

**Ovidiu Creangă, ed., *Hebrew Masculinities Anew*
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This volume follows Creangă's two previous, successful edited volumes on masculinities in the Hebrew Bible in 2010 and 2014. This third volume focuses on a handful of areas: (1) new and different methods and approaches; (2) under-studied topics, e.g., God's masculinity; (3) re-examining "hegemonic masculinity and its limits"; (4) LGBTQIA perspectives on Hebrew masculinities; and (5) "alternative" forms of hegemony upheld by Hebrew Bible (e.g., in Wisdom literature).

In an introductory chapter, Creangă notes that many scholars, biblical and non-biblical, have used the idea of hegemonic masculinities, "the cultural ideal/s of manhood exalted by a society but embodied only by a few of its members." The idea of hegemonic masculinity comes from Raewyn Connell's work in the 1990s about masculinity. She concluded that while hegemonic masculinity is transhistorical, the only real similarity over time is the oppression of women (21). Creangă notes that recent scholarship has observed that this concept is "fluid and unstable." Because of this, he notes that "multiple forms of hegemony" can coexist at the same time in the same place (6). He provides some other areas of research necessary for a robust study of masculinities in and related to the Hebrew Bible.

Next, in his chapter "Biblical Masculinity Studies and Multiple Masculinities Theory: Past, Present, and Future," Stephen M. Wilson provides a brief history of masculinity studies as well as its ideological and methodological genealogy. Wilson explains the overall purpose of masculinity studies: "Scholars of biblical masculinity therefore attempt to reveal the often implicit beliefs about what makes a man in the biblical world, while also uncovering the inevitable fissures in the depiction of manhood that necessitate its evolution and redefinition over time" (19). He closes the chapter championing more work on alternative biblical masculinities, and provides some areas of research that masculinity studies could venture into, such as using redaction criticism to analyze a single biblical book's masculinity diachronically (Murphy 2015). In the third essay, "Queer Masculinities in the Hebrew Bible", Gil Rosenberg defines queer masculinity in terms of "resistance to normativity," studying select stories about Abraham and Sarah to determine whether Abraham demonstrates queer masculinity. Rosenberg concludes that Abraham does not exhibit queer masculinity because he does not resist hegemonic masculinity, even though his actions are not necessarily hegemonic.

David Clines' essay "The Most High Male: Divine Masculinity in the Bible" looks at various qualities of masculinity, including strength, size, violence, and honor, in order to determine the overall rhetorical impact of god's masculinity on the Bible. For example, Clines notes that Hebrew Bible does not describe women as physically strong, nor do the violent verbs ascribed to God ever take women as their subject (64, 70). Divinity and biblical women, given this rhetoric, are wholly different, while biblical men and God share much in common. He concludes on a somber note: "[M]asculine language about the deity is far more pervasive in the Bible than is generally recognized" (81). This conclusion perhaps suggests that a critique of biblical patriarchy is a much more difficult task than Clines had originally imagined. In the next essay by Richard Purcell and Caralie Focht, "Competing

Masculinities: YHWH versus Pharaoh in an Integrative Ideological Reading of Exodus 1-14,” the authors provide contrasting and complementary readings of the relationship between Yahweh, Pharaoh, Moses, and Israel. Purcell demonstrates that Yahweh outmans Pharaoh according to standards of hegemonic masculinity, while Focht retells these chapters in Exodus as a barroom romance set in 1950s lesbian butch/femme culture.

In her essay “The Unblemished Male? Castration and the Cult of Circumcision,” Sandra Jacobs looks to determine why Jews who were circumcised were included in the community and those who were castrated were excluded in the writings of the Deuteronomist and the Priestly source, even though both are forms of genital cuts. Jacobs provides a number of options for the creation of anti-castration and pro-circumcision laws in Dtr and P, and clarifies that both groups of scribes thought an ideal male should be able to procreate (110). In her chapter “Queen Jezebel’s Masculinity,” Hilary Lipka uses Jack Halberstam’s idea of “female masculinity” (i.e. masculinity without a male body) to explore Jezebel. She concludes that Jezebel exhibits masculine traits: (1) inner strength; (2) leadership; (3) agency; (4) violence; (5) womanlessness; and (6) is the dominant partner in marriage (143-144). In the following essay, “Old Age and Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible,” by Milena Kirova, the author notes that the biblical writers present men’s old age as involving the decay of the body and the inability to procreate (154) and that death and Sheol erase the gendered nature of existence according to many biblical writers. For example, she considers passages like Job 3:18 (“the small and the great are there”) and Qoh 9:2 (“since the same fate comes to all”) to encompass the erasure of gender differences in Sheol as well (166-7).

Amy Kalmanofsky’s essay “Moses and His Problematic Masculinity” argues that Moses’ masculinity obfuscates God’s masculinity in the Exodus narrative, creating a problem for Yahweh. Because of this, Moses is punished, eventually forced to submit to lessened, prophetic masculinity before God, and finally rejected, then buried outside the Land. In the subsequent essay, “The Queenmakers: Transformational Rhetoric of Gender in the Prophets, Susan Haddox uses queer theory and drag theory to analyze the ways that prophetic literature depicts elite Israelite males as harlots. Haddox argues that the feminization of defeated warriors in prophetic literature allows the prophetic feminization of Israel to be readable as male (197). For example, she demonstrates how, in Isaiah 3, the prophetic text moves from recognition of the leaders as men (3:2-3), to not-men (3:12), i.e. children and women, to haughty, decorated women (195). In addition, she shows how in Nahum 2, gender is fluid, e.g. Nineveh begins as masculine (2:1) and becomes more feminine as the book progresses (3:5). Rhiannon Graybill, in her essay “Jonah ‘between Men’: The Prophet in Critical Homosocial Perspective,” reads Jonah along with queer theory (Sedgwick 1990), *Moby Dick*, and *Frankenstein* to demonstrate that the femaleless Jonah Scroll operates using homosociality, such as Jonah and God relating through the sailors. Graybill reads Jonah’s masculinity as passive and self-destructive while characterizing Jonah’s relationship with God as one ranging from repulsion to compulsion. Further, she depicts God’s relationship with Jonah ranging from murderous to parental. In his essay “Scribal Masculinity and the Court Tales of Daniel,” Brian DiPalma looks at Daniel and a handful of other ancient Near Eastern texts to provide a sketch of an alternative masculinity from the Persian Period: “the masculinity among scribes and among those who progressed into higher ranking positions as court officials ... that accepts and

reproduces a part of a culturally predominant masculinity through various scribal practices, such as producing literature, displaying knowledge, or faithful service to the king” (231).

In his offering, “Male Agencies in the Song of Songs,” Marti Nissinen concludes (similarly to Clines 1995) that this poem presents paradisiacal and fantastic renditions of masculinity (and femininity), but that the ideal-lover-masculinity that spans the poem is less harmful than the Hebrew Bible’s normative, hegemonic masculinity (also present in the text). Kelly Murphy’s essay “Wisdom is Better than Gold: Masculinity and Money in the Book of Proverbs” analyzes the way that Proverbs instructs young men about the masculinity of economics. Murphy concludes that Proverbs’ masculinity ties economics to the fear of Yahweh (287). The final chapter, by Stuart Macwilliam, worries over the method of biblical masculinity studies, especially its reliance on Connell and Clines, and provides some ideas for further research, such as comparative ancient Near Eastern studies. Wilson’s and Macwilliam’s essays provide cogent bookends to the collection as a whole.

In sum, *Masculinities Anew* is an excellent sampling of standard and *avant garde* research on masculinities in the Hebrew Bible. In terms of this volume’s use of theory, the essays by Rosenberg, Focht, Lipka, Kirova, Haddox, and Graybill utilize newer approaches to masculinities, while the other essays tend to follow what Wilson and Macwilliam have described as the standard model. This model, in general, defines hegemonic masculinity (much in the same way Clines did in 1995), and then studies character(s)’s masculinities in order to determine their level of masculinity. Personally, I found DiPalma’s essay to be compelling given the recent interest in understanding scribal culture, especially because equating the masculinities presented in the text with that of the authors/editors seems foolhardy at this juncture in biblical studies. Further, the second-level analysis by Rosenberg about whether or not a character’s masculinity is resistant, supportive, and/or compliant with a story’s hegemonic masculinity, I hope, will become a model for later scholars. I hope that Wilson’s chapter, which should become a seminal essay in this field, is a catalyst for new directions in biblical masculinity studies. The essays by Wilson, Rosenberg, Focht, and Haddox can easily be used in any course on the Bible and Gender, while the whole volume would work well for a graduate course’s weeklong study of masculinity in Bible. For scholars interested in this field *Masculinities Anew* is a must read, and for the novice the methodologies and argumentation are approachable, yet challenging.

Reference List

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