

○ TEXTUALLY VIOLATING DINAH

LITERARY READINGS, COLONIZING INTERPRETATIONS, AND THE PLEASURE OF THE TEXT

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The story of Dinah in Genesis 34 has been a contentious interpretative site in modern biblical exegesis. There are various positions taken on the precise meaning of both the interaction between Dinah and Shechem, as well as the brutal results that follow in the narrative. Meir Sternberg and Susanne Scholz represent two dramatically different standpoints on the narrative action. In this piece we explore their differing readings in light of the literary poetics of Roland Barthes framed through a postcolonial analytic. We begin by outlining Barthes' understanding of the text of pleasure, which underscores the seductive and erotic character of the undecidable text. We stress in particular the modern desire to close down meaning and to delimit signification in such a narrative. Sternberg's and Scholz's positions are then analyzed through this framework. We return in the final part of the study to underscore the colonizing edge evident in the attempt by interpreters to narrow meaning in Genesis 34, often by giving voice in the space of narrative absence. We argue that an appreciation of literary aesthetics may enhance a postcolonial critical engagement of both ancient texts and modern interpretations.

We are not saying Oedipus and castration do not amount to anything. We are oedipalized, we are castrated... But is this sufficient to silence the outcry of desiring-production: We are all schizos! We are all perverts! We are all libidos that are too viscous and too fluid – and not by preference, but wherever we have been carried by the deterritorialized flows (Deleuze and Guattari 1983: 67).¹

In the opening lines of his landmark work, *The Pleasure of the Text*, Roland Barthes writes: ‘The pleasure of the text: like Bacon’s simulator, it can say: *never apologize, never explain*. It never denies anything: “I shall look away, that will henceforth be my sole negotiation”’ (Barthes 1975: 3). The conceptual framing that Barthes provides in this introductory comment aids in appreciating the acutely erotic engagement between a text and its reader. The fundamental post-structuralist pillars support Barthes’ main thesis: ambiguity, ultimate deferral, and dissolution become pleasure centers for the reader, as the undecidability of the text seduces its audience. In keeping secrets, erecting falsehoods, and masking truths (indeed, as in Bacon’s simulation itself), the pleasure text draws the reader into a space of unknowing, inviting the reader to explore the text in its moments of ambiguity, sometimes to the point of figurative orgasm. The lack supports this space of pleasure through the very danger that the text – and indeed language itself – might explode or become lifeless at any moment, emptied of significance at the turn of the page. The text never denies anything: all things are possible while nothing is possible. The text need not apologize or explain itself, but can instead suspend its reader in a state of permanent awe. For Barthes, this constant wonder, this waiting for truth that will not come, is the central feature of the pleasure text: despite our thirst for truth, the text of pleasure will negotiate only by looking away.

The various implications of Barthes' literary approach to the erotic are hard to ignore when discussing cases of textual ambiguity. Indeed, his theories related to the sensuality of undecidability provide an invaluable point of departure for the discussion of ancient texts, in part because such a framework helps one appreciate better the interpretative regulating effects of traditional historical-critical study of the past – and we can potentially come to view the ancient texts from a different, more open-ended perspective. For instance, the intersection of desire and undecidability over which Barthes hovers easily plays out in conversation with Genesis 34, the infamous narrative detailing the interaction between Dinah, Shechem, and the sons of Jacob, which is driven largely by desire (both inside and outside of the text) and marked heavily with ambiguous language throughout. Genesis 34 maintains a unique balance between narrative presence and absence, and, in its operation of storytelling, is shockingly violent and action-oriented. The story is linear, consistent with the textual norms of the stories immediately preceding and following it. Moreover, despite its ambiguity, the chapter certainly does not lack narrative thrust. It remains, however, that this presence is coupled with an equally disturbing absence: the voices of the women and Shechemites in the story are omitted entirely, and the sexual scene between Dinah and Shechem itself is largely ambiguous, especially with respect to the role of desire. This facet contributes to the way in which the narrative appears to support several mutually exclusive readings of the events in the story, including as well the multivalent interpretation of its placement within the broader Jacob-cycle.² This plurality grows from lack: that is, a readerly negative space emerges, being generated precisely by the indeterminate nature of the language, of its meaning, and of the narrative *telos* of the text itself.

As a result of this dynamic, Genesis 34 arises as a particularly curious and inviting moment in the Jacob-cycle: we cannot ignore the violence or the ambiguity, and we are forced to ask troubling questions of the text. As Barthes explains, in such a text 'two edges are created: an obedient, conformist, plagiarizing edge... and *another edge*, mobile, blank (ready to assume any contours), which is never anything but the site of its effect: the place where the death of language is glimpsed' (Barthes 1975: 6). It is not the presence or the absence alone that captivates the reader, but the interplay of absence against presence that constrains (and even eclipses) the reader's ability to comprehend. As Barthes notes, 'the subversive edge may seem privileged because it is the edge of violence [i.e., the death of language, the eternal lack]; but it is not violence which affects pleasure, nor is it destruction which interests it; what pleasure wants is the site of a loss, the seam, the cut, the deflation, the *dissolve* which seizes the subject in the midst of bliss' (7). It is the seam that emerges as a result of this narrative presence and absence that calls the reader to fascination and pleasure. Indeed, the problematics of Genesis 34 have encouraged numerous biblical scholars to investigate the narrative dynamics in extensive detail. Thus, in the process of interpretation, the seductive balance that allows one to experience Genesis 34 as a text of inordinately dangerous pleasure is disrupted by the modern exegete seeking to explain this story that refuses to explain itself. In fact, in almost all of the research on this narrative, a strong desire for excessive closure is revealed – an effort to fix the lack and to control meaning. Going against the text of pleasure, as Barthes notes, such modern moves reveal the quest for a '*moral unity* that society demands of every human product' (31). Moreover, this primary disruption of the pleasure text by the modern exegete takes place precisely in the effort to fill in the textual gaps. This tendency may well be related to the function of the story as a literary pleasure center: the inter-

pretive fruit is ripe for the picking. It is intriguing, however, that the response to the seduction of the text in question is in fact to violate or delimit the text itself.³

It is this phenomenon in particular that we explore further in this article with reference to Meir Sternberg's and Suzanne Scholz's work on Genesis 34. In the process of this exploration we are fully aware of the bind that such an effort places on us as readers. The story about Dinah in Genesis 34 is a violent and ideologically dangerous narrative, and no doubt that has been one of the reasons why some scholars have sought to justify and moralize particular story-lines. Our eroticization of the semantic and ideological violence contained in the narrative (even if it is open-ended how it is so contained) is not intended to take lightly the real-world effects of violence, sexual and otherwise (cf. Schroeder 2007). Rather, in this particular exercise we are interested primarily in the intimate connection between the seduction of texts like Genesis 34 and colonizing strategies of reading. Ultimately, we do not believe that the current paradigms for reading Genesis 34 address in an adequate way the problems such texts pose to us as modern readers or the possibilities for real-world human communities they may also unlock.

TEXTUAL ACTION IN AND REACTION TO GENESIS 34

The story begins with Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, entering the Canaanite city of Shechem, where she undergoes sexual union (in one form or another)⁴ with the prince of the city: 'When Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force' (Gen 34:2).⁵ When Dinah's brothers find out what has happened, they are infuriated 'because he had committed an outrage in Israel by lying with Jacob's daughter, for such a thing ought not to be done' (34:7). Shechem's father, Hamor, then proposes a marriage between the families, as Shechem has become obsessed with making Dinah his wife. Seeking revenge, the sons of Jacob insist that, if the men of Canaan want to lie with and marry Hebrew women, they must all be circumcised. After open conversation regarding the issue of inter-familial marriage on both the Jacobite and Shechemite sides, the proposition by the sons of Jacob turns out to be a trick (which corresponds to a similar [but less brutal] plan of deception by the Shechemites). Not only does Shechem himself 'not delay to do the thing' (34:19), but he accepts the conditions of the deal for all the men under his father's jurisdiction. As the Canaanite men are healing from the circumcision, the brothers entered the city and 'killed all the males... [and] they took their flocks and their herds... all their wealth, all their little ones and their wives...' (34:25-29).

These actions – deceitful speech acts (on both sides), murder, and pillaging – make victims out of nearly every actant in the story. Moreover, the threads of biblical morality that weave throughout the text are ambiguous at best. On the one hand, Jacob's sons are expected to serve and protect their property (Dinah included), family honor, and their family's biological purity, and yet they enact what seem to be both atrocious and excessive forms of behavior (for which Simeon and Levi are explicitly signaled out by Jacob in Gen 49:5-7 and cursed for their rage). Meanwhile, Shechem engages in some kind of problematic sexual union with Dinah in the opening of the story, and then apparently falls in love with her after the fact. In all of this, Dinah is given no voice – she is always only the object of various male emotive responses in the text (her brother's rage, her father's shame, Shechem's lust and love). Further, Shechem and Hamor are tricked into leading their male subjects to their death, a collective repayment for Shechem's individual action.⁶ The Shechemite women and children are also victimized, as they are made

widows and fatherless by the slaughter, are left dispossessed by the sacking of the city, and are also silenced entirely by (and in) the text – they stand as a larger narrative counterpart to Dinah. Further, the culminating violent action in the text receives no explicit condemnation or commentary, leaving the text and actions unexplained and, in many respects, inexplicable. The closest we come to any ‘explanation’ is the response of Simeon and Levi to their father: ‘Should our sister be treated like a whore?’ (34:30-31). It is not insignificant that even this dialog ends in a question that is difficult to answer, either textually or contextually. We do acknowledge that the text perhaps makes some kind of implicit commentary through the use of possible irony (e.g., that the sons of Jacob similarly scheme as the sons of Hamor), and that there might well be subtle traces of larger cultural critique by the writer of Genesis 34 through this and other means (including intertextual connections with similar incidents in the Hebrew Bible, where the dispensing of justice is more limited [cf. 2 Sam 13]⁷). That said, the absence of clarity, from the beginning of the story to its close, suspends the reading act, offering a state of unknowing, of deferred pleasure (where knowing the ‘truth’ of the story would be the ultimate, and impossible, gratification).

In addition to instability regarding the moral of the story, the language in the text further serves to fracture the narrative semantics. As there is no Hebrew word for our modern concept of rape, the consensual/non-consensual nature of the sex-act is somewhat ambiguous, based on the difficulties in translating the Hebrew *laqach* and *shachav* in conjunction with each other and in deciphering the precise meaning of ‘*anah*’.⁸ Further, immediately following 34:2, it is noted that Shechem’s ‘soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl, and spoke tenderly to her’ (34:3). Is this a change of heart or a continuation of the action from the previous verse? In dramatic contrast to the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, the text in Genesis speaks *nothing* of Dinah’s experience or emotion, not only erasing her voice from the story but also any trace of her narrative ‘consciousness’ (and in some sense our consciousness of her as well). In fact, the very idea of ‘consensuality’ is quite beside the point – the text does not appear to be invested one way or another in Dinah as anything other than a foil for male action. She is somewhat of a ghost that haunts this male head-of-family landscape, and she becomes vivified only through male evocation of her name or males acting on her body. Indeed, we only find out late in the story that, while the potential marriage negotiations were taking place, Dinah was in Shechem’s house, not Jacob’s (34:26). The idea of Dinah’s staying (by force or by choice) in Shechem’s house is especially loaded here, as it was, in a sense, Dinah’s leaving Jacob’s house to visit Shechem’s land that set the stage for this violent tale to unfold.

It has been tempting, particularly in feminist scholarship, to focus on this ‘silencing of women’ as providing grounds for ‘recovering’ the lost female voice behind the text and hence, in many respects, also history. The problem, however, is that, aside from the momentary glimpse of agency opened up in the first verse (‘Dinah went out’), Dinah does not actually exist in this text apart from the male gaze – even female experience becomes difficult to conceptualize let alone talk about given the parameters of the narrative (which, even if it included ‘female’ sentiment, would be such sentiment as expressed from a decidedly *male* perspective). Further, it is difficult to know whether even the agency in the first verse truly exists outside of the male gaze, as 34:1 provides the primary cause/context for the phallogocentric discourse that ensues – it is the condition upon which the latter proceeds. A similar silencing takes place with respect to the Shechemite women

and children (although the majority of modern scholars seem disinclined to problematize that silencing), as this group represents an unvoiced Shechemite counterpart to Dinah. We may scrutinize the biblical value system placed on the ‘outsider’ in this text, and yet, as with the case of Dinah, one cannot help but perceive how quickly Dinah’s counterpart – writ large(r) – also readily disappears behind the text and hence history as well.

Yet for all of this ‘disappearance’ and silencing, not to mention the obscurity and ambiguity of the moral message in this text, readers have been intently interested in recovering meaning behind this silence and out of this ambiguity. This is the seductive pull of the text, wherein pleasure so easily gives way to violation. In earlier, pre-modern exegesis of this narrative, one observes the attempt to delineate the action of the plot in such a way as to make clear that Dinah was to blame (see the discussion by Schroeder 1997: 776–780; cf. Schroeder 2007). In later scholarship, there is a shift to the validation of the brothers’ response. Gerhard von Rad, for instance, regarded Simeon and Levi as ‘proud and implacable’ defenders of the family honor (von Rad 1972: 334).⁹ But perhaps there has been no greater modern defender of the narrative action of the text than Meir Sternberg, who understands Simeon and Levi to be legitimate ‘avengers’ (Sternberg 1985: 463), ‘the real heroes’ (473), ‘selfless and single-minded’ (472) in their efforts to revenge the honor of their family. It is to his reading that we now turn.

FOOLPROOF (COM)POSITIONS

The problematic nature of Meir Sternberg’s published work on Genesis 34 has already been investigated thoroughly by other scholars (alongside Fewell and Gunn 1993, see Nolan 1996). We simply touch on it here. In the twelfth chapter of his *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, entitled ‘The Art of Persuasion’, Sternberg endeavors to disambiguate the uncertain conditions of Genesis 34 through a meticulously careful reading of the text. In this approach, Dinah becomes an object in a story, a ‘lexical item’ (Sternberg 1985: 480). Focusing on the ambiguities inherent within the text, Sternberg is convinced that the boundaries of these uncertainties are tightly controlled by the narrator. Thus, in his reading, he seeks to reflect the ‘reality’ of the text, offering an interpretative approach that assumes a readership whose ideological perspectives are identical to his own. Fewell’s and Gunn’s critique of this model needs no paraphrase or adjustment: ‘Sternberg’s poetics of foolproof composition depends not only on the notion of an omnipotent narrator but also on the notion of an ideal, competent reader, presumably the reader epitomized by Sternberg himself. Yet although Sternberg dwells on the ideological nature of biblical narrative, he has almost nothing to say about the ideological nature of readers. And Sternberg, like the rest of us, is an ideological reader’ (Fewell and Gunn 1993: 194). Indeed, his ideology is replete throughout this text, as he unabashedly celebrates the heroic actions of Levi and Simeon in defending Dinah’s honor over against, in Sternberg’s view, the weak-willed behavior exhibited by Jacob.

In reading Sternberg’s analysis, one perceives rather quickly that it is ideologically driven by a masculinist core. Not only does he reiterate the textual silencing of Dinah by reading her as an object, but he also makes her as small an object as possible. This erasure of Dinah continues in his analysis as he traces the moral message of the story solely in terms of how it relates to the consciousness (individual or collective) of various males in the story. Sternberg’s study also privileges Hebrew action over non-Hebrew action by valorizing, implicitly and explicitly, the deeds of Dinah’s brothers. Sternberg even reserves the status of victimhood in the story for male

characters alone, while also praising as heroic the genocidal violence exhibited by Dinah's brothers: '[t]he initial accumulation [of sympathy] tips the scales of judgment so heavily on the brothers' side (as victims) that their following excesses (as victimizers) only produce emotional and moral equilibrium' (Sternberg 1985: 446; cf. Berlin 1983: 78). Dinah's voice never seems to be important – or even missed – especially so long as male or Hebrew heroism remains central and non-Hebrew or female action and actants inhabit the margins. Sternberg, without any hesitation, aligns Shechem and his people with wretchedness, while sustaining unquestioningly the alliance of Jacob's sons with divine retribution and righteousness. As Sternberg notes, '[t]he facts speak for themselves... The entire city falls together with the culprit, against the natural justice that God himself respects' (447). For a reading that is unwaveringly committed to recovering the 'intent' of this story and closing the gap on ambiguity, the sudden appearance of 'natural justice' is startling while also illuminating, as this appeal provides a narrative ontological grounding of the reading that best aligns with and supports Sternberg's own personal ideological (cl)aims. That both divine approval and natural justice are here so easily elided opens the gaps of ambiguity in Sternberg's own analytic in the very moment of his attempt to close down the same in the narrative.

For Sternberg, then, the narrative is complete. 'The Rape of Dinah,' he writes, 'shows every one of its characters from within, some more than once, and never without molding the reader's response to the subjects of consciousness' (Sternberg 1985: 478). This reading of Genesis 34 as a complete, unitary narrative, even in its apparent ambiguity, offers a disturbing disregard for the narrative Others. Problematic in this method is the naturalization and essentialization of Dinah's silence in the name of objective literary study. To read Genesis 34 without taking note (even in passing) of the erasure of Dinah and the women and children of Shechem is to take a position of discursive authority over the women in the text by simply not talking about them at all. Given that there are numerous interpretive moves that could be made in alternative directions, Sternberg's choice to legitimize the narrative violence in some respects mimetically reinscribes this text of terror in Sternberg's own work. This is the disjunctive edge of Sternberg's reading, insofar as the textual ambiguity of the story is erased in his analysis. Thus, the gaps in the text that frequently seem to decenter a normative and unitary interpretation are, in Sternberg's hands, turned into signifiers of the threads of meaning he is teasing out. The gaps thus provide the ground of meaning for Sternberg, generating the impetus for the stabilizing of his narrative, the normativizing of his reading, and the naturalizing of his sense of justice.

But what is created in this process? Dinah has become little more than a foil for male action and reaction in both Genesis 34 and its modern interpretation. Moreover, the traditional reading (with which Sternberg's interpretation coheres) of the role of the brothers in Genesis 34 has served to promote and legitimate insider/outsider discourse, to reinforce ethnic purity, and to create a structure for a brutally violent form of vengeance (justice?) when given provocation. While some scholars have sought to extricate from the ambiguities of the narrative more complex and indefinite notions of identity formation (Camp 2000: 289–322), the general tendency has been to proffer fairly simplistic lines of readerly identities sustained by Genesis 34. Furthermore, and in a similar vein, Dinah is always spoken for, being manipulated to serve the ends of the interpreter in not that dissimilar a manner as she functions as an object for her brothers in the narrative. Of course, since the narrative allows no space for Dinah as a 'subject of consciousness', it is impossible that she will ever be able to speak, act, or even exist outside of the male subjects

in the story (and in interpretation). Still, the tendency by many modern scholars to further her absence (and erasure) in the text by reading over Dinah in ‘foolproof’ ways not only suggests a certain arrogance in interpretation, but also serves to promote a form of violence in and through the seeming exuberant willingness to close off the ambiguities of the text in which Dinah might well be productive of meaning – even *historical* and *narrative* implication (cf. Camp 2000: 279–322).¹⁰ The question that looms large, then, is whether or not a feminist approach can prevent Dinah from becoming this inevitable vanishing point in the story. Susanne Scholz’s analysis of Genesis 34 as ‘Dinah’s story’ (Scholz 2000: 127) offers precisely such an attempt at recovery (cf. Scholz 1999).

RELOCATING THE SUBJECT

Scholz’s reading stands in stark contrast to the one offered by Sternberg. Her point of departure is a subjective, self-reflexive feminism; therein she ‘wants to challenge biblical scholars to be ethically accountable for the content and consequences of their interpretations of Genesis 34’ (Scholz 2000: 5–6). For Scholz, this ethical accountability is enacted when one reads Dinah as a subject in the narrative, seeking to recover her conscious experience as a rape victim, as opposed to minimizing the sexual assault as someone like Sternberg does. Scholz employs modern feminist research on rape to inform her discussion. In dramatic juxtaposition to Sternberg’s suggestion that Genesis 34 is not about Dinah as much as it is about the male conflict over her, Scholz reads the text as a ‘rape story’ in which ‘the rape and Dinah are rhetorically central’ (176). To that end, Scholz offers narratological evidence that Dinah is more important, textually-speaking, than Sternberg would have us think. Her study highlights the tradition-historical tendency to dismiss Dinah as a significant actant in the story, and she attributes this dismissal to the general discomfort with and silencing of rape victims that support a modern ‘rape culture’.

Of course, whether Dinah is read as central or marginal, Dinah never actually speaks in the narrative, and her consciousness is in no way present in the text, not even for a moment. Scholz, in reading Dinah as a subject, must therefore make leaps in and with the text, assuming (rather than revealing) Dinah’s voice and experience. In the second paragraph of her close reading of Genesis 34, Scholz explains that in vs. 2 ‘a man sees Dinah and disregards her integrity. The next verse changes Dinah’s visit into a nightmare’ (135). Here, both the nightmarish condition of her visit and her ‘integrity’ are assumed. Scholz later writes of Dinah’s position on the events in the following way: ‘[i]t is clear that she does not like to be raped’ (168). Given no voice in the text, it could hardly be ‘clear’ that Dinah has a position on anything. Probability and educated guesses aside, Scholz is speaking here, not Dinah. Mieke Bal’s observations on attempts to recover the voice of the repressed female of such texts are worth reiterating in this context:

... Beth [Bal’s name for the concubine of Judges 19] remains an object throughout, and the acts of which she is the object all work to deny her as a subject of experience... [T]o say that ‘the horror... is known through the eyes of these violated women’ is, I am inclined to say, a violation of their stories, a subjectification of the objectification, and hence, indirectly, a violence... (Bal 1993: 196).

Bal's point is that a double violation has taken place in these acts of interpretation: the woman is first objectified in the text and then the attempt by the modern interpreter to recover her subjectivity ends up reinscribing the objectification on another – perhaps even higher – level of authority.

In a similar way, males like Shechem are also given an explicit voice they do not possess in the narrative. For example, Scholz, in her dependence on modern views of rape, states:

[Gen 34:1-3] shows... that the rapist attempts immediately to hide his deed. Shechem tries to 'soothe' Dinah. Feminist scholarship discloses that rapists often try to appear 'normal' after the rape, especially in situations of acquaintance rape. Differentiating between 'hostility rape' and 'sexual gratification rape', feminist scholars explain that the latter is the more ambiguous and confused one (Scholz 2000: 141–142).

Scholz goes on to identify Shechem as a 'sexual gratification' type of rapist. Scholz accomplishes this reading by actually beginning in the same place as Sternberg, by isolating Genesis 34 from the rest of the Jacob-cycle. Although Scholz acknowledges that she is not opposed to interpreting the story within its literary context, she argues that 'a restricted reading allows a sustained study of the textual details and the subject of rape' (130). If earlier historical-critical scholarship was convinced that the narrative had to be isolated into its different strands in order to resolve the ambiguities and tensions,¹¹ more recent literary-critical approaches represented by Scholz and Sternberg seek to eradicate the same through a dislocation of the narrative from its surrounding context (including if not especially a separation of the narrative from the curse on Levi and Simeon in Gen 49). This isolation aids Scholz in her attempt to construct both Dinah and Shechem through the prism of rape. Thus, the closure of meaning and the delimitation of the interpretive boundaries begin with the demarcation and displacement of the text, thereby allowing one to locate centrally the theme/topic of the narrative. Here both Scholz and Sternberg stand in methodological agreement and, possibly in partial consequence of the isolation of the text from the broader Jacob-cycle, the gaps in the narrative are more readily filled in with the ideology of the interpreter. Of course, ideology already informs the attempt to isolate the passage so as to make it easier to close down its meaning without presumed outside interference. Further, since any assessment of the larger context is also ideologically informed, even using that broader context would not solve this problem raised in Scholz's and Sternberg's interpretation. It is most revealing, however, that they both seem to think it will, which suggests a lack of recognition about the operative role of ideology in *both* their particular reading *and* the method used to derive it.

With the story thus isolated, Scholz then uses another one of Sternberg's tactics, albeit more subtly. Scholz employs language in her study that vilifies Shechem and praises the brothers, both implicitly and explicitly. This language is often supported not by the text but instead by modern scholarship on rape and rape culture. Scholz writes that 'this story illustrates that rape cannot be tolerated, even by a male hero like Shechem' (132). Further on, she describes Shechem's interest in Dinah after the rape as 'perverse lust' (141), even though the text offers no qualifying support for that statement. Scholz also refers to Shechem as 'Dinah's kidnapper' (156), aligning him with a crime with which the narrative, even in its most condemnatory moments, never actually associates Shechem. Moreover, she refers to him as 'the perpetrator' (150), offering him no identity

or motive outside of the rape-act. Later, Scholz will stand firm in her conclusion that Shechem is only interested in marrying Dinah because ‘the desire to continue the dynamics of rape dominates his activity’ (157). The discursive contours of her argument are fairly evident, as throughout Scholz centers rape in the same measure that Sternberg, in some respects, makes it absent. And for both of these scholars textual closure is the first step in narrowing (if not eliminating) the interpretive gaps in the narrative.

It is no surprise, then, that, despite a rather different position on the place of rape in the narrative, Scholz, like Sternberg, understands Dinah’s brothers/the sons of Jacob to be heroes. Though remaining present to the fact that the brothers’ murdering and subsequent pillaging, plundering, and capture of an entire town’s women and children is indicative of a heinous double standard, Scholz nevertheless describes their actions as generally commendable – even radically feminist! Scholz insists that the brothers exhibit an awareness of issues in rape culture that we are only now beginning to understand in the twenty-first century. ‘The brothers recognize rape not only as a problem between two individuals’, Scholz writes, ‘but as a crime with societal dimension. They demonstrate with their action that the entire town, as a societal entity, participates in rape and rape-prone behavior’ (160; cf. 163–165). For Scholz, this ‘recognition’ represents a ‘radical idea’ (165). In Scholz’s interpretation, then, the slaughter of the Shechemite men does not come across as a violent genocide, a position that serves to generate a strong sense of ideological justification – not explanation – of the narrative and its message. Here, albeit for different reasons than with Sternberg’s reading, the violence of the text is justified, even naturalized (once again), through a careful filling in of the gaps in the text. In this way, taking control of the text always already reproduces an endless array of universal human subjects and subjectivities, which, ultimately, stand in for the interpreter her/himself. Through a uniform attempt to close down the text – to eradicate its ambiguities – the varied and diverse results of ‘analysis’ leave us with a wide range of new textual colonies. In this process, we argue, the colonial and violent nature of the narrative in Genesis 34 is reproduced on a meta-level by the interpreter in each act of reading. And this violence is continually played out on the ‘bodies’ of Dinah and the rest of the characters, as they figure in and prefigure modern meaning(s).

‘AND DINAH WENT OUT’: POST-COLONIAL ENGAGEMENTS OF THE PLEASURE (OF THE) TEXT

In the rabbinic treatment of the story of Dinah in *Genesis Rabbah* (80.1–12), one of the recurring foci for their discussion is the phrase ‘And Dinah went out’. At numerous points, this line forms the central emphasis in their argumentation: Dinah brought the whole matter on herself by parading in public when she should have stayed within the *domus* and private space of her family – it was her unsavory (even whoring) behavior that brought the events that followed on the household of Jacob: ‘And what caused it all? ‘And Dinah went out...’ (80:12; cf. the commentary by Neusner 1985: 146–156). Indeed, for the rabbis the whole incident is much ado about nothing. In a sense, then, what they had to say about Dinah’s going out directs us to the core of this discussion: it is *not* a tradition of violent patriarchy that is read and written into Genesis 34, but instead a colonial ambivalence. While the story may seduce us to follow, to ‘go out’ like Dinah in our readings of this text, there is also an element that seeks to restrain us, to

place us in an interpretive practice that mimics, reflects, and refracts the texts through our own modern views, our own personal ideologies, our own colonial predilections and praxes.

It is precisely at this juncture, in our minds, that a post-colonial reading strategy supplements the literary poetics that Barthes has supplied. Barthes was primarily interested in the production of desire (and the celebration thereof) of the open-ended narrative, and, in this instance, was not inclined to bring in observations related to the régimes of control and power that are also being played out in the same moment. In other words, Barthes' literary erotic approach reveals a particular response on the part of the interpreter to close down meaning, while a post-colonial interpretative strategy analyzes the same from a different analytic standpoint. As a result, we see an emergent complexity in the same moment of openness. Moreover, we also understand that looming gaps actually help accommodate multiple and competing strong readings of the same narrative, and thus the undecidable text creates space for the kinds of readings we have been encountering. Further, these textual aesthetics easily give way to the desire to regulate meaning through colonizing reading strategies. Within Barthes' literary erotic approach there is thus both space and motivation for colonizing interpretations. Therefore, the text of pleasure and colonizing reading strategies, while not to be equated, are nonetheless interrelated. Having explored the literary erotics of the text, particularly as it serves to evoke colonizing interpretations, we now look more closely at the *colonizing* side of the equation.

One can begin an examination of the colonial ambivalence mentioned above by posing the Spivakian question: 'Can Dinah speak?' (Spivak 1995b: 292). To understand that query, and ultimately Spivak's claim that the subaltern cannot speak, one must first appreciate that for Spivak, as for Derrida and Foucault, speech is always already subject to dialogical conditions: while a woman may talk, she is only speaking if there is a listener to complete the exchange (289). Words uttered do not constitute a speech act, since, as Spivak notes, in the very moment of 'uttering' 'one [is] constructed by a certain kind of psychobiography, so that the utterance itself... would have to be interpreted in the way in which we historically interpret anything' (291). And here the colonizing interpretative strategy looms large in the case of Genesis 34, as the process of superimposing a regulative psychobiography onto a silenced woman's utterances (or lack thereof) has ideologically controlling effects on both the woman and the utterance – in short, it refracts the dominant socio-cultural ideologies of the interpreter but in a way that seems not to (the same principle applies, albeit somewhat differently, to Shechem's spoken words of affection). This observation by Spivak concerns, maybe especially so, passages in which women are expressly silent/silenced. In reading Genesis 34, then, to accept or to rely on the unspoken complicity of the Shechemite women is to construct on their behalf a collective psychobiography in which they are simply stolen away like 'their flocks and herds' (Gen 34:29). Further, to accept Dinah's silence as unproblematic or natural involves a similar grafting of a constructed (indeed, imagined) psychobiography that suits the needs of the interpreter. To imply that Dinah, or the displaced women of Shechem, should or should not, could or could not, 'speak' is to build these women not as the text would have them be (an undecidable option), but instead as informed entirely by the agenda of the modern biblical critic. Admittedly, Sternberg has taken this impulse one step further, insofar as the text itself has displaced Dinah and become the voice that speaks from out of its own psychobiography: literary poetics does not (because it cannot) escape the Spivakian dilemma! In this respect, Sternberg has failed to appreciate the effect of colonial ambivalence on the text itself. Indeed, the gaps in the text – and its ambiguities – have in some sense

been produced in/by the act of the text to eradicate its own site and mode of production. It is the text's 'attempt' to hide – to create closure – that in effect has produced the textual ambiguities that we encounter. As Terry Eagleton aptly notes, '[t]extual dissonances... are the effect of the work's production of ideology. The text puts the ideology into contradiction, discloses the limits and absences which mark its relation to history, and in doing so puts itself into question, producing a lack and disorder within itself' (Eagleton 2006: 95). In short, the biblical text, by erasing its basis as political myth and thereby concealing from view the historical variables that gave rise to it, potentially generates the kinds of ambiguities we now encounter. In this way, Spivak's contention is also related to the text itself, not just to the characters contained and constrained within that text. Therefore, the very elements that produce the seductive pull of the text of pleasure also have this other colonial side to them – it is a double-edged sword that we encounter.

To read Genesis 34 in a colonial context, then, 'naturally' brings the question of method and ethics to the forefront of discussion. As modern readers, we are in a different world from the ancient text. The knowledge that governs modern moral and ethical sensibilities in many instances is foreign to the story-world of the Hebrew Bible, insofar as we do not always share the same governing myths (the authors of this article situate themselves squarely in this context). One wonders, therefore, if we do not commit a colonizing offence by bringing our own modernity with us to our interpretation of an ancient text like Genesis 34, irrespective of whether our ethics are embodied in views on rape or in approaches to literary poetics. Or, as in many post-colonial claims, are we ethically obligated to bring our modernity with us when we 'go out' into a text, in hopes that we might have de-colonizing effects on that story world? If we decolonize or re-mythologize an ancient text using our own modern view, can we make any claim to authenticity or have we silenced (erased) too many voices, too much history? As Mark G. Brett notes, in post-colonial readings 'the myth of authenticity is a kind of neo-foundationalism, riven with moral ambiguity since it proclaims a concern for the subaltern voice while at the same time effectively silencing it' (Brett 1996: 220). Further, as evidenced by the similarities between the work of Sternberg and Scholz, the effort to decolonize Genesis 34 requires an adoption of the colonizing language of the text – a sustained yet inadvertent privileging of Hebrew action, actants, and experience. Thus, even as we open up a space for unheard voices, the pretense of an *authentic* subaltern voice in the narrative appears as a myth and illusion. Brett goes on to suggest that '[t]he discourse of authenticity suspects even the resisting voice insofar as that voice adopts the language of the colonizer; according to this nostalgic version of authenticity, if the subaltern speaks a creole, the subaltern does not speak' (220). In modern feminist interpretation, if Dinah's voice ever could function to reverse patriarchal patterns, when taken in a colonial context, Dinah will always be speaking a creole – a hybridic mimesis of both ancient and modern experience – that is, an illusion. Her voice is always already another's. She does not speak – she cannot speak. For that matter, Sternberg's literary-poetics similarly constructs a hybridic text, which also cannot possess an authentic voice. The text is given an illusory voice, which likewise does not speak – it cannot speak.

Indeed, using the Spivakian model, we note that, coming back to the women in the narrative, these characters are what Spivak (informed directly by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*) identifies as a 'subject-effect'. We are inclined to read the retrieval of subaltern consciousness as the charting of what in poststructuralist language would be called the 'subaltern subject-effect'. As Spivak (1995a: 213) notes:

A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject is in fact part of an immense discontinuous network ('text' in the general sense) of strands that may be designated as politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. (Each of these strands, if they are isolated, can also be seen to be woven of many other strands.) Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by the heterogeneous determinations that are themselves dependent upon a myriad of circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. Yet the continuist and homogenist deliberative consciousness symptomatically requires a continuous and homogeneous cause for this effect and thus posits a sovereign and determining subject.

Once the illusion of this operating subject is transformed into a confirmed narratological presence, the subject-effect can be offered a voice that, instead of allowing subalterns to speak their consciousness (that they do not have), actually allows their interpreter to control them as a ventriloquist would a puppet.

This observation could represent the chilling heart of the Dinah story in Genesis: given the textually indeterminate nature of this narrative, the cultural world and perspective of the interpreter often ends up delimiting the meaning, closing in the gaps, conjuring up a Dinah (or a text) who manifests the moral and cultural ideologies of the reader. In this respect, watching both Sternberg and Scholz at work is not that dissimilar an experience from observing the story of Dinah within the framework of the rabbinic midrashic imagination. Indeed, if the text of Genesis 34 encourages anything, it is precisely this: the ambiguity of the action and the vanishing voice of characters like Dinah invite – even demand in some contexts – that interpreters overwrite the script of this text, creating a uniformity and normativity that the text itself initially resists. Modern historical-critical scholarship, whether it seeks sources, literary and rhetorical structures, or the recovery of the repressed voice of the Other overrun by patriarchal ideology, frequently succumbs to a fundamental assertion of so many forms of analysis: the text's meaning is determinate and its ethic manifest. But precisely herein is a dilemma for modern scholars, as both Sternberg and Scholz have an operative poetic-ethical framework that strains against the structure of textual determinacy. Sternberg's emphasis is on the impulse of the narrative, allowing *that* voice to dominate and speak – to delineate the 'clear' internal logic of narration. Scholz seeks the repressed Other, hoping to free *it* to speak. But what becomes of these ethical mandates – diverse as they may be – if we determine that the gaps in a text like Genesis 34 loom too large to be closed, that the voiceless are submerged behind the text never to resurface (and, indeed, they were never there to begin with), that the clear and present action is more ambiguous and complex than we had imagined, thereby challenging our longing for closed narratives and our desire for patent ethics? The pleasure of the text's indeterminacy so easily leads us into textual violation, again and again – Dinah only ever 'stays in'.

We note that this is precisely what Scholz and Sternberg are doing with Dinah and the text (respectively), albeit in differing ways. Further, even the male characters, in Sternberg's literary-rhetorical reading, also participate in this broader discursive context. In this way, then, the diverse cast of characters in the narrative become a conduit for modern ideology and control – for the promotion and regulation of particular sets of beliefs and practices. For both Sternberg and Scholz, this move involves judgments about justice, including especially particular valuations of

heroic action taken in revenge. There is much more to say about the politics of both of their approaches and perhaps also the role of colonial imitation that a colonized text like Genesis 34 initiates/inspires in a reader. For the moment, however, we note that a *poetics of colonization* is more manifestly operative in modern – even liberationist – readings than we may be comfortable with. Indeed, herein we begin to explore the intersection of the complexity of interpretation with the text's own intricate complexions. In this respect, the story in Genesis 34 could well represent a microcosm for the broader discursive interplay evident throughout the book of Genesis. The attempt to tease out a consistent narrative perspective – including a reliable thread of a biblical theological-ethical framework – represents, in our view, an effort to counteract the more open textuality of the story in Genesis 34 and to mask modern unease with that. We are quite uncomfortable with the possibility that we may never know how this story was intended (and even here we are limited by modern concepts of 'intentionality'), let alone how it was read (in diverse places and times). Yet, in the framework of colonial ambivalence, meaning itself is already fractured, so 'intention' is something to be contested at the outset, as the fracturing of meaning is a result of the splintered nature of broader social-historical experiences by ancient writers/communities/readers. A plea to 'reading ethics' at this juncture represents just another form of the same kind of control evidenced above, but one now grounded in a higher plane of authority.

This line of reasoning, finally, brings us back to Barthes' notion regarding the text of pleasure, which opened this discussion. In his assessment, Barthes notes that there are two different texts in view: the text of pleasure and the text of bliss. The former is 'the text that contents, fills, grants euphoria; the text that comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading'. The text of bliss, by contrast, is that text that 'imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts (perhaps to the point of a certain boredom), unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, the consistency of his tastes, values, memories, brings to a crisis his relation to language' (Barthes 1975: 14). Genesis 34, in some respects, has this dual edge to it – being both a text of pleasure and a potential text of bliss. Herein we are confronted with the juxtaposition of pleasure and bliss in Barthes' own framework: '... pleasure and bliss are parallel forces... they cannot meet... and... between them there is more than a struggle; an *incommunication*... [and as a result] I must certainly believe that history, our history, is not peaceable and perhaps not even intelligent, that the text of bliss always rises as a scandal (an irregularity), that it is always the trace of a cut' (20). In this argument, we begin to see the powerful edge – or cutting – of Barthes' approach to literary texts. In seeking to close down the mechanisms of ambiguity we not only regulate the text of pleasure, but, even more, we prevent any possibility that bliss might emerge in the midst of reading a text that we find discomforting, challenging, unsettling, and disruptive. Here we find contested our own notions of moral regularity, of the unity of the Western subject, and of our own cultural hegemony (which has always been based, at least in part, on the premise of ethical unity and coherence). And so we return to our initial question: why do we find it so necessary to close down the meaning of the Dinah story? Is it, as Barthes argues, because such a text 'is a drift, something both revolutionary and asocial, and it cannot be taken over by any collectivity, any mentality, any idiolect... the pleasure of the text is scandalous: not because it is immoral but because it is *atopic*' (23). But why do we have this 'allergic' reaction? More importantly, what about being 'out of place' (like Dinah) makes us uncomfortable? And why do we feel it so important to put her and this text back in

place – to position her, like the rabbis did, back in the *domus*, in the spaces and places of safety – moral, ideological, cultural, social, political?

And precisely here Barthes' observations hit home: '*Text* means *Tissue*: but whereas hitherto we have always taken this tissue as a product, a ready-made veil, behind which lies, more or less hidden, meaning (truth), we are now emphasizing, in the tissue, the generative idea that the text is made, is worked out in a perpetual interweaving; lost in this tissue – this texture – the subject unmakes himself' (64). In this, then, also lies the dual colonial edge, as the ancient colonized (and colonizing) text meets our own forms of colonialism. At the heart of the matter is not a question of interpretative strategy but instead of translation, taking translation here in a Derridean sense. That is, we understand a post-modern post-colonial view of translation to be a grafting of oneself onto and into a text, creating a bricolage of self and text. With regards to the grafting of ideologies onto the ambiguous text, Derrida asks: 'Wouldn't 'literary criticism' as such be part of what we have called the *ontological* interpretation of mimesis or of metaphysical mimetologism' (Derrida 1981: 245)? In a sense does not the text, after interpretation, become entirely its mimicked self, become its interpretation – become the applied ideology? We are left, finally, with the sense that we have returned to an origin – that the text, translated, has been added to and is complete again, whole without holes. '[T]his accumulation', Derrida writes, 'will be the only means, not of presenting, but of feigning to present the text that, more than any other, writes and reads *itself*, presents its own reading, presents its own self-presentation, and constantly deducts this incessant operation' (294). As noted with Spivak and Eagleton above, we see here again the colonial operations of the text, and the radically delicate character of the pleasure text, which seduces us, calling to be translated into our own language, where truth invites its own mimicry.

The questions we must ask of and answer for ourselves, then, relate to our own interpretive participation in that operation that necessarily grafts, cuts, and presents ourselves in our texts. And here we are left with the 'truth' of Barthes' paradigm of the pleasure text: 'There are those who want a text (an art, a painting) without a shadow, without the 'dominant ideology'; but this is to want a text without fecundity, without productivity, a sterile text... The text needs its shadow: this shadow is *a bit* of ideology, *a bit* of representation, *a bit* of subject: ghosts, pockets, traces, necessary clouds: subversion must produce its own chiaroscuro' (32). Thus, in some respects, the colonialism itself is a critical part of the text's own afterlife and readerly influence. The complex interlocking of colonial subjects – ancient and modern – as they are woven together (and also separated out) through and in the act of reading/interpretation, represents the essence of what makes Genesis 34 a text of pleasure in the first place. We may therefore have no choice but to 'go out' like (and with) Dinah, come what may – being 'out of place', rejecting, as Richard Walsh suggests, 'the courage to sustain our convictions', seeking, rather, "to become traitors" to our mythic enclosures and to become "wanderers of the earth"' (Walsh 2001: 146). We recognize that engaging a narrative such as Genesis 34 as a text of pleasure is not necessarily the most comfortable option, and we also understand the modern problematic of classifying this violent text as offering a site for the production of pleasure. Still, one form of resistance to the colonial ambivalence evident in Genesis 34 may be, finally, to allow the text of pleasure to stand as an open-ended entity, giving into its seductive pull rather than closing down its meaning. Moreover, in our estimation, the benefit of allowing the text of pleasure to operate on its own terms is that it may also produce the cutting of which Barthes speaks, and, therein, potentially become – if even for a moment – a text of bliss. Herein, a merging of Barthes' poetics of the erotic with

postcolonial interpretation may be fruitful for challenging and contesting colonial reading strategies more systemically, opening up, as well, an aesthetic space in which the postcolonial analytic can be pushed beyond its current boundaries.

ENDNOTES

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- ² Mark G. Brett (2000), for instance, highlights the condemnation of Simeon and Levi in Genesis 49, arguing that the ethnocentric action of Genesis 34 is viewed negatively in light of the larger narrative complex (102–107; cf. the critique by Kelso 2006). For a radically different perspective, see the treatment by Meir Sternberg discussed below. Although R. Christopher Heard (2001) does not extend his discussion of Genesis 12–36 to the Dinah story in any detail, his argument that the broader narrative section of Genesis 12–36 has a peculiar ambiguity in terms of resolving narrative tension (which in his mind supports a Persian sponsored ethnic exclusivity in Yehud) could also play out with respect to the ambiguities present in Genesis 34 (cf. van Wolde 2003: 435–449). The matter becomes no less complicated if one tries to read the narrative in terms of its alleged sources (P and J), as John van Seters (2001: 239–247) recently attempts; cf. Nicolas Wyatt (1990: 433–458), who weaves an even more complex history of the story, finding in it an ur-mythology of ancient divinities that is historicized over time.
- ³ Barthes identifies this desire to recover meaning as an Oedipal pleasure: '(to denude, to know, to learn the origin and the end), if it is true that every narrative (every unveiling of the truth) is a staging of the (absent, hidden, or hypostatized) father – which would explain the solidarity of narrative forms, or family structures, and of prohibitions of nudity, all collected in our culture in the myth of Noah's sons covering his nakedness' (Barthes 1975: 10). Barthes relates the logocentric desire of the modern exegete to find truth with the standard centralization of the father figure in the narrative, a relationship that fits particularly well into a discussion of Genesis 34, with its heavy accent on *fathers* and *brothers*.
- ⁴ There is no precise word in Hebrew for 'rape'. Indeed, one of the thorny problems in the interpretation of Genesis 34 has been the attempt to figure out what happened to Dinah in v. 2, especially in light of the expressed feelings of 'love' offered by Shechem in v. 3 (cf. n. 8 below). For a thorough treatment of rape language (or lack thereof) in Hebrew and in the Hebrew Bible, see Gravett 2004: 279–299; Bechtel 1994: 19–36. Scholars have gone back and forth over this issue, and there is no need to repeat the various arguments in this context. For the most recent discussion, see Hilary Lipka (2006: 184–199),

who argues that rape is not the issue in Genesis 34, but rather the point of contention is the taking of Dinah's virginity out of wedlock. The continued focus on this particular aspect of the Genesis 34 narrative is based in large part on our modern, individualistic approaches to human relationships (see the helpful comments by Camp 2000: 285–291; cf. Fewell and Gunn 1993: 193–211). There have been many different kinds of resolutions to this problem (which is largely one of modern-making) and some are quite elaborate and creative; see, for example, the following suggestion by Joseph Fleishman (2004: 27–28): 'Shechem saw Dinah at a festival like the wine harvest festival where the daughters of the land were probably dancing and where there were men for various reasons. At this event, which was naturally filled with sexual tension, Shechem saw Dinah and desired her...He abducted her, apparently with the help of his friends, and had sexual relations with her at some place...It is very likely that Shechem decided to abduct Dinah for purposes of marriage because he was aware of Jacob's separatism, and expected Jacob not to consent to such a marriage'. As we argue in this study, however, many modern scholars are largely focusing on the wrong questions in terms of reading this ancient text (most of what we *want* to know is beyond our ability to reconstruct from the text).

5 Translations from Genesis are taken from the NRSV

6 Jon L. Berquist (2002: 46–49) explains the outcome by correlating body and society as socially represented through the 'rape' of Dinah and then the circumcision of the men of Shechem – there is a 'bodily logic' in both the proposal of marriage and then the slaughter of the Shechemites (but the two logics stand in direct contrast). Yet the massive scale of the reprisal is a feature that the text itself seems rather to leave standing without full explanation.

7 In conjunction with the story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, we also note that, in this similar story to Genesis 34, Absalom only kills Amnon for the rape of his sister. Initially, David fears that 'all the king's sons' have been slain by Absalom, but that turns out not to be the case as the narrative progresses (13:26–36). While a massive retaliation is not out of the range of cultural expectation (as we see from the aftermath of the rape of the concubine in Judges 19), it also appears that one could anticipate that only the violator would be punished.

8 The critical question revolves around the precision of this terminology with respect to sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible (cf. n. 4 above). The terms *laqach* and *shachav* are rather vague over all, and *'anah* also possesses varied meaning (Lipka notes, for instance, that it can denote 'sexual coercion' or it can also refer to an act of 'consensual sex' that evokes cultural honor/shame issues; see her detailed linguistic discussion in Lipka 2006: 184–199). It is also a matter of whether precision in one context, say 2 Samuel 13, can readily translate into other portions of the biblical text, in part because context often substantially determines how easily we can (or cannot) pin down meaning (i.e., clarity in one context does not imply that the language itself necessarily possesses that essential linguistic property of meaning).

9 Von Rad, following Hermann Gunkel's reading (Gunkel 1997: 357–362), mitigates against the heavy retaliatory aspects of the text by separating the two culminating elements (murder and plunder) into the endings of two different narratives/sources of this event. In his mind, this helps tone down the harsher aspects of the text (i.e., they were not originally joined together and, therefore, the 'tradition' was not as punitive as the now final story; cf. Westermann 1985: 535–537). Should a reader not be convinced, he goes on to inform us that '...the ancient reader, who felt more than we do the burning shame done to the brothers in the rape of Dinah, will not have called them wrong' (von Rad 1972: 334). Von Rad illustrates well our modern discomfort with this story, and his focus on the 'shame of the brothers' operates within the kind of Prussian masculinist framework out of which early biblical scholars were operating (although Harold C. Washington [1997: 332–342] argues that von Rad represents something of a post-WWII reaction to and departure from the more aggressive national-

- ism/militarism evidenced by earlier scholars). More recent readings of the Dinah story tend to downplay any 'heroic' quality on the part of the actants in the story (cf. Matthews 2005: 578–579).
- 10 Helpful at this juncture are the recent works by Julie Kelso (2003, 2006) on Genesis 34, particularly her criticisms of Mark Brett's approach in terms of his securing a postcolonial hybridic reading of the text at the expense of writing over the suppressed voices of the women. For Kelso, the text's violence is most readily apparent in 'the subordination of (re)productive nature to its socially inscribed function for men' (2006: 54; her emphasis).
- 11 See most recently Alexander Rofé's detailing of the original solution to the narrative ambiguity in Genesis 34, which he attributes to an 1880 discussion by Abraham Kuenen (Rofé 2005: 371). Rofé argues that an original clan saga was turned into a story about ethnic purity/purification in the Second Temple period, largely aimed against the Samaritans who would be denoted by the reference to Shechem (372–373). Noteworthy, however, is that once this tradition-historical observation is made, there are still unresolved issues that emerge, as Rofé himself suggests: 'Questions remain unsolved and new ones arise' (374).

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