' prolepsis creates a certain tension between the story, according to which the object is the rehabilitation of Jephthah's honour, and the narrative, according to which there is no clear vision of that goal.

With regard to narrative rhythm, a decisive acceleration occurs in 'Upon This Evil Earth'. The period in Gilead's household (nos. 1-10) occupies nearly twenty pages (171-90) and that of Jephthah's exile (nos. 11-14) fills fifteen pages (191-206), whereas the war and the related negotiations (nos. 15-20) are narrated on seven pages (206-13) and the entire episode with Pitdah and its aftermath (nos. 21-28) are recorded in merely four pages (213-17). Thus, only a fourth of the narrative is devoted to the second half of the story (nos. 15-28), which is the part that corresponds to the biblical story. With summary as the fundamental narrative movement, the manifold pauses for description contribute to the initially slow narrative pace, whereas the complete ellipsis of the sacrificial event accelerates the narrative speed.¹⁰²

By comparison with the biblical narrative, this acceleration is not sudden, but is rather integrated in the narrative as a whole. The precise effect of this acceleration appears to be ambiguous. It could indicate that the emphasis of the narrative does in fact lie on Jephthah's background, that is, on how and why he became what he became. The sacrifice then simply follows as the logical conclusion of his early development and is therefore not specifically emphasized. More likely, the acceleration of the narrative draws attention to the climax. It thus functions as the means by which to emphasize the sacrifice.

The scenes in 'Upon This Evil Earth' are few and fragmentarily narrated. The longest scene by far is the negotiation scene between Jephthah and the

by no means redundant. Rather, it inversely points towards the end, where he not only hurts but kills her.

101. The significance of dreams is enhanced by the fact that Jephthah's countenance when he sees Pitdah is described as that of 'a man possessed by a dream' (214).

102. See, e.g., pp. 170, 179, 187, 193-95. Oz's narrative makes a complete ellipsis where the biblical one, through circumlocution, makes what I label a semi-ellipsis. See Chapter 1, 'The Time of Judges 10.6-12.7'.

Gileadite elders (206-10), although it is interrupted by the negotiations between Jephthah and Gatel and by a dialogue between Jephthah and Pitdah. In contrast to the biblical narrative, the two parties elaborate their standpoints carefully, which renders the process of the negotiation visible. The most frequent scenes occur between Jephthah and his daughter Pitdah, who encounter each other on no less than seven occasions.¹⁰³ Unlike the biblical narrative, the scene of Jephthah's vow takes place before the entire community and is developed to include Pitdah's prophecy. The scene of Jephthah's return is much reduced: Jephthah is completely silent and Pitdah only says the word, 'Father'. The initial scene with Gilead and Nehushtah (172) and the early scenes with Gilead and Jephthah (183, 185-86) efficiently demonstrate the narrative's point that close relationships include distance and antagonism. Themes from the first scenes are later repeated, for example, in the scene with Jephthah and the Gileadite elders and in the final scenes with Jephthah and Pitdah.

With regard to the aspect of frequency, 'Upon This Evil Earth' differs from all other texts treated in this study in that it features the only case of a *repeating* narrative.¹⁰⁴ The first chapter (168-70) summarizes the story, whereas the following nine recount it in greater detail. However, the two versions differ significantly. The first covers only a third of the total number of the story's events and includes none of the events related to Jephthah's background (nos. 1-13) and very little of the intercourse between Jephthah and Pitdah (nos. 21-25). The first version does, however, include one event that the second omits, namely, the commemoration ritual in Pitdah's honour. The first chapter of 'Upon This Evil Earth' corresponds more closely to the biblical story.¹⁰⁵ The relationship between the two parts of the narrative could therefore be described by analogy to reading in the synagogue, where the biblical text is first read and then expounded, for example in the *targums*. This analogy sheds some light on the chronological structure of this narrative. But in this purely literary context, the relationship between the two parts must not be considered as hierarchical. The *repeating* narrative underscores the primacy of the events that are included twice. The most remarkable common feature of the two versions, however, is the ellipsis of the sacrificial event.

The three aspects of narrative time all point in the same direction and thereby achieve a more homogenous effect than in the biblical text. One

103. See pp. 203, 204, 208, 212, 215-17.

104. 'Upon This Evil Earth' also contains *iterative* narrating, which describes certain conditions, e.g., those of the household of Gilead (174) or of the court of Gatel (210, 212).

105. However, one feature of the first version, which is not represented in the biblical text, is Jephthah's conviction that the sacrifice is a divine test.

difference can be noted with regard to frequency. The iterative features of the biblical account give it a more general character, whereas in Oz's narrative iteration is merely used to describe the dullness of everyday life.

The Mood of 'Upon This Evil Earth'

The narrative mood of 'Upon This Evil Earth' is more remote than that of *A Mighty Man of Valour*. Dialogue is relatively rare in Oz's text and most often narrated or transposed rather than reported. This enhances the distance between the story and the narrative and increases the visibility of the narrator. Thus, by contrast to the biblical text, the narrative lies closer to the pole of *diegesis* than that of *mimesis*. Focalization consistently remains external throughout the narrative. The narrator exhibits an overview of the situation pertaining to the aspects of space, time, cognition and emotion.¹⁰⁶ With regard to the last of these aspects, the perspective is not one of complete omniscience. The following example demonstrates that it is with some uncertainty that the narrator penetrates Jephthah's thoughts:

As Jephthah spoke to his father he looked at the broad, rough hand that rested heavily on an earthen tray. At the sight of this father's hand his own pale, thin hand filled with fear and longing. Perhaps he imagined that his father might speak to him lovingly. Perhaps he imagined that his father might ask for his love. At that moment, for the first and only time in his whole life, Jephthah yearned to be a woman. And he did not know what (183).

Whereas the narrator often intrudes upon the thoughts and emotions of Jephthah, those of the other actors are more rarely and superficially focalized.¹⁰⁷ The emotive state of Pitdah, the daughter, and Pitdah, the concubine, never come into view.¹⁰⁸ Focalization thereby singles out Jephthah, although he remains an enigma even to the narrator. Through the exclusive interest in Jephthah, Oz's narrative shows strong affinities with the perspective of its biblical counterpart.

106. See, e.g., pp. 168 (for time and space), 182 (for cognition) and 172 (for emotion).

107. The narrator summarily perceives Gilead's melancholy (174) and Nehushtah's longing to reach into her husband's sorrow (172), whereas Jephthah's state of mental detachment is carefully elaborated through analogy with the stars: 'Jephthah observed the stars in the summer sky over the estate and the desert. They seemed to him to be all alone, each star by itself in the black expanse, some of them circling all night long from one end of the sky to the other, while others remained rooted to one spot. There was no sorrow in all the stars, nor was there any joy in them. If one of them suddenly fell, none of the others noticed or so much as blinked, they simply went on flickering coldly' (181).

108. The dreams of the daughter are perceived (208, 212), but not her emotions.

The Voice of 'Upon This Evil Earth'

The general conditions governing the narration in 'Upon This Evil Earth' resemble those of *A Mighty Man of Valour*. The narrator is of the extradiegetic as well as of the heterodiegetic kind, with no exceptions of embedded narratives. The ideological profile of Oz's narrator differs significantly from Grant Watson's. The narrator of Oz's short story uses more neutral language in his descriptions of characters, in contrast to the derogatory epithets recurrent in Grant Watson's novel. Consistent with this neutrality, the narrator's comments are also of another type, generalization, which makes reference to universal truths outside the fictional world more obvious.¹⁰⁹ Initially, this type of comment is made at the end of the first chapter as an epilogue to the summary of the story:

Some men are born and come into the world to see with their own eyes the light of day and the light of night and to call the light light. But sometimes a man comes and traverses the length of his days in gloom and at his death he leaves behind him a trail of foam and rage (170).

It can be inferred from the context that Jephthah belongs to the latter of these two categories. By making Jephthah part of a universal human category, the narrator indicates that, although not the most common, the fate of this judge should by no means be understood as an exceptional one. Devoid of sentimentality, the narrator's statement concentrates on the effect of Jephthah's life, avoiding issues of intent or personal responsibility.

A second example of this type of comment is made towards the end of the narrative as a prelude to Jephthah's return:

The days of a man's life are like water seeping into the sands; he perishes from the face of the earth unknown at his coming and unrecognized at his passing. He fades away like a shadow that cannot be brought back. But sometimes dreams come to us in the night and we know in the dreams that nothing truly passes away and nothing is forgotten, everything is always present as it was before.

Even the dead return home in the dreams. Even days that are lost and forgotten come back whole and shining in dreams at night, not a drop is lost, not a jot passes away. The smell of wet dust on an autumn morning from long ago, the sight of burned houses whose ashes have long since been scattered by the wind, the arched hips of dead women, the barking at the moon, on a distant night, of remote ancestors of the dogs that are with us now: everything comes back living and breathing in our dreams (213).

Here, the narrator clearly normalizes the fate of Jephthah and Pitdah. The issue is not simply the fate of 'some men' but of everyone. Through the

109. Chatman 1978: 228.

usage of the pronoun 'we', an attempt is made to establish a connection between the world of the narrative and that of the readers. The narrator thereby implicitly appeals to the reader to recognize the legitimacy of the 'experience' of the characters, inviting the reader to become part of the universal community that commemorates Pitdah as well as Jephthah. Thus, according to this narrator, war and rape/sacrifice, like 'the arched hips of dead women', belong to the fundamental conditions of human existence. Apparently, the attitude advocated is acceptance or identification rather than denial or protest.

In accordance with the mood of the narrative, its voice gives evidence of a detached narrator, who seeks understanding and identification instead of judgment. The narrator differs most clearly from its biblical counterpart through explicit attempts to tie the narrative to a universal human experience.

Characterization in 'Upon This Evil Earth'

In the gallery of actors, Jephthah, Gilead, and Pitdah the daughter stand out as fully developed characters. Nehushtah, Gilead's wife, and Pitdah, Gilead's concubine and Jephthah's mother, are succinctly portrayed, as each other's opposites. Nehushtah appears as a timid descendent of the local aristocracy, obsessed with tiny things (172). Pitdah is an undaunted witch of foreign origin, who curses Gilead to his face (175). Gatel and Nehushtah's three sons, Jenin, Jemuel and Azur, are even less developed; they serve as contrasts to Jephthah. The Ammonite king also provides a contrast to Jephthah by appearing talkative and naïve (192), and the brothers differ from the young Jephthah through their well-built bodies (180).

Gilead

Gilead's appearances are concentrated at the beginning and the end of 'Upon This Evil Earth'. Although absent from the major part of the narrative, Gilead contributes importantly to Jephthah's advancement. As Jephthah's father, he is obviously a prerequisite for the story. Moreover, he resolves the negotiations between Jephthah and the Gileadite elders by proposing that Jephthah should replace him as judge (no. 16). He thus serves as Jephthah's helper in the accomplishment of the object of the story, Jephthah's rehabilitation to a position of honour, a position from which Jephthah later resigns. Most importantly, Gilead serves as a prototype for the characterization of Jephthah in three ways: by initiating the pattern of expulsion and return of one's kin, in his relationships to women and, finally, by physical resemblance and the dislike of words.

The narrator's presentation of Gilead is thorough and covers his external appearance, his psychological features and the effect he has on the people close to him:

Gilead the Gileadite, the lord of the estate, was a tall, broad man. The sun had scorched the skin of his face. He strove with all his might to subdue his spirit, but even so he was a tyrant. His words always left his mouth reproachfully or in a venomous whisper, as though whenever he spoke he had to silence other voices... Even in trivial matters he would turn to God and ask for the birth of a bull calf or the repair of cracked earthenware pitchers. At times he would laugh for no reason at all.

All these things inspired great fear in his servants (171).

In what follows, the narrator mainly concentrates on Gilead's psychological status. His temper is illustrated in the account of a recurrent scene, where he, 'overcome by a cold hatred of the cold starlight', assembles his entire household in the middle of the night, picks up a stone with the intent of killing someone and then abruptly puts it back again (171-72). A little later, the narrator directly describes him as 'a moody and hopeless man' (174).¹¹⁰ Towards the end of the narrative, Gilead is summarily portrayed as 'a broad, bitter man' (214). His words at the grave of his son—'He judged Israel for six years by the grace of God... The grace of God is vanity'—finally confirms the narrator's description (170).

Towards women, Gilead demonstrates a basic ambivalence. He is attracted to his wife Nehushtah by the unquenchable 'thirst' that he detects in her. Yet he expresses nothing but deprecation in his speech to her (172-73). Their sexual encounters are constructed as reciprocally intimidating:

Then Nehushtah would sometimes enter his bedchamber and fondle him with her pale fingers as if he were one of her pet animals. Her lips were as white as a sickness, and he yielded his body to them as a weary traveller yields himself to a harlot in a wayside inn. And upon both of them there was silence.

But when mounting vigor roused his body against him, Nehushtah took refuge in her innermost chamber, and Gilead would storm into the women's quarters to relieve on the maidservants the pressure of the boiling venom. All night long the quarters were alive with wet sounds and low tremulous moaning and the squeals of the maids, until the dawn, when Gilead would burst forth and rudely awaken the household priest. Cowering at his feet, he would sob: Unclean, unclean. Then, with the tears still wet on his face, he would knock the priest flat on his back with a punch, and out he would rush to saddle his horse and gallop away into the eastern hills (174).

A series of similes are used initially to describe the relationship between Gilead and Nehushtah. Gilead features as Nehushtah's pet. Whereas she is in complete control, his position is one of utter passivity. Furthermore, the

110. The narrator enhances the correspondence between his spirits and his appearance by the following simile: 'At night, if the torchlight fell on his face it looked like one of the masks with which the pagan priests covered their faces' (174).

pallor of Nehushtah's body is described in terms of a disease. This imagery confirms the suggested asymmetry of power between them, in that Gilead has no defences against her. Yet, it also belittles the woman, making her the parasite of her man. Finally, the intercourse between husband and wife is likened to the one that occurs between a prostitute and her customer. Such a transaction implies a drastic reduction of Nehushtah to the object of Gilead's desires. Paradoxically, Gilead 'yields' to her, as if she were still in control. This might be another example of a 'blurred structure', in which the agency of the patriarch is displaced by that of the women.¹¹¹

Gilead's reaction to this marital encounter shows him to be a man of extremes. He features as either the 'pet' or the 'tyrant'. The narrator juxtaposes Gilead's 'mounting vigor' and 'boiling venom', thereby merging sexuality and aggression. Whereas Nehushtah uses her temporary sovereignty to 'fondle' Gilead, his powers serve to abuse the maids of the women's quarter for the entire night. Gilead directs his violent reaction not towards Nehushtah but towards other women. Judging from his tearful confession, his beating the priest and his attempted escape from the scene, he gains no satisfaction and remains ambivalent towards his own deeds.

Ambivalence also marks Gilead's relationship to Pitdah the concubine, although its expressions differ. When she fixes him with her gaze, he simultaneously trembles and curses her. When he hears of her sorcery, he hesitates between rejecting her and being close to her (175). However, the power dynamics between them appears more obvious than those between Gilead and Nehushtah, since Pitdah features as Gilead's 'little servantgirl', whom he beats and expels to a sure death.¹¹² Nevertheless, their mutual laughter and curses also suggest certain reciprocity, although none of their dialogues is reported.¹¹³

The pattern of ambivalence and physical abuse continues in Gilead's relationship to his son Jephthah (177). In their first dialogue, Jephthah attempts to prove his love for his father by passing his hand through the fire. Gilead aborts the test, although too late to avoid injury to his son.¹¹⁴ Afterwards, he identifies with, as well distances himself from, his son:

111. The other example features in the biblical text (Judg. 11.35), when Jephthah accuses his daughter of causing the tragedy of the sacrifice.

112. Sending the female servant out into the desert clearly echoes Abraham's treatment of Hagar, where the situation of rivalry is similar (Gen. 16).

113. Paradoxically, mutuality is suggested even at the moment of abuse: 'Bellowing aloud, he would clasp both her hands in one of his and bite her lips until the two of them screamed together' (175).

114. The scene can be interpreted as a variation on Abraham's attempted sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. 22). Gilead stands in God's position and Jephthah in Isaac's. In this case, however, it is the son who initiates the test and offers his own body in sacrifice. Moreover, Gilead is not powerful enough to prevent the symbolical sacrifice.

You are tainted as your father is tainted. And yet I cannot bring myself to hate you... Now, my son, go. Do not hate your father and do not love him. It is an ill thing that we must be each of us son to a father and father to a son and man to a woman. Distance upon distance. Now, don't stand there staring. Go (184).

This encounter paradoxically results in a rapprochement between the two, achieved through occasional horse rides. Yet when Jephthah verbalizes his longing for a home, Gilead confirms his ideology of loneliness: 'You for yourself. I for myself. Every man for himself' (185). Towards the end of the narrative, Gilead receives in return a similarly ambivalent treatment at Jephthah's hand. Following his voluntary resignation as judge, Jephthah first degrades Gilead to the position of a prisoner, and then treats him as his guest of honour, 'with wine and servant girls' (210-11).¹¹⁵

Gilead appears an independent and capricious character. His first contribution to the course of events—his sending away and bringing back Pitdah (and thereafter begetting Jephthah)—is completely unprovoked by any other actor. In the course of the negotiations between Jephthah and the Gileadite elders, it is Gilead who repeatedly offers Jephthah the judge's office, despite the son's doubts. Although largely unaffected by the acts of other characters, Gilead shows no control over his own passions. This becomes most obvious in relation to women (Pitdah, Nehushtah and the maidservants) and to the child Jephthah. No clear development of Gilead's character can be observed. Yet his status undergoes a dramatic shift when he is imprisoned briefly by Jephthah. He soon recuperates and the old patriarch possesses unlimited power over his household in the end.

Jephthah

Jephthah appears in all the chapters of 'Upon This Evil Earth' except the major part of the second chapter (170-76), which deals with the time before his birth, and he has relationships with all other named actors. The narrator introduces Jephthah as a 'wild man', situated in an extreme environment, the desert (168, 177). As a boy, his wildness is demonstrated by the fact that he attracts the company of 'black goats', of 'emaciated dogs' and of 'wild birds' (178). As an adult, it is his wildness that gains him leadership over Israel. Yet this quality is one of complexity:

He was victorious in every war he fought. But his countenance was ravaged. He did not love Israel and he did not hate his enemies. He belonged to himself, and even to himself he was a stranger (168).

The 'wild man' appears to be an alienated man, who rules Israel without commitment. The narrator's qualification of Jephthah echoes Gilead's pro-

115. Gilead's dismissal of Jephthah echoes his dismissal of Nehushtah (173).

fession of detachment—‘Do not hate your father and do not love him... Every man to himself’ (184-85). His otherness is enhanced by comparison with his brothers and is explained by his background as ‘the son of the other woman’.¹¹⁶ Moreover, the narrator relates how the women of Abel-Keramim address him as ‘You stranger’ (191-92).

There are several points of comparison between father and son. The young Jephthah does not ‘display his father’s moods’. He is presented as a ‘strong, finely shaped boy’, implicitly contrasted to the coarseness of his father (179). As a man, Jephthah’s appearance exceeds his father’s in roughness. Whereas Gilead’s face is described as ‘scorched’ by the sun, Jephthah’s appears as ‘scorched by fire’ (171, 196).¹¹⁷ Jephthah and Gilead also share a feature of great relevance to the narrative: a distrust of words.¹¹⁸ Significantly, the son resembles the father in the effect his sexuality has on women: ‘Like his father Gilead before him, he was endowed with powers of sadness and powers of silent dominion. Women longed to dissolve the power and penetrate the sadness and also to submit to him’ (191). Jephthah also resembles Gilead in the combination of sexuality and violence, manifested by the juxtaposition of ‘lust’ and ‘rage’ in the following:

Three or even four women flocked to him in the same night, and Jephthah loved to revel with them and enjoy them one by one while they enjoyed each other in unison and he would enter among them a scourge of lust a rod of rage and sometimes after all the sound and fury they would sing him Ammonite songs... (193-94).

The female counterpart to both men consists of anonymous collectives, the maids and the Ammonites respectively. If there is a difference between these male characters, it lies in their attitude to their acts. Whereas Gilead’s debauchery results in feelings of shame, Jephthah consistently remains detached: ‘his heart was far away’.

The narrator once applies the metaphor of prostitution to describe Jephthah’s relationship to King Getal: ‘[R]umor whispered that the king was like a harlot before the stranger’ (196). The boy king here meets the same fate as Gilead’s wife had met earlier. Thus, closeness to Jephthah or Gilead has consequences with regard to power and gender. To be the counterpart of Jephthah/Gilead is to occupy the female and degraded position. This pattern is also evident in the relationship between Jephthah and Gilead,

116. Whereas his brothers were ‘solidly built, broad-shouldered’, Jephthah was ‘slim and fair’. Whereas they ‘knew joy and laughter’, he ‘seemed withdrawn’, ‘even when he laughed’ (180).

117. Jephthah’s face is also described as ‘parched and weather-beaten’.

118. ‘[N]either the man nor the boy could trust words or liked words...’ (184). See also pp. 179 and 201. King Gatel is described in contrast to Jephthah as someone who loved words with all his being (192).

when, in their first direct encounter, the boy 'suddenly yearned to be a woman' (183).

The other actors evaluate Jephthah in predominantly negative ways. The judgment of one of the elders frames the narrative: 'This man is deceptive'. In the first chapter, detachment is given as the reason for Jephthah's deceptiveness, 'His heart is not here with us but far away' (168). In the end, his origin explains that, 'He is not one of us' (215). When Pitdah dies, Nehush-tah emphasizes his strangeness in relation to her sons and menacingly addresses him as her possession: 'You are mine now, thin little orphan cub'.¹¹⁹ The chieftain of the Tobians, however, regards Jephthah's strangeness and desperation as an asset (200). Jephthah's lack of ethnic or religious affiliation makes him a fitting member of their band: 'You are a warrior. Come out with us to kill and plunder like one of these young men' (201). In the context of the negotiations, two attempts are made to define Jephthah positively. King Gatel calls him an Ammonite brother and Gilead addresses him as 'my son' and 'my boy' (207, 210). Jephthah, however, rejects both these flattering attempts of rapprochement because of their obvious purpose to use him in order to secure a military advantage.

In contrast to the biblical narrative, Jephthah here features as a reluctant speaker. He becomes wordy only in his prayers and, to some extent, in the negotiations with the Gileadite elders. The encounters with the Ammonite king, with the Tobian chieftain, with his father and with his daughter are all brief, with the exception of the last.

As a boy, Jephthah speaks only twice to his father. Their first encounter has the character of an interrogation. Gilead sends for Jephthah to ask him why he passes his hand through the fire without crying. Jephthah briefly answers that he does so to prepare himself for an unknown cause (183-84). He responds to his father's demand to repeat the act, with a confession of absolute loyalty as well as with a condition: 'If you will love me'. The dialogue ends in conflict when Gilead forbids the 'test' and Jephthah persists with it nevertheless.

In their second encounter (185), the conversation develops from practical to existential matters. When Gilead asks where to ride, Jephthah answers that he wants to go home, but he denies that he belongs to Gilead's home and even professes that he is ignorant of what home he seeks. Remarkably, the silence that follows is perhaps the strongest moment of closeness between them ('But now they were both within the same silence and not in two separate silences'). That silence leads Jephthah to contemplate eloquently the meaning of the desert:

119. Nehush-tah contrasts the bodily constitution of her sons with Jephthah's: 'You are all large and dark, but one of you is quite different, fair and very thin', a description that Jamin, the eldest, repeats (188-89).

What is the desert trying to say, what thought is the wasteland, why does the wind come and why does it suddenly drop, with what sense must a man hear the thronging sounds, and with what sense may he hear the silence? (185)

Through this series of questions, Jephthah implicitly answers his earlier question about the location of his home. His home is the desert, which is confirmed by Gilead's insistence on a man's loneliness. The object of interrogation becomes a seeker of greater mysteries and thus he achieves the closeness for which he has been longing.

Jephthah thrice speaks about his identity. The first time, the Tobian chieftain directly questions him about it. He does not accept Jephthah's initial answer—'I am the son of Gilead the Gileadite...by an Ammonite servant woman' (200-201). Instead he twice pushes Jephthah to repeat the designation 'stranger', which he himself used to address Jephthah. Moreover, Jephthah denies any political allegiances. He uniquely confesses to worship 'The Lord of the wolves in the desert at night'. His identification with the deity is rather specific: 'In the image of his hatred am I made' (201). Through the process of this interrogation, it appears that Jephthah strips himself of his heritage and thereafter becomes a free-floating 'stranger', constituted by divine hate.

The second time Jephthah speaks of his identity resembles the first. He replies to Gatel that he is neither Gatel's brother nor Gatel's son (208). Instead, he twice repeats the identity of a 'stranger'. He denies loyalty to the Israelites and professes rather to fight for 'someone you do not know', purportedly for the 'Lord of the Wolves'. The declaration that follows ('In his honour I shall put you to the sword and your enemies, too') indicates that his master, and thereby Jephthah himself, stands above human allegiances.

The issue of Jephthah's identity surfaces a third time in the negotiations with the Gileadites. Because of Jephthah's reputation as a warrior, his half-brothers seek his aid in the dire situation caused by the Ammonite attack. The circumstances of this confrontation resemble those between Joseph and his kin (Gen. 42). Jephthah paradoxically confirms the parallel through denial: 'Rise, fugitives. Do not bow down to me. I am not Joseph and you are not the sons of Jacob' (206).¹²⁰ The negotiations follow the pattern established by the encounters with Gatel and the Tobian chieftain, to present Jephthah's identity initially through negations.

Throughout the negotiations, Jephthah repeatedly describes himself as a 'stranger' and even more emphatically, as 'the harlot's son'/'the whore's son'. When the elders bow down to him, Jephthah tells them to rise: 'The man to

120. The narrator also states, in an implicit comparison with the Joseph narrative: 'Jephthah did not conceal his identity from his brothers. But neither did he fall on their necks and weep' (206).

whom you are bowing down is a harlot's son' (209). He thereby downplays his own position by implying that their reverent behaviour towards him is inappropriate. In the course of the negotiations, these designations are crucial for Jephthah's decline of their request that he become their leader. As a 'stranger', he would make their camp unclean.¹²¹ The argument is in all probability not one of consideration for their religious law but rather an attempt to expose their real intentions. Jephthah reminds them of their former hatred and suggests that because of his dubious identity as 'a stranger, a nomad and a harlot's son', they will imprison him as soon as the war is over.¹²² However, when the Gileadites finally have sworn loyalty to Jephthah as their new judge, he transforms the epithet of marginality and exclusion into one of power: 'A whore's son shall be your leader' (210).

Jephthah's dialogues with his daughter Pitdah are thematically diverse. The mysterious statement 'There's a lizard; now it's gone' frames their encounters (198, 216). When Gilead originally spoke these words to Jephthah (186), they appear to refer to the ambiguity of closeness and alienation between the parent and the child. When Jephthah speaks these words to Pitdah, they stand alongside words of protection: he first urges her to cover her head from the sun and finally to run away from the sacrifice. Jephthah's ambivalence becomes obvious in what follows. He promises not to hurt Pitdah when he remembers his father's touch (203), but even so, he later beats her and jealously interrogates her about the identity of the bridegroom in her dreams (208). Their third dialogue centres on power and knowledge (204). Jephthah's brief and suspicious remarks form a striking contrast to Pitdah's enthusiastic elaborations on the nature of snakes. He dissociates himself from her by citing Scripture (Gen. 3.1) and his question to her, 'What about you', is difficult to understand in the context. To say the least, the communication between father and daughter does not run smoothly.¹²³ Jephthah on his part appears passive and defensive.

Through numerous addresses to the deity, Jephthah seeks models of identification in the biblical tradition. He draws the longest comparison during his stay in Abel-Keramim:

121. 'I am a stranger, O elders of Israel. No stranger should go before you in your wars, lest the camp be unclean' (209). The notion of 'uncleanness' has been broached once before in the narrative, by Gilead, after his debauchery with the maids (174).

122. 'But surely you hate me, elders, and when I have crushed the Ammonite for you you will chase after me like a rebellious slave and my father here will put me in irons because he is the judge of Israel and I am a stranger, a nomad and a harlot's son' (209-10). This argument is consistent with Jephthah's statement to the Tobian chieftain that he is made in the image of the deity's hatred (201).

123. Their dialogues are apparently set in contrast to the conversation between them at the moment of their escape from Ammon, when 'Jephthah used more words than on any other day in his whole life' (198).

My brother Azur is not Abel and I am not Cain, O Lord of the asp in the desert, do not hide yourself from me. Call me, call me, gather me to you. If I am not worthy to be your chosen one, take me to be your hired assassin: I shall go in the night with my knife in your name to your foes, and in the morning you may hide your face from me as you will, as if we were strangers... Surely anger and sadness are a sign to me that I am made in your image, I am your son, I am yours and you will take me to you by night, for in the image of your hatred am I made, O lord of the wolves at night in the desert... I know your secret for I am in your secret: you paid heed to Abel and his offering but in your heart it was Cain, Cain, that you loved, and therefore you spread your wrathful care upon Cain and not upon the face of this evil earth, and you set the seal of your image upon his brow to wander to and fro in all the land and to stamp your seal of a barren God upon people and hills, O God of Cain, O God of Jephthah son of Pitdah. Cain is a witness and I am a witness to your image... Give me a sign (195).

Jephthah's interpretation of Genesis 4 is an attempt to establish two things: that, like Cain, Jephthah is the chosen one, and that God expresses love through wrath. Despite his initial denial, Jephthah emphatically identifies with Cain. Like Cain, Jephthah is 'a fugitive and a vagabond upon the face of this evil earth'. Addressing the deity 'O God of Cain, O God of Jephthah son of Pitdah' makes the connection between the two explicit. Moreover, the address exalts Cain and Jephthah to the position of originators of a new tradition, in rivalry to the tradition of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jephthah identifies not only with Cain but also with the deity. Jephthah states, in a travesty of Gen. 1.26, that 'in the image of your hatred am I made'. He even dares to call himself God's 'son', although he initially offered to serve as simply a 'hired assassin'. Denial can serve as a confirmation of their bond in the same way that wrath serves as an expression of love. The fact that Jephthah knows and even is party to the deity's 'secret' suggests that their relationship is one of mutuality.

Jephthah reiterates the same themes before the arrival of the Gileadite expedition, although in this case with Genesis 22 as the inter-text:

Touch me, O God, you have not touched me yet, how long shall we wait for you... Here I am before you upon one of the mountains, holding the lamb for a burnt offering, and behold the fire and the wood, but where is the knife... Send me your wrath, O God, and let me be touched by it, surely you are a solitary God and I, too, am all alone. You shall have no other servant before me. I am your son and I shall bear witness all my life to your inscrutable terrors... (205).

Although Jephthah still professes to be God's son and God's exclusive servant and witness, he has not yet received the longed-for touch. According to Jephthah, the reason for this might be that God, like himself, is a 'solitary' party. The allusion to Gen. 22 is marked by correspondances as well as significant differences. Like Abraham, Jephthah stands on the mountain, ready

to sacrifice. Also like him, Jephthah purports to be God's chosen servant, waiting to be blessed. Like Isaac, however, Jephthah the son observes that something is missing. What he misses is not the sacrificial lamb (22.7) but the knife, which in the previous address was Jephthah's prime instrument for serving God ('I shall go in the night with my knife in your name to your foes', 195). This confusion of roles (father and son), as well as of the missing objects (knife and lamb), ominously indicate that his identification with Abraham will not stand.

Jephthah's final address to God is made at the moment of the sacrifice:

You have chosen me out of all my brothers and dedicated me to your service.
You shall have no other servant before me. Here is the dark beauty under my
knife; I have not withheld my only daughter from you. Grant me a sign, for
surely you are tempting your servant (217).

Like Joseph, Jephthah is elected from among his brothers to redeem the people. Like Abraham, he offers his only child. However, Jephthah's sacrificial object is not only of a different gender, she is also a sexualized body, defined as 'the dark beauty'. Dressed in a 'bridal wreath' (216), she hardly features as a child, but rather as God's bride-to-be.¹²⁴ Before a mute deity, moreover, Jephthah himself speaks God's line (22.12), 'I have not withheld...'. Jephthah's final words are a vain attempt to establish his identification with Abraham. The God of Cain and of Jephthah son of Pitdah, however, does not merely 'tempt' humans. Rather, this deity consistently shows love through rejection and abandonment.

Three of Jephthah's prayers are brief and take the form of a promise. After the death of his mother Pitdah, Jephthah pledges loyalty to God in rather general terms: 'God love me and I will be your servant, touch me and I will be the leanest and most terrible of your hounds, only do not be remote' (187). Before the battle, Jephthah's prayers become more specific. He asks for a sign and promises to 'offer you their carcasses strewn upon the field as you love' (212). These first two addresses have in common the fact that Jephthah puts his warrior's skills at God's disposal in exchange for proximity (as he did with Gilead). The third address breaks this pattern. Jephthah swears, in a quote unchanged from the biblical text: 'If you will surely deliver the children of Ammon into my hand... I will offer it up as a burnt offering' (212). Jephthah thus requests aid in order to accomplish a specific military feat, and in return he will give, as a token of his devotion, a burnt offering. In this series of addresses, the vow appears enigmatic. The fact that the vow is made in public raises the suspicion that Jephthah makes the vow in order to hide the nature of his relationship to the Divine from the Gileadite community.

124. Pitdah's two dreams (208 and 212) also support this interpretation.

Jephthah's independence increases as the narrative proceeds. His first autonomous act is to pledge loyalty to the god of his father, but not to the god of his mother. His two flights, from Gilead and from Ammon, are described as shrewd initiatives although they are in fact responses to potentially lethal situations.¹²⁵ He rises to prominence from a peripheral position and, once he is elected judge, he immediately puts his father and benefactor in chains. Seemingly unprovoked, Jephthah swears the oath before the council and he apparently receives no assistance from God in the battle. Remarkably, the battle features a campaign exclusively directed against women: 'Sweeping through the villages, he...gave the wives, concubines, and harlots as food to the fowls of the air' (213). Jephthah does not protest against the sacrifice of his daughter but rather shows 'great joy' on the way towards its execution (216). Afterwards, when the sacrifice proves not to be a divine test, he sets the Gileadites against the Ephraimites in a new meaningless war and voluntarily resigns from office.

Jephthah is a much more independent character in 'Upon This Evil Earth' than in the biblical text. The only major exception is the sacrifice, at which Oz's Jephthah vainly expects divine intervention. Yet, the uncertainty regarding initiative lies altogether in the pronounced expectations of the character, since the narrator offers no indications whatsoever that God would actively participate in the course of events. Moreover, Jephthah appears to be immune to the continual fluctuations in his status. Leader or not, he remains the feared stranger and harlot's son. His development from a trusting child to a detached adult occurs very soon after his mother dies and he flees to Abel-Keramim.

Pitdah

In comparison to Gilead and Jephthah, Pitdah, Jephthah's daughter is a much less developed character. Although she is introduced early in the story, when Jephthah leaves Abel-Keramim (197), her appearances are brief and their significance is not always obvious. As in the biblical narrative, she does not play a significant part until the sacrifice. She is an even more isolated character than her biblical counterpart, since she relates as an individual only to Jephthah. The women of Tob 'adore' her and the collective of maidens 'follow' her to the mountains (202, 216). There is, however, no indication of any more specific interaction between her and other women.

The narrator's initial presentation of Pitdah as a child focuses on her origins and on her reaction to being taken with Jephthah when he flees from Abel-Keramim:

125. In this regard, the narrator creates a certain ambivalence by describing the escape as an expulsion in the first summarizing chapter. Cf. pp. 171 and 190.

Pitdah was seven years old when she was taken out of the city into the desert on the back of her father's horse. She was an Ammonite, like her mother. She had passed her childhood among maidservants, eunuchs, and silks...

When they left the city by the Dung Gate Pitdah laughed for joy, for she loved riding: she fondly imagined that she was being taken out into the desert for a day's ride and that at evening she would be brought back to her mother and the cat. But when the first night broke on her in the wilderness, she was alarmed and began to scream and stamp her feet, and she cursed her father and even kicked the horse with her strong little legs. Her mouth, pursed with rage, was a pitiful spectacle (197-98).

In many ways, Pitdah here features as the opposite of her father. Although she is of mixed Gileadite and Ammonite descent, the narrator unequivocally presents her as an Ammonite. In contrast to Jephthah, she does not originate from the desert, but rather spends her first years in the luxury of a royal court. Whereas Jephthah as a boy proved himself able to exercise extreme self-control towards his abusive father, Pitdah pours out her anger towards Jephthah unrestrainedly. One could question whether the narrator, who deems this a 'pitiful spectacle' finds her pathetic or worthy of pity.

In what follows, the narrator's descriptions of Pitdah repetitively centre on her physical attractiveness.¹²⁶ On no less than three occasions, she is described as 'dark' and 'beautiful' (202, 215, 216). This reflects the meaning of her name in Hebrew, 'topaz' or 'chrysolite'.¹²⁷ In contrast to the other two named women of the narrative, Nehushtah and Pitdah, the concubine, Jephthah's daughter's psychological features receive no comment. Pitdah appears as a bride twice in her dreams (208, 212) and she is also dressed as a bride when she confronts Jephthah upon his return from battle:

As she came out she seemed to be floating, as if her feet disdained to touch the dust of the path. As a gazelle comes down to water so Pitdah came down to her father. Her bridal gown gleamed white, her eyelashes shaded her eyes, and when she looked up at him and he heard her laughter he saw fire and ice burning with a green flame in her pupils... Pitdah's hips moved restlessly as though to the rhythm of a secret dance and she was slender and barefoot (214).

The narrator here focalizes on Pitdah's body in minute detail. Her movements are simultaneously described as otherworldly and sensual. The narrator remarks both on her outfit and on the body that is beneath it. Pitdah is not only cast as an object but also as a subject of desire. The simile of the thirsty gazelle indicates that Pitdah's yearning for her father is a basic need;

126. According to Fuchs (1984), Oz presents women as sexual stereotypes in his early fiction.

127. Pitdah (פִּטְדָּה) is one of the jewels on the high priest's breastplate (Exod. 28.17).

she wants Jephthah as an animal wants water.¹²⁸ In addition, the description of her gaze towards Jephthah as a 'green flame' indicates that it is a gaze of passion.

The bridal motif reaches its climax in the account of the sacrifice: 'she a bride on her marriage couch and he a youthful lover stretching out his fingers to the first touch' (216-17). Their shared 'great joy' suggests some kind of mutuality. Nevertheless, this final variation of the bridal motif stresses Pitdah's passivity most decisively, reducing her to an item of Jephthah's craving.

There are several parallels between Pitdah and Jephthah, which all seem connected to the idea of otherness. She, like her father, and like Joseph, 'finds favour' in exile (202), making herself at home on the margins, among the Tobian outlaws. Both the daughter and the father appear to be detached from this life. A typical description of Pitdah is that 'she seemed to be in a dream' (203) and that 'her thoughts always seemed to be far away' (204).¹²⁹ Her and her father's common laughter 'as wild beasts' at the moment of sacrifice (217) could be understood as a sign of an extraordinary lack of involvement.¹³⁰ Both Pitdah and Jephthah, like Gilead before them, elicit fear in those around them (216, 217). The narrator thus has an anonymous collective of nomads make the following connection between the two: 'She is a stranger, the daughter of a stranger; no man may approach her and live' (216).¹³¹

Pitdah's unanticipated, and at times symbolically loaded, speeches distinguish her from the other actors. She speaks to Jephthah on six occasions and once she addresses the entire community. Her first dialogue with Jephthah occurs when she realizes that their escape from Ammon is final. She then features as the trustful child, who naïvely asks: 'When will we reach the sea like you said?' (198). Later, in their third dialogue, she answers her own question:

128. The image of the gazelle could be an allusion to the Song of Songs, although not a very obvious one. In the Song, the man (2.9, 17) and the woman's breasts (4.5; 7.3) are likened to gazelles. Possibly, the simile generally enhances the erotic qualities of the bride.

129. Jephthah stands '[a]s though in a dream' when he returns to Mizpah (214). Amid the pleasures of Abel-Keramim, 'his heart was far away' (193-94).

130. Pitdah laughs almost every time she appears (204, 208, 213, 216, 217, 218), even when Jephthah abuses her (208), just as her mother laughed with Gilead after he had cursed and struck her (175).

131. The words of the nomads could be an allusion to the allegedly dangerous 'strange woman' of Proverbs 6.24. Apart from these nomads, only the narrator and Jephthah, on one occasion, refer to Pitdah as the 'dark beauty' (217).

I love watching you sleeping on the ground after your night fights, with the flies walking all over your face. I love you, Father. And I love myself, too. And the places where you never take me, where the sun sets in the evening. You have forgotten the sea, but I remember. Now, put this cloak over your head and moo, and I'll watch you and laugh (204-205).

These are her last words in an enigmatic conversation on power, knowledge and the nature of snakes, which Pitdah both initiates and terminates. She remembers Jephthah's forgotten promises, yet she holds no grudges. Her repeated mention of flies in Jephthah's face, and the fact that he is helpless in his sleep, indicate a reversal of power that could suggest the possibility of revenge for Pitdah. Moreover, Pitdah appears to provoke and to confuse her father through her reflections. Yet her attitude is one of reconciliation rather than of desire. What remains at the end is the enactment of play, where it is no longer possible to differentiate between parent and child.

Two of Pitdah and Jephthah's dialogues—the second and the fourth—concern Jephthah's jealousy. In the former, Pitdah makes excuses for her reaction: 'I can't help laughing because of the way you are looking at me' (203). In the latter, her stance towards Jephthah is much firmer. She reveals the nature of her father's look at her: 'You are looking at me like a murderer' (208). She does not yield to his persistent interrogation, but addresses him as if he were the child and she the reproaching parent: 'I couldn't see his face in the dream, I could only feel his hot breath on me. Look at you, you've got foam on your lips, leave me alone, go and wash your face in the brook' (208). Next, she threatens him with her laughter, provoking him with the possibility that she may use it as a means to dishonour him before the community: 'Don't hit me again or I'll laugh aloud and the whole camp will hear' (208). Finally, she questions Jephthah's motive for interrogating her and thereby exposes his fear: 'But you know who my bridegroom is. Why did you shout at me, why are you trembling so?' (208). Throughout the course of this conversation, Pitdah gradually gains control of her abusive father. She reveals his viciousness as well as his fear and she does not hesitate to bully him by virtue of her superior knowledge.

Immediately after Jephthah utters his vow, Pitdah appears as the undaunted prophet: 'He will deliver the children of Ammon into your hands. Now, you, my maidens, make ready my bridal gown' (212).¹³² It appears, again, that Pitdah is convinced of something that her father can merely hope for. Like other prophets in the Hebrew Bible, she displays this conviction by staging a symbolic act: dressing in a bridal gown. Thus, rather than humiliating Jephthah in the eyes of the camp as she has previously threatened to do, Pitdah here serves as her father's most vehement supporter.

132. Pitdah's 'prophecy' here can be compared to God's counter-vow in the LAB.

Pitdah's two last addresses to Jephthah are very brief. When she welcomes him back from the battle, she touches his eyelids and merely says, 'Father' (215). The scene differs significantly from its biblical equivalent, where Jephthah reproaches his daughter and she argues elaborately in favour of the sacrifice. In Oz's version, the confrontation between father and daughter is one of silence and bodily closeness. In the final address, Pitdah refuses Jephthah's suggestion that she should escape the sacrifice. She repeats her final words from their third conversation: 'Put this cloak over your head and eyes and moo, and we'll watch you and laugh' (216). In the face of death, Pitdah speaks of playing. A small but significant change is that the subject of the laughing has been changed from 'I' to 'we'. That might indicate that she no longer laughs at Jephthah. United in detachment and regression, they may jointly face the oncoming 'pitiful spectacle' of the sacrifice.

It is mainly as a speaker that Pitdah develops an increasing independence in the narrative. The narrator ridicules her when, as a child, she protests against her and her father's exile from Abel-Keramim. In the ensuing conversations with Jephthah, however, she begins to put herself in the position of the parent and Jephthah in that of the child. She disorients her father with her far-reaching existential reflections. Although threatened and beaten, she presents Jephthah with an ultimatum, but she does not use her powers to intimidate him. Rather, she displays complete loyalty to Jephthah immediately after his vow when she publicly prophesies that he will be victorious. Later, when Jephthah suggests that she escapes, she merely laughs. Pitdah repeatedly goes against Jephthah but she does so in order to bring the events he has initiated to fruition.

Conclusions on 'Upon This Evil Earth'

The events of 'Upon This Evil Earth' form a long homogeneous story. In comparison to its biblical counterpart, the object of the story has been changed from military victory to Jephthah's personal rehabilitation. The story thus features a chain of effects, a family chronicle, without a clear centre. Its order, rhythm and frequency emphasize the latter half of the biblical narrative, specifically, the sacrifice. As a result of Jephthah's resignation from office, the resolution of Oz's narrative becomes more unequivocally tragic than the ambiguous biblical narrative.

Because the story is structured as an extended biography, no clear driving force can be established. Rather, different actors compete to influence the course of events at different points: Nehushtah stands against Pitdah, the mother, over against Gilead; the Ammonites rival the Gileadites over against Jephthah; and Jephthah contends with Pitdah, the daughter, over the vow. In contrast to the biblical narrative, the struggle for power is an

exclusively human affair, more random and indirect here than in *A Mighty Man of Valour*.

The ideological profile of Oz's narrator is distinguished by the narrator's reconciliatory attitude towards the narrated events. Rather than reproach, the narrator proposes that similar events could happen anywhere and to anyone. The narrator's outlook is both universal and fatalistic. In contrast to *A Mighty Man of Valour*, neither Jephthah nor religion in general is blamed.

The characterization of the main actors gives further evidence of the narrator's ideology of detachment, above all through the strong similarity between Gilead and Jephthah. Gilead features as the violent patriarch of two minds, who mistreats women and children, but who finally helps Jephthah attain the office of judge. The likewise feared and admired Jephthah exceeds his father in abusiveness by actually killing his daughter, the only one who had the ability to surprise him. Jephthah transforms his identity as a 'stranger' and a 'harlot's son' into emblems of authority, only to step down, like Gilead, at the height of his power. In his prayers, he strongly identifies with various biblical characters, particularly with Cain.

As a representative of the third generation, Pitdah differs from her male ancestors, initially by her lack of self-control as a child and later on by virtue of her sexuality. At the same time, she resembles her father in her indifference to danger and even triumphs over him in her capacity as an independent speaker, as Jephthah had done in relation to Gilead. Nevertheless, in the context of the family's record of abusing women, it hardly comes as a surprise that the courageous Pitdah should be killed through violence with sexual overtones.

On the basis of the characterization of these actors one might posit a psychological explanation of the course of events. Jephthah killed his daughter because he had learned from his father to abuse women and because Pitdah simultaneously occupied the ambivalent and impossible position of both daughter and lover.

5

THE JEPHTHAH NARRATIVE AND THE ETHICS OF INTERPRETATION

Transformations

Analysis of the biblical text has shown that it contains four main ambiguities or uncertainties. These concern the coherence of the narrative, the subjects, the narrator and the characterization. With regard to coherence, the narrative develops logically, with the Ammonite war as the central event. However, three episodes are rather loosely attached to the main event. The conflict between Israel and Yhwh appears as a rather stereotyped introduction, whereas the sacrifice of the daughter and the Ephraimite war stand as two epilogues to or consequences of the war. Later versions of the story face the challenge of having to deal with these logical difficulties of the narrative.

All the extra-biblical works examined in this study play down the initial divine–human conflict. In the works of modern fiction, this conflict is completely eradicated and the deity does not feature as an actor. In the oratorio, the divine–human conflict is transformed into an indirect and much milder conflict between the people and Zebul (Jephthah's brother).¹ In the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, the conflict is almost entirely reduced to something in the background. The only remaining event is the people's prayer of redemption. *Jewish Antiquities*, in contrast, retains all of the events of the biblical conflict, except God's rejection of the people.

Only the oratorio omits the sacrifice completely, and thereby most events related to the daughter.² It transforms the sacrifice into the daughter's dedication to God, but ends the story before this event occurs. *Jewish Antiquities* retains the sacrifice, but denies the daughter both movement and

1. The conflict consists of merely two events (Zebul's request and the people's pledge of repentance), which do not appear in the biblical story.

2. Rather than exhorting Jephthah to execute his vow, his daughter urges the priests to abandon their hesitancy. It is consistent with the introduction that direct conflict is thus avoided.

speech, apart from her request for a respite. In *Jewish Antiquities*, the sacrifice stands as a mishap, committed by an individual, Jephthah, whereas in *A Mighty Man of Valour*, it appears as a collective act, committed by the tribe of Gilead. In contrast to the biblical text, the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and 'Upon This Evil Earth' underscore the logical significance of the sacrificial event and, moreover, make the commemoration ritual part of the story.

The Ephraimite war appears neither in the oratorio nor in the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*. In *A Mighty Man of Valour*, the war serves as the catalyst for the sacrifice, and the story ends before the war is over. In 'Upon This Evil Earth', Jephthah provokes the war, rather than the other way around, and no resolution of the war is presented. In *Jewish Antiquities*, the Ephraimite war stands as the explicit consequence of the Ammonite war.

None of the above-mentioned episodes appear in all versions of the story. It is possible to delineate a common core to the story, which contains only four events: the negotiations between Jephthah and the Gileadites, Jephthah's vow, the victory over the Ammonites and the daughter's meeting with Jephthah. What comes before (e.g., the Ammonite attack) can be reduced to a scenario and what comes afterwards (the sacrifice and the Ephraimite war) can be reduced to an epilogue. Why are precisely these four events necessary? The first, the negotiations with the Gileadites, is the event that transforms Jephthah from an exiled outlaw into a legitimate judge and thereby also makes him the subject of the story. The second, the vow, adds complexity; it creates the essential 'possibility' of the story. It also serves to distinguish the Jephthah cycle from the paradigmatic judge story in the book of Judges (2.11-23). The third, the victory over the Ammonites, fulfils the first part of the vow, the condition. The daughter's greeting of Jephthah, finally, provides the answer to the question raised in the second part of the vow, who or what will be the sacrificial victim. These four events together create the fundamental dilemma of the story: How should the subject proceed in such an impossible situation? If he executes his vow, he will lose his only daughter, and, if he breaks his vow, he will dishonour his God. Yet the 'core' of the story includes no resolution. It appears that the main concern of the extra-biblical texts is not the story itself, since only Handel radically alters the ending, but rather the subject's experience of the story's static conditions.

One tendency is clear with regard to the issue of coherence: the tension between story and narrative in the biblical text remains present in all extra-biblical works. Whereas the victory over the Ammonites stands as the logically central event of all these stories, the extra-biblical narratives emphasize the sacrificial event. However, two qualifications need to be made. Oz's story differs slightly from the others in that it lacks a clear centre. The extra-biblical narratives also stress other parts of the story, although these are always connected to the sacrifice in one way or another. The oratorio dwells

on the event that cancels the sacrifice (the angelic intervention), *Jewish Antiquities* emphasizes the sacrifice along with the Ephraimite war, *A Mighty Man of Valour* stresses no less than three events (the vow, the encounter with the hermits and the sacrifice) and 'Upon This Evil Earth' gives attention to the entire second half of the narrative. No narrative, however, emphasizes the logically central event of the Ammonite war.³

The extra-biblical stories exhibit a greater degree of internal consistency than the biblical story. In *Jewish Antiquities*, the story resembles the biblical one in that it integrates the Ephraimite war but it differs from the biblical story by further isolating the sacrifice. The oratorio transforms the story most drastically, at the risk of reducing it to incomprehensibility. The *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and *A Mighty Man of Valour* each create a new pivotal event, God's decision how the vow will be resolved and Jephthah's meeting with the hermits respectively, whereas 'Upon This Evil Earth' is organized in a completely different way, as a family chronicle.

The second ambiguous issue in the biblical narrative is the question of agency. Four actors compete for the initiative: Jephthah, Yhwh, the people and the daughter. The rivalry lies primarily between Jephthah and the deity, and to a lesser extent between Jephthah and his daughter. It is not necessarily easier in the extra-biblical narratives to identify the actor who features as the driving force of the narrative, that is, as the figure most responsible for the course of events. The two early Jewish texts offer quite different solutions to this problem. In the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, God appears as the *de facto* power by strengthening Jephthah before he utters the vow and by deciding its object afterwards. Rather than resolving the dilemma, God seizes on it and thereby implicitly confirms the validity of the vow. Moreover, much emphasis is placed on the daughter's support for the execution of the vow. Thus, with regard to the story, it is the joint initiative of God and Jephthah with the vigorous assistance of Seila that leads to her death. Yet in the narrative, only Jephthah is blamed (by God) as responsible for Seila's death. The *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* thus creates a new ambiguity between story and narrative. In *Jewish Antiquities*, in contrast, there is no doubt about Jephthah's exclusive responsibility. God neither strengthens Jephthah before the battle nor assists him during it. The roles of the people and of the daughter are reduced to almost nothing, and Jephthah alone is held accountable by the narrator for the course of events.

In the oratorio, Jehovah alone directs the action so that Jephthah's struggle with his responsibility appears as a mere misapprehension. In contrast to the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, the deity here actually solves the situation, by sending an angel to interpret the vow as a misapprehension, and the narrative is thus transformed from a tragedy into a comedy. In the two works of

3. In the LAB, the emphasis falls uniquely on the sacrifice.

modern fiction examined here, one cannot distinguish any single driving force. The deity does not interfere in the action, although the religious ideas of Jephthah play a significant part in both works. Above all, both texts feature human power struggles, although they are very different. In *A Mighty Man of Valour*, Jephthah's kin compete openly (Kanza versus Ozias and Jabin) to influence Jephthah, e.g. to spare his daughter. Vashti exerts her influence behind the scenes and the external enemies (the Ammonites and the Ephraimites) trigger Jephthah's actions through their military attacks. Whether Jephthah yields to this outside pressure or acts in spite of it cannot be established. 'Upon This Evil Earth' features a less direct power struggle, although the Ammonites and the Gileadites appear as rivals for Jephthah's loyalty at one point. Here, the series of events appears, rather, as a number of chain effects, where the acts of the individual actors are strictly determined by the situation. Thus, Jephthah's sacrifice of Pitdah in the illusory belief that the deity would intervene at the last moment is simply the logical consequence of his upbringing in Gilead's house and of his Ammonite and Tobian exile.

The third ambiguity in the biblical narrative, the narrator's lack of direct judgment about the narrated events, is clearly dissolved in the extra-biblical narratives. *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, *Jewish Antiquities* and *A Mighty Man of Valour* all include condemnatory remarks by the narrator. In *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, the criticism concerns Jephthah's vow and is uttered by one of the actors, God. However, it is not a complete disapproval of the vow as such. Rather, it takes issue with a hypothetical option: if Jephthah meets a dog, will he then perform an unclean sacrifice? The actual sacrifice is in fact deemed 'precious'. In *Jewish Antiquities*, the narrator condemns the sacrifice as contrary both to religion and to the law. Jephthah's behaviour is attributed to a lack of two virtues, wisdom and piety, prominent virtues in classical Greek literature. In Grant Watson's novel, the narrator's disapproval is more sweeping than in the two early Jewish texts. For example, the narrator attacks the people's nationalism and the fanaticism of Jephthah's faith. In addition, the narrator ironically rebukes the people for their silence in the face of the impropriety of the sacrifice.

The oratorio lauds both Jephthah's and the deity's achievements in the war (through the chorus and two of its actors, Zebul and Hamor). However, the censure of the sacrifice could be seen as evidence of the most absolute form of criticism of this event. In 'Upon This Evil Earth', the narrator formulates a position that deviates strongly from the other works considered here, and proposes an attitude of reconciliation. Rather than regarding Jephthah's acts as exceptionally evil or as incomprehensible, the narrator suggests that such things could happen anywhere and to anyone.

Characterization, the fourth area of ambiguity, may serve as an indicator of the narrator's implicit assessment. Jephthah is simultaneously presented as

a hyper-masculine hero of war, as the fruit of illegitimate female sexuality, as the son of Gilead and of a foreigner, as an outcast and as the leader of the tribe, as someone who determines the actions of the deity but who cannot steer his own steps. The daughter, for her part, oscillates between the roles of (sexualized) sacrificial object and of (theological) discursive subject. She paradoxically negotiates space for the community of women under the auspices of patriarchy, and through her death she gains immortality in the religious tradition. God, as actor, is split between the roles of the abandoned counterpart of the people and the mute power behind the scenes.

Both the early Jewish works clear Jephthah of his dubious background, in terms of gender, ethnicity and social standing. They also present him as the least esteemed of the minor judges and make him the object of severe criticism. However, whereas *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* constructs him as dependent and verbally non-assertive and makes him disappear halfway through the narrative, *Jewish Antiquities* increases his independence and his negotiating power and allows him to become the sole fully developed character of the narrative. Thus, whereas *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* denigrates Jephthah's character, *Jewish Antiquities* offers a more complex portrayal than the biblical account. With regard to the daughter, the tendency is the opposite. *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* not only expands Seila's role as a speaker (which here includes protest as well as identification with Isaac), but also turns her into a stronger subject (through setting the precedent for the mourning ritual). Moreover, the deity repeatedly lauds her. *Jewish Antiquities*, by contrast, reduces the daughter's speech as well as her movements, and thus transforms her into a one-dimensional and insignificant figure.

The oratorio presents four major characters. Jephtha is transformed from the exemplary war hero (untainted with regard to his background) to the tested believer with Job-like qualities. Hamor, the would-be son-in-law, is his opposite: weak, hesitant in war and inefficient in speech. As in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, Jephtha is written out at the end. Iphis's role is much expanded but constantly wavers between that of subject and object. Paradoxically, her many initiatives often serve the purpose of belittling her. She exhibits perfect obedience to paternal authority, in stark contrast to her mother Storgè, who protests aggressively. At the same time, the daughter outshines her father in the final scenes of celebration, another similarity to *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*.

The works of modern fiction both elaborate on Jephthah's dubious past and the daughter's physical attributes, but their explicit and implicit assessments of the two characters differ greatly. *A Mighty Man of Valour* presents overwhelmingly negative portraits of both of them. The unique internal focalization (from both Jephthah's and Vashti's positions) serves to expose the characters rather than to evoke sympathy for them. The judge is a

divided figure, for whom the external appearance of ruthlessness and zeal contrasts to an interior of self-doubt and uncertainty, all related to his background. He does not excel as a public negotiator, but often engages in private conversations with his daughter. Vashti appears as a naïve young woman, who is largely identified by her clothing and whose peers admire as well as blame her. Her development as a speaker concerned with religious matters comes to an abrupt end with the sacrifice. Furthermore, the narrator directly disqualifies the meaning she invests in the sacrifice as illusory.

The characters of 'Upon This Evil Earth' could be described as small cogs in a big wheel rather than as individuals with well-developed features. Jephthah inherits his father Gilead's rough appearance and his abusive behaviour towards women. He gives the denigrating names he was called as a child ('harlot's son' and 'stranger') new meaning, and, in his prayers, he strongly identifies with Cain, the murderer. Pitdah shares her father's fearlessness and detachment from life, but, unlike him, she is specifically defined in terms of her sexuality and as a bride-to-be, whose independent speech provokes violence and alienates her from her father. The narrator invites the reader to identify with, and to understand, the characters, in particular Jephthah, while at the same time constructing the witch's daughter Pitdah as an exotic, erotic and enigmatic Other.

In summary, the comparative analysis offered in this study has concentrated on four basic ambiguities in the biblical narrative. In general, the stories of the extra-biblical works are more coherent than the biblical story. The ambiguity whether Jephthah or the deity is the driving force of the story is either eliminated or transferred from the divine to the human domain, except in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, where the ambiguity is even more pronounced. The narrator's judgment of the events becomes more obvious in all the extra-biblical works, whereas characterization becomes more clear-cut in the early Jewish works and more complex in the later ones.

Strategies

From discussions of specific transformations made in the extra-biblical material, I now turn to more general interpretative strategies. I will begin by summarizing the transformations of each narrative in order to show what, in my view, are the most essential transformations. The tendency in the extra-biblical material is that the stories exhibit greater internal consistency and the narratives maintain or increase the emphasis on the sacrifice. The decisive differences appear in terms of agency, the narrator and characterization. Since each narrative provides a different solution, the summary below must necessarily be asymmetric.

Liber antiquitatum biblicarum strongly emphasizes the sacrifice. God features as the sole driving force of the story and intervenes to secure Seila as

the sacrificial object. God also takes over the function of ideological commentator from the narrator, rejecting Jephthah and praising Seila. In consistency with these judgements, Jephthah is characterized as a weak and dependent minor judge, whereas Seila appears as a complex and eloquent representative of Israel.

Jewish Antiquities elucidates the connection between the Ammonite and the Ephraimite war, whereas the sacrifice is made a still more obscure part of the story. The narrator reduces the roles of the deity and the people and almost entirely erases the daughter. The dominating character, Jephthah, is cast as a powerful but ignorant man, harshly rebuked by the narrator for causing the sacrifice.

The oratorio radically alters the coherence of the story by transforming the sacrifice into a dedication and thus the tragedy into a comedy. The dominating role of the deity reduces the human actors to puppets. The chorus, Zebul and Hamor fulfil the narrator's function and their theological discourse above all serves to legitimize the war. Jephthah struggles in vain with his faith and Iphis emerges in his place as the celebrated heroine.

A Mighty Man of Valour introduces a new pivotal point in the story, Jephthah's meeting with the hermits. Since Jephthah lacks faith in Yhwh, his sacrifice of his daughter appears as the eventual triumph of meaninglessness. Human power struggles prevail throughout the narrative and no dominating force can be established. The narrator voices strong criticism of religious fanaticism and portrays Jephthah as a brutal warlord and Vashti as a naïve female defined by her body.

'Upon This Evil Earth' is a family chronicle beginning a generation before Jephthah, to which the sacrifice is the logical conclusion. In this narrative of violence, sex and religion, no single actor comes out on top. Whereas the narrator invites the reader to identify with the abusive Jephthah, a man tested by fate, this is not the case with the daughter, who is, rather, ostracized as an enigmatic Other.

Based on these transformations, I identify five main strategies. 'Strategy' is here defined as the manner in which the reader solves the interpretative difficulties that he or she confronts in the act of reading. The following five strategies are my own abstractions from the extra-biblical texts. They represent specific interpretative attitudes that readers of the extra-biblical texts might use either consciously or unconsciously.⁴ Hypothetically, the strategies

4. Genette (1982) suggests a number of categories for the relationships between texts, which are too general for the purpose of the present study. The extra-biblical texts discussed in this study would all qualify as examples of 'transposition' (237-453) or 'transformation sérieux'. Two of Genette's subcategories, 'valorization' and 'devalorization', could be regarded as proximate to my first four strategies, since they focus on the evaluative aspect, and the fifth, censure, could perhaps be described as a form of 'con-

may also serve as models for new readers or for rewriters of the biblical text. They are:

1. Condemnation. A reader may explicitly pronounce judgment upon certain elements of the narrative and directly dissociate her- or himself from these.
2. Identification. A reader may explicitly recognize certain elements of the narrative, and, by contrast to the first strategy above, attempt to understand these elements from inside the diegetical world.
3. Glorification. A reader may implicitly make a positive value judgment with regard to certain elements of the narrative.
4. Alienation. A reader may implicitly distance him- or herself from certain elements of the narrative.
5. Censure. A reader may deny or eliminate certain elements of the narrative.

In the extra-biblical texts discussed in this study, the strategies of condemnation and identification (1, 2) can be seen in the narrator's explicit judgment. The narrator here takes the reader by the hand and shows him or her where to go, that is, how to evaluate the narrated events. Thus, the reader is spared the ethical ambiguities at the cost of accepting limits to his or her freedom of interpretation. The strategies of glorification and alienation (3, 4) are related to characterization.⁵ The narrative here guides the reader in a more subtle way than in the first two strategies above. The final strategy, censure (5), is linked to the issue of coherence. This strategy represents the most severe interference with the biblical text by the narrator. Purely quantitative reduction or development of the characters do not count as proper strategies, since these can be used in different ways to strengthen the other strategies.⁶

The two early Jewish texts, *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and *Jewish Antiquities*, condemn Jephthah directly (strategy 1), whereas *LAB* also glorifies the daughter (strategy 3). *A Mighty Man of Valour* condemns both Jephthah and, less extensively, his daughter (strategy 4). 'Upon This Evil Earth' offers an

cision' (264-71). However, whereas Genette aims at creating a general scheme for the relationships between, in this case, hypotexts and hypertexts, I focus more specifically on the ideological implications of these relationships, especially on the hypotext as ethically ambiguous. In other words, Genette's categories are based on the technique with which the transformations are made, whereas the strategies I discuss are formulated on the basis of their effects.

5. In the *LAB* and the oratorio, glorification is related to characterization. Hypothetically, the strategy could just as well be related to the narrator.

6. The condemnation of Jephthah is, e.g., combined with reduction in *LAB* and with amplification in *Ant*.

altogether different treatment in that it alienates the daughter from the reader but invites the reader to identify with Jephthah (strategies 2 and 4). The oratorio, finally, glorifies the daughter and censures the act of killing (strategies 3 and 5).

Assessment

The strategies identified above reveal how ancient rewriters have treated the ethical dilemma raised by a canonical text and how modern readers continue to do so. The assessment of these strategies offered here is an attempt to discuss tentatively how we may, at present, act as ethically accountable interpreters, but it is not aimed at judging whether or not the authors have acted responsibly.⁷ To use feminism as a standard for this evaluation means to take the issue of power seriously and to side with the oppressed party. Two main questions will guide this procedure:

1. How do the strategies reflect the reader's understanding of power relations in the narrative?
2. In what ways may the strategies serve as an impetus for change for the reader?

In the material discussed in this study, the strategy of condemnation is the most common and is always applied to Jephthah. The strategy does away with the ambiguity regarding who is responsible for the sacrifice and makes it clear that the male judge acted wrongly. However, to place the blame squarely upon Jephthah also lessens the ethical dilemma by diverting attention from the deity. For apologetically motivated readings, such as the one in *Jewish Antiquities*, the strategy is certainly necessary. In order to present religion in a favourable light, the deity must be freed from all allegations of promoting child sacrifice. Even so, condemning the merely human instrument while letting the divine agent completely off the hook can hardly be considered satisfactory, either from a feminist point of view or from a wider perspective, since it leaves unscathed the most powerful subject within the patriarchal (diegetical) world. Jephthah may be condemned as a daughter-killer, although in *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, for example, his impiety consists predominantly in improper swearing of vows, not in improper sacrifice. To condemn Jephthah does not always imply siding with the daughter. In both *Jewish Antiquities* and *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum*, Jephthah's fault is described as an offence against God and the law, not against his daughter. A problem with an exclusive denunciation of Jephthah is that it renders what is already the daughter's limited agency entirely invisible.

7. It bears repeating that the ethical dilemma of the biblical text is most clearly addressed by the oldest texts.

The strategy of condemnation (strategy 1) can also be applied to the daughter. In the real world, blaming the victim features notoriously as a means of defending male abusers and rapists in court. It thus serves to obscure the power relations between the two parties and it shifts the focus from the perpetrator to the victim. This is also the effect of Jephthah's words to his daughter in the biblical narrative. Among the extra-biblical texts, only *A Mighty Man of Valour* repeats this strategy, albeit with the variation that the narrator blames the daughter alongside Jephthah. The daughter is considered culpable since she neither protests against Jephthah's vow nor entreats other men to help her. Such a reading strategy involves an interpretative betrayal of the disadvantaged party and implies loyalty to the privileged one.

To condemn Jephthah may appear to be the ethically obvious choice. Yet that strategy runs the risk of reifying gender stereotypes in that it further increases the dichotomy between male villainy and female victimization and thus raises an interpretative dilemma.⁸ On the one hand, things should be called by their proper name. Oppression is oppression. The first step towards emancipation from patriarchal structures lies in describing the situation accurately and without idealization. On the other hand, by not recognizing even a limited agency for the daughter, the reader perpetuates the idea that she is helpless and thereby continues the pattern of discrimination against her.

The strategy of identification (strategy 2) advocates recognition rather than denunciation. When the strategy is applied to Jephthah, as in the case of 'Upon This Evil Earth', it involves the reader along with the perpetrator. It thus may serve to excuse the male executioner, and the focus on his loss renders the plight of the daughter invisible. To pursue this strategy of interpretation is to enhance the asymmetric relationship of power between Jephthah and his daughter. Moreover, universalizing Jephthah's experience is a schoolbook example of androcentrism, the establishment of the male as the norm. This is what male and female readers frequently do, since they have been socially taught to do so.⁹

8. In a highly polemical article, Reis (2002: 105-30) accuses feminist exegetes of committing precisely that error, i.e., of promoting gender stereotypes. In Reis's interpretation, Jephthah's daughter was a 'spoiled brat', who drew the sacrifice upon herself by spiting her spineless father. Paradoxically, Reis also confirms stereotypes, albeit different ones, such as the provocative teenager daughter and the *laissez-faire* father. In the categories of this study, Reis's interpretation is an example of condemnation of the daughter. Thereby, she takes part in the not-yet-obsolete exegetical tradition of blaming biblical female characters, such as Eve or Jephthah's daughter, for their own suffering and subordination. For elaborate criticism of Reis, see Sjöberg 2003.

9. Fetterley (1986: 147-64) describes how women, in the realms of literature, are taught to identify with the male point of view.

Does the strategy of identification inevitably transform the reader into an accomplice? I do not think so. It depends on the purpose for which the strategy of identification is pursued. It could, for example, be used to parody the position of power and thereby to suggest that this power is relative rather than absolute.¹⁰ A modern example of such an approach features in the celebration of Purim, in which participants masquerade as characters from the book of Esther. To cross-dress as, for example, the prototypical hater of the Jews, Haman, is intended to ridicule and expropriate the position of power held by the enemy by means of identification.¹¹ This is an ironic form of identification, which could perhaps be described as a conscious appropriation of the text.

Identification with the daughter is an option that none of the narratives studied here has attempted. This is hardly a coincidence, for such a reading would certainly go against the grain of the biblical narrative. As stated above, readers in patriarchal interpretative communities are trained to identify with the male 'hero'. To feminist commentators, however, the option of identifying with the daughter may appear appropriate. Phyllis Tribble ends her classic reading of the narrative by making the rare exegetical move of engaging in direct dialogue with the text, in a precise act of identification: 'Like the daughters of Israel, we remember and mourn the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite. In her death we are all diminished; by our memory she is forever hallowed.'¹² This interpretative strategy, I suggest, corresponds to Schüssler Fiorenza's proposed 'hermeneutics of remembrance and reconstruction'.¹³ In the memory of present-day readers, the daughter is redeemed from her marginalized position in the narrative. This type of reading opens up the possibility for oppressed readers to recognize that their own situation is not unique. However, as in the case of identification with Jephthah, such an insight may be used not only to rise against the daughter but also to accept it.

The strategy of glorification (strategy 3) implies an affirmative evaluation of elements in the narrative. To most feminists, it has appeared troublesome to apply this strategy to the daughter, as *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* and the oratorio do. By lauding Jephthah's daughter, one honours and makes visible the plight of an anonymous oppressed female character.¹⁴ Such an

10. This would be in line with the thinking of Judith Butler; see 'Introduction'.

11. Beal (1997: 123) suggests that the modern practice of 'transvesting' masquerades at Purim is an opportunity to play with the identities of the self/Other.

12. Tribble 1984: 108. Tribble's book serves the purpose of remembering anonymous or forgotten biblical female figures, which, e.g., is emphasized by the epitaphs that introduce every chapter.

13. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 51.

14. I interpret Gerstein's (1989: 189) enthusiasm about the consequences of the sacrifice as a rare expression of such a position.

approach would correspond to the second-wave feminism of the 1970s, which aimed at recovering positive pictures of women in traditional works and positive aspects of women's lives. However, Elisabeth Cady Stanton has fiercely repudiated that option: 'We often hear people laud the beautiful submission and the self-sacrifice of the nameless maiden. To me it is pitiful and painful.'¹⁵ More recently, Cheryl Exum has pointed out that the celebration of female submission constitutes no threat to patriarchal authority and that it may in fact be seen as a confirmation of the patriarchal order.¹⁶ If the only agency allowed for a woman in this system is to submit to patriarchal authority, even when it means submitting to her own death, should such an absolute self-effacement be praised as a model?

The most extreme example of glorification in the history of Christian interpretation is the typological reading.¹⁷ To regard Jephthah's daughter as a forerunner to Christ obviously indicates appreciation of her importance. With regard to power, however, it is simply not the same thing when a judge's daughter with no rights or possessions accepts death through sacrifice as her 'fate' as when the Son of the Almighty lays down his life in order to save humanity. Feminist critics of Lars von Trier's movie *Breaking the Waves* (1996) make precisely that point.¹⁸ They strongly object to the interpretation that the pious female protagonist, Tess, who allows herself to be killed through sexual assault in order to save her husband, could serve as a christological model. The glorification of female self-effacement to the point of death as something good and honourable undoubtedly amounts to a harmful use of the narrative patterns of the Bible.

Glorification of Jephthah does not feature as a strategy in any of the narratives I have discussed. Such readings can, however, be inferred from both early canonical and deuterio-canonical texts. The book of Sirach unreservedly praises the category of Israelite leader to which Jephthah belongs: 'The judges, too, each when he was called, all men whose hearts were never disloyal, who never turned their backs on the Lord—may their memory be blessed!' (46.11). The New Testament letter to the Hebrews is more direct:

And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight (11.32-34).

15. Stanton 1974: 25.

16. Exum 1992: 66.

17. According to Thompson (2001: 171-74), the Church has identified the daughter as a martyr, used her example in the recruitment of nuns and regarded her as a type of Christ. All these approaches to the text contain elements of the strategy of glorification.

18. The reception of the movie is analysed by Lindell (2004: 40-85).

Only four judges are selected for the prestigious list of 'men of faith' found in Hebrews 11, an indication of this New Testament text's high esteem for Jephthah as a religious leader. Apparently, human sacrifice has not tarnished his record! Some modern exegetical commentaries seem to accept Sirach's and Hebrews' appraisal of Jephthah unconditionally.¹⁹ Like identification, glorification of Jephthah implies acceptance of the emblems of power. When this strategy can be detected in the works of esteemed male academics, the effect is a double bind.²⁰ Academic men of power give scholarly legitimacy to the ideology of male supremacy in the biblical narrative.

The strategy of alienation (4) serves to estrange the reader. When applied to the daughter, as in 'Upon This Evil Earth', it seems to be an implicit version of blaming the victim and thereby a further, yet more deceptive, marginalization of her. Constructing the daughter as a peculiar Other legitimizes the asymmetric relationship of power between her and Jephthah. Not surprisingly, this strategy, as expressed in 'Upon This Evil Earth', includes an element of sexualizing the daughter. The reader is thus encouraged to judge the daughter by the same standard the biblical narrator used for her grandmother, as the 'other woman'. This tendency is evident in the discussions of many female biblical figures, most notably of the 'fallen Eve' in commercials or in the visual arts.²¹ The strategy of alienating the daughter diverts the reader's attention from the male agents. The underlying logic appears to be that the daughter is sacrificed because of her own bizarreness, not because of the problematic situation in which the narrator places her. Two analogies from the real world are of relevance here. In psychological discourse, abused women have sometimes been described as emotionally disturbed.²² In the rhetoric of war, the enemy is alienated through dehumanization and feminization in order to make the killing appear less tragic.²³

None of the narratives discussed applies the strategy of alienation to Jephthah. To apply this strategy to the male protagonist would perhaps be the most effective way of demonstrating his error.²⁴ One can imagine a modern author being attracted to this strategy. It would, however, run the

19. Robert Boling (1975: 3) quotes the words of Sirach in his introduction and commentary to Judges.

20. Bal 1988b: 9.

21. Edwards 2003.

22. In his Swedish handbook of psychiatry, Cullberg (1985: 144) assumes that abused women often suffer from a masochistic neurosis.

23. The torture of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in April 2004 is an uncannily brutal example of this strategy.

24. *A Mighty Man of Valour* comes closest to this strategy, through its depiction of Jephthah as a religious fanatic.

risk of presenting Jephthah as an incomprehensible exception rather than as an extreme and abusive example of what the biblical account presents as the norm.

The strategy of censure (strategy 5), finally, involves the greatest degree of interference with the biblical narrative. It is no exaggeration to call it a double-edged sword. On the one hand, censure (of the sacrifice) amounts to a denial of both the father's responsibility and of the daughter's suffering. Thus it obscures the mechanisms of power and poses no challenge to the patriarchal order. On the other hand, this strategy may serve as an option to envisage a different, more equitable, world order, in which the father cannot determine the limits of his daughter's life. The oratorio is an expression of the first alternative. A stronger Lord dethrones Jephthah and saves the daughter from death. In this case, dedication hardly means liberation, since the daughter's lack of proper agency remains unchanged.²⁵ Elisabeth Cady Stanton adopts the second option by imagining another course of action, according to which the daughter would openly defy Jephthah as well as take issue with the Jewish law about vows.²⁶ Thus, censure could be regarded both as an effort to 'redeem' the text apologetically by concealing the lethal implications of men's power and as a means to reconstruct a utopian alternative to this power. In other words, this strategy may or may not serve the ends of feminism.

Assessment of this strategy depends on the context in which it is used. Censure as an individual reading strategy must be distinguished from censure as an instrument of church politics. The dwindling popularity of the Jephthah narrative both in the Church and in the arts serves as evidence of a *de facto* degradation of its status. Although I resist the idea of specific manipulation of the canon, I do not regret that this particular narrative is no longer used to preach the nobility of female self-effacement or of male obedience to a cosmic feudal Lord. In my view, the problem consists not in the narrative's inclusion in the canon—it may serve as a witness to a specifically gruesome phase of patriarchal history—but in the authority with which canonical writings are vested. This is what needs to be challenged, either by means of theological argument or by fantastic rewritings.

The call for a general censure of parts of the canon represents an attitude of coercion both *vis-à-vis* the texts and *vis-à-vis* its potential readers, and is problematical for a number of reasons. For one thing, making the canon more theologically homogenous implies a view of readers as not capable of judging for themselves. This kind of censure would serve as an attempt to

25. The question whether the daughter was sacrificed or not, pursued by e.g. Marcus (1986), draws the attention away from the central feminist issue of the narrative, the father's total sovereignty over his daughter.

26. Stanton 1974: 25-26.

protect readers from complex issues and to deny them access to a genuine struggle with the religious tradition. Luther's proposal simply to move on without afterthought when encountering a difficult passage is an example of this strategy.²⁷ Moreover, censure is practically impossible to achieve. It is simply too late. Whether we like it or not, the biblical texts are part of our cultural and religious heritage. In addition, the call for censure often has anti-Semitic overtones.²⁸ Ilse Müllner warns against anti-Judaism in feminist analyses of violence in biblical texts, if they judge the whole Judaic tradition as misogynist.²⁹ Finally, censure involves force and control, which disqualifies it as a feminist strategy. The radicalism of feminism lies in its recognition of pluralism and not in the exchange of one normative interpretation for another.³⁰

My assessment of the five interpretative strategies identified above does not amount to a detailed verdict. Each strategy brings with it risks as well as benefits. On the one hand, deeply disturbing strategies, such as identification with Jephthah, can potentially yield constructive results by reducing power to parody. On the other hand, apparently pro-feminist readings, such as glorification of the daughter, may serve the purpose of preserving patriarchy. The strategy of censure may in some contexts be an imitation of patriarchal power politics and in others it may be a means to envision a better world. Some strategies undeniably carry worse consequences than others. Alienating or condemning the daughter can hardly be considered as anything but utter disloyalty to the weaker party.

Programmes

How can the strategies discussed above be related to existing programmes for the ethical and political practices of exegesis? In *Rhetoric and Ethic: The Politics of Biblical Studies* (1999), Schüssler Fiorenza develops the ideas of her 1987 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature into a full-scale programme. She envisions no less than a revolutionary change

27. Luther 1898: 571.

28. At the release of the latest official translation of the Hebrew Bible into Swedish, one journalist (Moberg 2000) was so appalled by certain parts of the canon (i.e., the Hebrew Bible) that she compared Yahweh with Hitler and therefore argued for a censure of the canon, nearly two millennia after its completion. When Marcion, at the dawn of the Christian Church, proposed a trimmed canon, the proposal became, in contrast, part of the process of canon formation (Bengtsson 2004).

29. Müllner 1999: 129-31.

30. Pluralist democratic societies do, of course, have the right to take a stand against extremism of different kinds. However, I cannot see that censure in this sense is the right way. The same dilemma is raised, e.g., by the issue of hate speech, dealt with by Butler (1997).

within the discipline of biblical studies. Her point of departure is a sharp criticism of the previous or rival modes of interpretation, namely, of the 'doctrinal–fundamentalist paradigm', the "scientific" positivist paradigm' and the '(post)modern cultural paradigm'.³¹ In their place, she argues for a 'rhetorical–emancipatory paradigm'.³² The 'rhetorical' aspect includes both the ethical and the political, and it requires an understanding of biblical texts and of their interpretation as a 'site of struggle over authority, values and meaning'.³³ The 'emancipatory' aspect means that the scholarly practice aims at 'transformation for justice and well-being'.³⁴ This task should not be limited to academic or religious communities but should stand in the service of the broader public. Within this paradigm, Schüssler Fiorenza proposes a procedure of seven 'interpretive strategies'.³⁵ In short, the interpreter should begin by reflecting on his or her experience and social location and he or she should then continue by critical analysis and ethical evaluation in order finally to reach the stage of creative transformation.

Schüssler Fiorenza conceptualizes the ethics of interpretation both as a specific field in biblical studies and as a lens through which the discipline can be understood anew.³⁶ With regard to the former, she defines four areas of investigation in great detail: the ethics of reading, the ethics of interpretive practices, the ethics of scholarship and the ethics of scientific valuation and judgement.³⁷ With regard to the latter, the main object is to overcome the dichotomy between 'engaged' and 'objective' scholarship.³⁸

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, the exegete's task includes critique and construct, as well as meta-theoretical reflection on scholarly practice. The necessity of a positive appropriation of the text is controversial, among feminist exegetes as well as among others. Although I dare say that all feminists envisage social change, the means are different. To what extent does the feminist scholar also need to be a religious or political activist?³⁹ Many

31. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 39-44.

32. In earlier works, Schüssler Fiorenza (1999: 44) has used a number of different labels for this paradigm, such as 'pastoral–theological', 'liberationist–cultural', 'rhetorical–ethical' and 'rhetorical–political'.

33. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 45.

34. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 44.

35. These are: the hermeneutics of experience and social location, the analytic of dominion, the hermeneutics of suspicion, the hermeneutics of ethical and theological evaluation, the hermeneutics of remembrance and re-construction, the hermeneutics of imagination and the hermeneutics of transformation. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 48-55.

36. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: appendix 1, 'The Ethics of Interpretation: Thirteen Theses', 195-98.

37. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 196, thesis IV.

38. Schüssler Fiorenza 1999: 195, 198, theses III and XIII.

39. In Milne's (1997) description of the history of feminist exegesis, the first phase

feminists have argued that the constructive part of the feminist exegetical project runs the risk of weakening its critical edge and that it therefore is legitimate to limit oneself to the critical task.⁴⁰ Hanna Stenström pinpoints the problem when she, against Schüssler Fiorenza, states: '[I]f we do not dare see clearly what a gender analysis shows, our work for change may take away the symptoms but not roots of oppression and the evils will return in a different guise. Even painful truths may set women free.'⁴¹ This is also the position I take in the present study.

In relation to Schüssler Fiorenza's rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm, I clearly recognize the first four critical and evaluative interpretative strategies—the hermeneutics of experience and social location, the analytic of dominion, the hermeneutics of suspicion, the hermeneutics of ethical and theological evaluation—whereas the final three constructive strategies—the hermeneutics of remembrance and re-construction, the hermeneutics of imagination and the hermeneutics of transformation—are absent in my own work. With regard to her fourfold scheme for the ethics of interpretation, the present study is primarily focused on the ethics of reading (see chs. 2–5) and to some extent also on the ethics of scientific valuation and judgment (see above, 'Assessment'). The fact that I do not engage in the constructive task does not mean that I question its general legitimacy but only that I am content to leave that to others. The same pertains to the ethics of interpretive practices and the ethics of scholarship, although I briefly address the latter in the Introduction.

With regard to Schüssler Fiorenza's programme as a whole, I offer two more general reflections. First, I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza that alternative versions of the biblical stories are needed. We have not yet heard the perspectives of Yael, Deborah, Delilah or Jephthah's daughter. In the arts, however, numerous alternative versions of the biblical narratives do in fact exist. I believe it would increase the role of exegesis as a 'science of public information' to pay more scholarly attention to this type of material. The few non-exegetes who are acquainted with Jephthah have probably met him through Shakespeare, Handel or Rembrandt. Furthermore, could not studies

(Stanton) was a decisively political one, whereas the second (Trible) was more directed towards specifically theological issues. With regard to the third phase (begun by Bal), Milne envisages a more 'self-consciously non-confessional' (58) scholarship with a closer co-operation with other academic feminists. She thus gives primary legitimacy to the critical task of feminism.

40. Fuchs (2000) decisively argues for the importance of a 'critical hermeneutics', whereas Exum (1996: 11) strives to go beyond the critique-construct dichotomy. Among New Testament exegetes, Fatum (1989) is an early critic of Schüssler Fiorenza's attempt to salvage the Bible for feminism and Stenström (1999, 2002 and 2004) later extensively elaborates on the relationship between the critical and constructive tasks.

41. Stenström 1999: 313. Cf. Fatum 1995: 261.

of the Bible in culture at least occasionally correspond to Schüssler Fiorenza's call for a hermeneutics of remembrance, imagination and transformation? Admittedly, many cultural adaptations of the biblical narratives may hardly count as more liberating than the biblical narratives themselves. Yet I believe that there is a constructive theological potential in the biblical cultural approach that has only begun to be exploited.

My second reflection concerns the act of constructing grand programmatic monuments. The claims of the architect are of course important. Does the programme serve as a point of departure for further dialogue or is it used as self-demarcation over against other scholars? Regardless of her intent, I would say that a very detailed programme such as Schüssler Fiorenza's constitutes a magnificent instrument of power. She herself uses its categories for polemics against, or even for caricature of, historical-critical scholars.⁴² Thereby she runs the risk of repeating the 'kyriarchical'⁴³ behaviour for which she criticizes her historical-critical colleagues.

The dispute between Schüssler Fiorenza and Räisänen, documented in *Reading the Bible in the Global Village: Helsinki*, further demonstrates that her programme has in fact become the site of an intense scholarly power struggle.⁴⁴ I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza that Räisänen belittles the contribution of feminist exegesis by lumping it together with a number of different approaches, and by claiming that the impetus to a moral criticism of the Bible actually stems from the *Sachkritik* of historical-critics.⁴⁵ Yet Schüssler Fiorenza's programme sets the agenda for the debate and constitutes the norm to which Räisänen, as a representative of the historical-critical Other, reacts. Although feminist studies have in many contexts been, and still are, deemed to be a marginal phenomenon, the work of Schüssler Fiorenza, produced by the holder of the Krister Stendahl chair at Harvard University, cannot possibly be considered as belonging to that category.⁴⁶ I do not suggest that feminists should avoid confrontational politics but I do question whether the presentation of regulatory programmes for how proper scholarship should be conducted is really the best way to inspire innovative scholarship that furthers the feminist cause.

42. In her analysis of the Schüssler Fiorenza–Räisänen debate, Stenström (2002: 538) finds that Schüssler Fiorenza simplifies the contrast between herself and historical-critics. Thus, the pattern of black and white, them and us, is kept and merely turned upside down.

43. Schüssler Fiorenza (1999: 5) launches the neologism *kyriarchy-kyriocentrism* from the Greek word *kyrios* (meaning lord, master, father and husband) to replace the term patriarchy, since it is often used in a bipolar dualistic manner.

44. Räisänen 2000a.

45. Schüssler Fiorenza 2000: 33–38.

46. Cf. Stenström 1999: 310.

In contrast to Räisänen, Daniel Patte offers an enthusiastic response to Schüssler Fiorenza's challenge. In his *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: A Reevaluation* (1995), Patte presents a rather personal narration about his own 'conversion' to the new ethical paradigm and discusses its theoretical presuppositions.⁴⁷ As editor of the *Romans through History and Culture Series* and, more recently, *A Global Bible Commentary*, Patte has given evidence of how this new interpretative paradigm works in practice.⁴⁸ Patte's ideal of an ethically accountable exegesis, presented in *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation*, is one that is both multidimensional and 'androcritical'.⁴⁹ Multidimensional exegesis assumes recognition of Greimas's idea that plurality could be conceived of as 'meaning-producing dimensions' in any given text.⁵⁰ Thus, the traditional exegetical practice of presenting a single most plausible interpretation is deemed as a one-dimensional means to master the text inappropriately. Androcritical exegesis involves acknowledgment of one's own position as a researcher, which in Patte's case means belonging to the privileged group of male European-American scholars. Consciously androcritical men seek to avoid the hazards of androcentrism. They must abstain from patronizingly 'speaking for' and also from simply 'listening to' the other, since these can serve as a means of co-option.⁵¹ According to Patte, one ought, rather, to 'speak with' the other, without denying one's own position. Ethical responsibility is assumed when the exegete considers the consequences that his or her interpretation have beyond the academic guild. Does it hurt or does it help? Who will benefit and who will suffer from it?⁵²

How can Patte's proposal be related to the present study? Certainly, a major point of this book lies in demonstrating the 'multidimensional' character of the biblical narrative. This is evidenced both by the selection of extra-biblical texts and by the result of the analyses, the five interpretative strategies I have identified on the basis of them for dealing with the biblical

47. *Ethics of Biblical Interpretation* should not be read in isolation. In *Discipleship according to the Sermon on the Mount: Four Legitimate Readings, Four Plausible Views of Discipleship, and Their Relative Values* (1996), Patte seeks to demonstrate how androcentric scholars in their interpretations make specific analytical and hermeneutical choices.

48. See *A Global Bible Commentary* (2004: xxi-xxxii), *Reading Israel in Romans* (2000: 1-54) and *Gender, Tradition, and Romans* (2005: 1-11).

49. Patte's explicit purpose is not to write another programme or a recipe for how an ethically responsible and accountable biblical exegesis ought to be conducted (1995: 6). Even so, he still ends by presenting a list of ten 'main features' for interpretation, although these are much less detailed and elaborate than Schüssler Fiorenza's programme (1995: 114-25).

50. Patte 1995: 28 n. 34.

51. Patte 1995: 23-25.

52. Patte 1995: 124-25.

text. The choice to study rewritings of the narrative, rather than exegetical commentaries, involves an acceptance of the legitimacy of the non-academic interpretative work on the biblical text. Whereas Patte speaks of 'ordinary readings', the present study goes one step further by dealing with artistic readings. The resulting strategies convey a wide variety of both documented and hypothetical interpretations. By assessing these strategies, I attempt to evaluate their consequences, to assume 'ethical responsibility'. This procedure does not lead to the preference of one strategy in favour of all others, as in the 'one-dimensional' exegesis that Patte criticizes. Rather, I conclude that some strategies are more harmful than others.

In my view, Patte's notion that an ethically accountable interpretation also needs to be androcritical indicates both a step forward and a step backwards. The benefit lies in the recognition, which is self-evident among feminists, that men too are gendered.⁵³ The 'male European-American exegetes' thus become both visible and relative as just one advocacy group among others and its status as the unconsciously accepted norm of scholarship can thus be denied.⁵⁴ However, the designation of androcritical exegetes as one advocacy group among others fails to do justice to the history of dominion on the part of scholars who belong to this group.⁵⁵ In a utopian future, hopefully, its adherents may be relieved of their privileges so that they can speak on more equal terms with others.

A problem with Patte's usage of the category 'male European-American exegetes' is that it does not make the differences (of, e.g., class and sexuality) within this group clear enough.⁵⁶ Patte thereby runs the risk of speaking of 'men' in the same monolithic way in which Judith Butler in 1990 criticized feminists for their use of the category 'women'.⁵⁷ This is somewhat paradoxical since Patte as editor of *Romans through History and Culture* and *A Global Bible Commentary* has contributed to demonstrating the diversity of this group of scholars.

Patte also assumes that the exegete has a religious interest. In *The Ethics of Interpretation*, he argues that it belongs to one's vocation as a critical exegete to counter the three hazards of fundamentalism, secularization and sectarianism.⁵⁸ I can identify with Patte's call to counter the absolutizing

53. Økland 2003b.

54. As Bal states on the cover of Patte's volume: 'Criticism that shapes itself through andro-criticism will be, simply, better than its predecessors.'

55. I agree with Schüssler Fiorenza's (1999: 8) criticism of Patte that he appears naïve with regard to power. However, I believe she is unfair not to recognize the progress that his work constitutes in this respect.

56. This pertains above all to *Ethics of Interpretation*. But even in the recent work, *A Global Bible Commentary*, Patte speaks of 'we European/American' males (2004: xxx).

57. Butler 1990: 1-6.

58. Patte 1995: 75-76. It is consistent with this religious interest that *A Global Bible*

tendency in biblical interpretation, but I do not regard my vocation as only or mainly directed towards a Protestant or Christian context. Fundamentalist hermeneutics are not restricted to the Church, to which the material of this study testifies.

Since 1995, the connection between gender and 'interest' has proved to be neither direct nor specific. Lesbian women can be conservative historical-critics and heterosexual men can be post modern deconstructionists. Despite an underlying essentialist logic, Patte shows in his practice that the option 'speaking with' can allow readers from different and fluctuating positions all around the world to form new and pluralist interpretative communities. Along those lines, I envisage that fixed and shared identities must no longer be considered the sole unifying source of understanding. The recognition of difference may in fact strengthen the individual participants in this conversation about biblical texts and their meaning as well as the interpretative community as a whole.

Final Reflections

Six years have passed since I embarked on the present exegetical journey. Such diverse phenomena as the exceptional September 11 attacks and the habitual male battering of women and children have continually served as motivating factors for an analysis of both 'texts of terror' and 'terrorist hermeneutics'. In a global context, it appears all the more important that Christians and Jews (for which the biblical narrative remains sacred) should confront the dark side of their religious traditions in order not to project barbarism on other religious communities.⁵⁹ Now that this occasion for wrestling with textual violence is coming to an end, the question how the present study may contribute to the discussion of the ethical and political dimensions of biblical studies presents itself. Two main points appear.

A Plea for Interpretative Pluralism

How could, or should, the ethical dilemmas raised by a biblical narrative such as the one about Jephthah be treated? The identification and assessments of different interpretative strategies in this study indicate that no single interpretation will suffice, since most readings involve risks as well as benefits. The strategy of censure, for example, may imply both the exertion of power and a dream of utopia. Identification with Jephthah may paradoxically yield a larger potential for change than identification with the

Commentary is intended to be used in Sunday-school classes and Bible study groups (2004: 1).

59. Gerd Lüdemann (1997) coins the expression 'the dark side of the Bible'.

daughter. This means that we need to reach beyond the simple dichotomy of rejection–redemption of ethically provocative or ambiguous texts and instead actively strive to recognize complexity.

The interpretative pluralism that I envisage is an engaging and challenging one. It demands that its practitioners see the world from different perspectives and recognize that readings carry consequences for better and for worse in different contexts. To be a responsible reader thus requires both commitment and discernment.⁶⁰ In my opinion, it is not enough to reiterate automatically what presently amounts to the ‘politically correct’ view. Possibly, the strategies revealed and categorized in this study may serve as a toolbox for readers who strive for responsibility in their encounters with problematical texts.

Feminists may or may not need the odious biblical narratives. As part of our common cultural heritage, these texts cannot be ignored. As a covert and perpetuated source of norms for gender relationships, they do however need to be critically interpreted and discussed. Although it is hardly an original point, it is nevertheless the road towards pluralism that recommends itself. Dismantling the illusory claim of certitude in biblical interpretation might be the most important contribution of the exegete.⁶¹ This may in turn serve as an impetus for theologians to ask what kind of authority is vested in the biblical texts. The present study deals predominantly with the narrative authority of a biblical text, in its capacity as a ‘classic’, whereas others may deal with its historically constitutive and theologically dogmatic authority.⁶²

Exegesis in the Service of the Public

Having directed some critical questions to Schüssler Fiorenza and to Patte about their constructions of grand meta-theoretical programmes, I will refrain from attempting such a move myself. The scholarly debate among advocates of the ethical turn in biblical studies indicates both that much is at stake—prestige as well as ethos—and that the assessment of one’s own position of power is a difficult and risky task even if it is part of one’s programme. In my view, the controversy about paradigms runs the risk of creating new deadlocks within the discipline, rather than opening up new horizons.

If one envisages that biblical studies should stand in the service of the public, it is necessary to ask oneself how exegetical programmes or interpretative strategies can be related to the violent world in which we live. As I

60. Responsibility must not be reduced to an abstract idea; it assumes relationships. To extend Stenström’s argument (2002), one needs to ask to whom one is responsible through one’s readings, i.e., to identify the specific interpretative community to which one belongs.

61. Collins 2003: 21.

62. Drawing from Weber, Mary Ann Tolbert (1998) distinguishes between the narrative, constitutive and dogmatic authority of the Bible.

see it, this study contributes to the deconstruction of one aspect of the ideology of male dominion. This means that the problem of gender-related violence can be identified in history and tradition, and that it cannot be reduced to exceptional tragedies. Recognizing that fact helps us to shift the focus from the individual to structures with regard to both male and female agents. Critical analysis of biblical narratives like the one about Jephthah could then function as an impetus for a broader political work towards change.

Although it has not been the purpose of this study to survey the history of interpretation, I cannot refrain from observing that the versions of the Jephthah narrative from the twentieth century accentuate the gender asymmetries of the narrative more clearly than the ancient ones do. If the biblical narrative is ethically ambiguous, the later narratives may in fact be even worse. This fact may serve as a counterpoint to any naïve notion of constant progression with regard to gender equality and it further explains why the 'effective history' of the Bible is a significant part of the feminist critical project. One can only hope that, in the near future, more exegetical works will be devoted to the appropriation of biblical texts in discourses on war, sexuality, politics, science or entertainment.

I hope that the readers of this study may find it less difficult than Shakespeare's character Polonius to see what follows from the Jephthah narrative. Like Hamlet's and the Bible's literary worlds, our real world is full of old and new lords, ready to sacrifice any female that stands in their way and ignorant of their own place within the patriarchal line of succession. By identifying this particular space in the matrix of oppression and by offering a few interpretative strategies, this study has sought to engage in the ongoing liberation of human bodies and minds.

APPENDIX

List of characters in the extra-biblical texts

Azur	Nehushtah's son in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Gatel	the Ammonite boy-king in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Getal	the Ammonite king in <i>LAB</i>
Gilead	Jephthah's father in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Hamor	Seila's beloved in the oratorio
Iphis	the daughter in the oratorio
Jabin	an old wise Gileadite man in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Jehovah	the deity in <i>LAB</i>
Jemuel	Nehushtah's son in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Jenin	Nehushtah's son in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Kanza	Jephthah's closest man in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Miriam	one of Vashti's friends in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Nehushtah	Gilead's wife in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Ozias	Jephthah's half-brother in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Pitdah	Jephthah's daughter in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Pitdah	Gilead's concubine in 'Upon This Evil Earth'
Ruth	one of Vashti's friends in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Sara	Vashti's closest friend in <i>A Mighty Man of Valour</i>
Seila	the daughter in <i>LAB</i>
Storgè	Seila's mother in the oratorio
Zebul	Jephthah's brother in the oratorio

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