THE TRANSGRESSION OF MAACAH IN 2 CHRONICLES 15:16

A SIMPLE CASE OF IDOLATRY OR THE THREATENING *POESIS* OF MATERNAL 'SPEECH'?

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In this essay, I shall argue that in Chronicles Maacah is not simply deposed because she is an idolater. Rather, in an important sense Maacah's act of producing an idol for the goddess Asherah threatens patri-lineal, patriarchal social order itself, as it is constructed and understood in Chronicles. Specifically, her act undermines the dominant (unconscious) phantasy at work in Chronicles: that of masculine, monosexual (re)production. To sustain itself, this phantasy requires the 'silence' or non-representation of the maternal body. In other words, it is not simply Maacah's idolatry that sees her punished; it is her daring production of the feminine divine and the associated female genealogy it evokes (the goddess/mother, worship-per/daughter) – the repressed of patriarchal discourses according to Luce Irigaray – that such a creative act effects. I wish to show that Maacah's productive, creative act may be considered as visual and tactile maternal 'speech'. When read alongside the naming speech of Jabez' mother in 1 Chr. 4:9, and the mur-derous speech of Athaliah in 2 Chr 22:10, Maacah's 'speech' is more than just a transgression of the law against the image. Maacah's act may be read as a threat to the continuity of partilineal succession and patriarchal social order. Attempting to represent the maternal body as divine arrests, even perhaps 'clots,' the 'fluidity' of this masculine order of representation because it contradicts what constitutes the 'reality' of this masculine discourse: a world of (self-producing) men.

> Man is divided between two transcendencies: his mother's and his God's – whatever kind of God that may be. These two transcendencies are doubtless not unrelated but this is something which he has forgotten. His mother is transcendent to him because she is of a different genre and she gives him birth. He is born of an other who is always Other-inappropriable. For centuries, at least in the so-called Western tradition, that transcendency has seldom been recognised as such (Irigaray 1992: 1).

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted in biblical studies that Maacah, the mother of King Asa, has her position of *gebirah* (mighty woman) stripped from her because she is an idolater (1 Kings 15:13; 2 Chronicles 15:16).[1] She produces an image for (and of?) Asherah, the Semitic goddess figure. The production of idols or images is forbidden in ancient Hebrew law (Exodus 20:4, 23; 34:17; Leviticus 19:4; 26:1; Deuteronomy 4: 15-19; 5:8; 27:15). It is thus difficult to know whether Maacah is punished because she makes an image of something in general, or because she makes an image of a deity, or because she makes an image of the deity as a *goddess*, all of which under Yahwism would constitute a transgression of the law. However, it is interesting to note that when we compare Asa's response in 1 Kings 15:13 with his response in 2 Chronicles 15:16, a causative verb of destruction has been added:

> And Asa cut down her horrid thing and he burned [it] in the Wadi Kidron (1 Kings 15:13).

> And Asa cut down her horrid thing and he pulverised [it] in to dust (*wayyadeq*) and he burned it in the Wadi Kidron (2 Chr. 15:16).

In Chronicles, unlike Kings, Asa does not simply cut down 'her idol' and then burn it in the Wadi Kidron. He cuts it down, *pounds it in to dust*, and then, somewhat redundantly, burns it in the Wadi Kidron. My question is this: why in Chronicles does Maacah's act effect a greater rage from her son, expressed through the inclusion of a causative verb of utter destruction?[2] In this essay, I shall argue that Maacah is not simply deposed because she is an idolater. Rather, in an important sense Maacah's act of producing an idol for the goddess Asherah threatens patrilineal, patriarchal social order itself, as it is constructed and understood in Chronicles. Specifically, her act undermines the dominant (unconscious) phantasy at work in Chronicles: that of masculine, monosexual (re)production. To sustain itself, this phantasy requires the 'silence' or non-representation of the maternal body.[3] In other words, it is not simply Maacah's idolatry that sees her punished; it is her daring production of the feminine divine and the associated female genealogy it evokes (the goddess/mother, worshipper/daughter) – *the repressed of patriarchal discourses* according to Luce Irigaray – that such a creative act effects.

As I shall argue, the silencing of the maternal body is readable symptomatically through the syntactic and grammatical breakdowns and contradictions that occur around the *yalad* verbs (the verbs 'to bear') rather consistently in the genealogical chapters, especially when a female name appears. In light of the phantasy of monosexual production that these problematic verses reveal, I wish to show that Maacah's productive, creative act may be considered as visual and tactile maternal 'speech'. When read alongside the naming speech of Jabez' mother in 1 Chr. 4:9, and the murderous speech of Athaliah in 2 Chr 22:10, Maacah's 'speech' is more than just a transgression of the law against the image. Maacah's act may be read as a threat to the continuity of partilineal succession and patriarchal social order. Attempting to represent the maternal body as divine arrests, even perhaps 'clots,' the 'fluidity' of this masculine order of representation because it contradicts what constitutes the 'reality' of this masculine discourse: a world of (self-producing) men.

THE PHANTASY OF MASCULINE MONOSEXUAL PRODUCTION: WHO BEGETS WHOM IN 1 CHRONICLES 1-9?

The Book (or Books) of Chronicles (*Divrei Hayyamim*; lit. 'The Word-Things of the Days') is a re-telling of Israel's past, with a major emphasis on the history of the Judahite monarchy. Broadly speaking, it consists of two principal parts or literary genres: genealogy (1 Chr 1-9), and narrative (1 Chr. 10-2, Chr. 36). In this essay, I shall limit my argument concerning the phantasy of monosexual production at work in Chronicles to the genealogical chapters. These chapters function somewhat as a preface to the narrative material (wherein we find the stories of Maacah and Athaliah). That they are unique to Chronicles, in that no other Hebrew book contains such a large bulk of genealogical material functioning as a *preface* or *introduction* to the narrative that follows, suggests that they provide us with certain insights into the workings of the Book as a whole.[4]

Biblical genealogies usually consist of a series of male generations, the literary-temporal movement of which is often constituted by the verbal act 'to beget.' The model of this 'begetting' is generally 'A begat B, and B begat C, and C begat D... etcetera,' with both the subject and object of the verb being masculine. The English word 'begat' (past tense of 'beget') is a translation of a number of masculine forms of the Hebrew verb *yalad* (3rd masculine singular of 'to bear, bring forth, issue out of'). When feminine forms of this verb appear, the verb is translated as 'she bore.'

Theoretically, genealogy does not require any verbs. It can be, and often is, constituted by a series of names in ascending or descending order (going back or forward through generations/time), or across a generation. For example:

> Adam, Seth, Enosh; Kenan, Mahalel, Jared; Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The sons of Japheth: Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras. And the sons of Gomer: Ashkenaz, and Diphath, and Togarmah. And the sons of Javan: Elishah and Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim. The sons of Ham: Cush and Mizraim, Put and Caanan. And the sons of Cush: Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raama, and Sabteca. And the sons of Raamah: Sheba, and Dedan. (1 Chr. 1:1-9).

The verb is possibly the first principle that distinguishes narrative 'proper' from genealogy, which is more akin to the genre of description. And yet, there is one verb that appears over one hundred times in the genealogies: the verb *yalad* ('to bear'). This may seem rather obvious, given that genealogies are a construction of generations (whether true or accurate, it does not seem to matter in the ancient literatures). What fascinates me, however, is that in the first nine chapters of this curious re-telling of Israel's monarchic and cultic past we hear over and over and over again that man 'begets' man. Indeed, while there are ninety-one occurrences of the masculine forms of the verb *yalad* (all translated as 'begat'), there are only seventeen instances of an active, feminine form of the verb 'to bear.' Thus, even before we begin a closer analysis of these verbs, we can say that the act of generation is a predominantly masculine affair.

But I am particularly interested in the most common form of this verb: the third, masculine, singular, Hiph'il (causative) – *holith*. For example:

> And Ram begot (*holith*) Amminadav, and Amminadav begot (*holith*) Nachshon, prince of the sons of Judah. And Nachshon begot (*holith*) Salma, and Salma begot (*holith*) Boaz. And Boaz begot (*holith*) Oved, and Oved begot (*holith*) Jesse. And Jesse begot (*holith*) his first-born Eliav, and Avinadav the second, and Shimea the third, Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Otzem the sixth, David the seventh (1 Chr. 2:10-15).

What can this Hiph'il form of the verb *yalad* (*holith*: 'he caused to bear') possibly mean, particularly when there is usually only a masculine direct object of the Hiph'il verb? As a causative form of the verb *yalad*, it seems to carry a greater sense of agency for the masculine subject. However, in terms of sense, one would expect the sentence to read 'he caused a woman to bear a son,' which would also be consistent with patriarchal cultural assumptions of masculine reproductive agency (with woman being the mere vessel for his seed). Furthermore, it can not mean 'he caused his son to be born,' for the verb is active, not passive. And yet, in the genealogies the

object of the verb *holith* ('he caused to bear') is always masculine (except for one remarkable instance, which we will encounter soon). The father causes his son to bear? Indeed, this curious, even non-sensical verb is the most common form of the verb in Chronicles.[5] The verb is used seventy-six times in 1 Chr 1-9[6] (and the Hiph'il waw consecutive, or narrative form *wayyolith* appears three times (1:34; 5:37; and 8:9)), making the Hiph'il of *yalad* by far the most common *verb* used to express, explicitly, the masculine production of generations of predominantly male children.

And yet, women mainly appear in the genealogies of Chronicles as the mothers of sons, and in certain instances, the biological 'fact' of maternal origin is recognized through the inclusion of a feminine form of the verb 'to bear' (though, as I mentioned earlier, the seventeen uses of a feminine verb are far outnumbered by the masculine forms of the verb). The mothers of sons in 1 Chronicles 1-9 are as follows: Keturah, 1:32; Bathshua the Canaanitess, 2:3; Zeruiah and Abigail, 2:16-17; Jerioth and Ephrathah, 18-19; the daughter of Machir, 2:21; Abiah, 2:24; Atarah, 2:26; Abihail, 2:29; Sheshan's daughter, 2:34-35; Ephah, 2:46; Maacah, 2:48; Ahinoam and Abigail, 3:1; Maachah and Haggith, 3:2; Abital and Eglah, 3:3; Bathshua, 3:5; David's concubines, 3:9; Helah and Naarah, 4:5; Ezrah (?), 4:17; Mered's Jewish wife and (?) Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, 4:18; the wife of Hodiah, 4:19; the many wives of the bands of the host for war, 7:4; Manasseh's Aramean *pilegesh*, 7:14; Maacah, 7:16; the ruling sister, 7:18; Ephraim's wife, 7:23; Hodesh, 8:9; Hushim, 8:11; and Maacah, 8:29/9:35, whom we can only presume is the mother of the sons listed from 8:30/9:36. There are also two, perhaps three instances of women being the mothers of daughters: Matred and Mezahab, although we have no way of being certain of the gender of the latter, 1:50; and the ambiguous mother (perhaps, Ezrah) who conceives Miriam, 4:17. Women who appear in the genealogies without reference to their status as mothers are Timna, 1:39; Mehetabel, 1:50; Azubah, 2:18-19; Achsah, 2:49; Tamar, 3:9; the six daughters of Shimei, 4:27; Sheerah, 7:24; Serah, 7:30; Shua, 7:32; and Baarah, 8:8. Clearly, women are understood mainly as the mothers of sons.

Labahn and Ben Zvi (2003) claim that the presence of a number of female figures in the genealogies of Chronicles effectively generates a gender-inclusive ideology. They acknowledge that women are largely represented as performing traditional, patriarchal roles such as mother, wife, daughter, and sister (of men), but claim that there are a significant number of women 'described as successfully fulfilling roles usually associated within the main (male) discourses of the time' (Labahn and Ben Zvi 2003: 457–458). For Labahn and Ben Zvi, the 'substantial number of instances in which women took upon the roles traditionally carried out by males…' meant that the genealogies:

> 'taught its intended and primary readers again and again that gender (and ethnic) boundaries could, were, and by inference can and should be transgressed by the Yehudite community on occasion, with divine blessing, and resulting in divine blessing' (Labahn and Ben Zvi 2003: 477).

I suggest that these females (who actually aren't that substantial in number) and their assigned roles serve further to bolster the importance of male activities, at the expense and devaluation of women's. Furthermore, they even claim that childbirth, as an act only women's bodies are capable of performing in 'reality,' is represented and acknowledged in the genealogies:

Needless to say, the male literati responsible for this literature were well aware that only women had the biological ability to give birth to children and therefore to maintain, through the continuous sequence of (female) childbirth, the continuation of a genealogical line and of society as a whole. It is worth stressing that any genealogical list therefore, at least implicitly, acknowledges and communicates the centrality of childbirth and of the females of the society, even if they remain unmentioned in the literary portrait, and if they are excluded from the explicit wording of the text. In fact, these 'erasures' of women speak volumes (Labahn and Ben Zvi 2003: 458–459).

Indeed they do! Labahn and Ben Zvi seem to be suggesting, however, that the very form of genealogy acknowledges women's role in reproduction. Why, then, we need to ask are male birthing verbs far more substantial than the female birthing verbs? Why is there not a mother mentioned for every son? As I shall argue here, the issue of childbirth and the maternal body are directly related to the *silence* of women in Chronicles, *not their acknowledgement or validation*.

Importantly, women seem to cause great problems when it comes to the production of meaningful, genealogical sense. These problems generally erupt around the use of the verb *yalad* ('to bear'), and may be characterised as:

1.   grammatical and/or syntactical breakdowns (1:32; 2:9, 48, 49; 4:19; 7:14);
2.   contradictions (2:19, 21, 23, 46, 50a; 4:18; 7:15, 17), and;
3.   a breakdown of realism (2:18a).

These problems are rather curious, given that birth is one of the activities only women's bodies are capable of doing in 'reality.' I wish to argue that these problems in the genealogies (1 Chr. 1-9) may be read as symptoms of the disavowal of the maternal body as origin in this masculine imaginary textual world. The traumatic 'reality' of maternal origination for the masculine subject is alleviated through the disavowal of the maternal body and the subsequent appropriation of that bodily act by the masculine subject ('I know I am born of woman, but just the same…'). In other words, 'man' understands himself (unconsciously) as capable of birth. What these textual problems allow us to 'hear' is the phantasy of monosexual, masculine production that creates and sustains this symbolic order. Furthermore, there is one instance of maternal speech in the genealogies, and this speech enables us to understand why maternal silence is required in Chronicles. I shall give a brief summary of these relevant texts.

GRAMMATICAL AND/OR SYNTACTICAL BREAKDOWNS

There are, in this genealogical discourse, three instances of gender confusion around a *yalad* verb: 1 Chr. 1:32; 2:48, 49:

> And the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine, (she) bore (*yaldah*) Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan (1:32).

> The *pilegesh* of Caleb, Maachah, he begot/bore (*yalad*) Sheber and Tirhanah (2:48).

And Shaaph, father of Madmannah, and she bore (*wateleth*) Sheva, father of
Machbenah and the father of Givea. And the daughter of Calev was Achsah.
(2:49).

In 1 Chr. 1: 32 the verb is feminine, singular (*yaldah*), but syntactically the subject of this verb
could in fact be the masculine, plural ('And the sons of Keturah'). 1 Chr. 2:48 and 1 Chr. 2:49
both contain a subject and a verb with contradictory genders. These syntactico-grammatical
struggles draw our attention to an important feature of the genealogies. It seems as though our
author is, in these verses, reluctant to admit that it is only women who are, in reality, capable
of birthing. While the verb in 1:32 is feminine, the somewhat unnecessary inclusion of the
standard introductory formula (And the sons of') makes the gender of this possible subject
masculine. Even if we read 1:32 as 'And the sons of Keturah, Abraham's pilegesh: she bore....,'
the clumsy syntax still makes the gender of the subject fairly nebulous. In 1 Chr. 2:48 and 49, it
is simply the case that the gender of the subjects contradicts the gender of the verbs. In other
words, 2:48 and 49 present us with the gendered subject of the birthing verb in direct contradiction
with the gender of the verb, in contravention of the grammatical laws of this gendered ancient
language, unlike 1:32 where the clumsy syntax makes for a more ambiguous relationship between
the genders of the subject and verb.

In 1 Chr. 2:9 we encounter a grammatical problem with the *yalad* verb in the Niph'al (passive)
form:

And the sons of Hezron who were born to/for him (*nolath lo*) – Yerachmeel,
Ram, and Cheluvai (1 Chr. 2:9).

The problem in 2:9 concerns the inclusion of the word *eth* before each of the sons' names. In the
Hebrew, this word, *eth*, is a word that marks the direct object of a Hebrew verb, which in this
case is a passive form. In other words, the sons are not the direct object of the passive verb, but
the subject of it. I contend that we read this slip as indicative of the problematic status of the
maternal body in this discourse, for if a woman's name was included, along with an active form
of the verb (e.g. *yaledah*), there would be no grammatical problems with this sentence. Without
the feminine verb and the maternal name, however, the inclusion of *eth* effectively functions as
the 'slip' through which we may recognize both the phantasy sustaining this discourse (masculine,
monosexual production), and the maternal absence required for this fantasy. That body is ab-
sented, or we might say *silenced*, to enable the fantasy of masculine (re)production.

With 1 Chr. 7:14 we encounter a difficulty in determining the subject of the feminine verb:

The sons of Menasheh, Asriel, whom she bore. His Aramean concubine
(*pilegesh*)[7] bore Machir, the father of Gilead (7:14).

With this verse, in the original Hebrew, it seems as if there is one too many verbs 'to bear'
(*yaladah/yaledah*: 'she bore'). The 'she' of the first *yaladah* (3fs of *yalad*, 'she bore') has no prior
proper name, while the second verb does. We could interpret the subject of both verbs to be
Menasheh's Aramean *pilegesh*, with the second verb and the production of Machir being some-
thing of an afterthought. However, in every other instance where *yaledah* appears, the subject
precedes the verb (1:32; 2:4, 17, 46; 4:18; 7:14), meaning that the subject of the second verb is

most likely 'His Aramean *pilegesh*,' leaving the first verb without a named subject. Of course, Hebrew verbs do not need named subjects to make sense. However, in this instance, given the pattern of named subjects in conjunction with the verb *yaledah* this verse at best struggles to make sense. And this verse is followed by a verse that is almost impossible to translate with any sense (1 Chr. 7:15 which literally reads 'And Machir took a woman/wife to/for Huppim and to/for Shuppim, and his sister's name was Maacah, and the name of the second was Tzelophchad, and Tzelophchad had daughters'). Compared with the relative ease with which our author constructs his past when women are not present (for example 1 Chr 1:1-31), and compared also with the infrequent problems when a masculine form of *yalad* is used (see below), a certain nervousness around women and the feminine act of birth is betrayed by these verses.

CONTRADICTIONS

Apart from the moments where the gender of the subject and the verb of certain verses are in contradiction, there are several other instances of contradiction. With 2:46 we encounter a possible contradiction:

> And Ephah, the pilegesh of Calev, bore (*yaledah*) Haran, Moza, and Gazez;
> and Haran begot (*holith*: *caused* to bear) Gazez (2:46).

Now, of course, there may be two characters named Gazez. Haran may beget a son and name him after his brother. What interests me about this verse, however, is that it is almost as if the masculine causative verb contradicts the feminine verb that precedes it.

With 1 Chr. 4:18, on the other hand, we seem to face an undeniable contradiction, this time concerning maternal identity:

> And his Jewish wife bore (*yaledah*) Yered, father of Gedor, and Chever, father
> of Socho, and Yekuthiel, father of Zanoach, and these are the sons of Bithiah,
> the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered had taken (4:18).

Who is the mother of Yered, Chever, and Yekuthiel? Is it Mered's Jewish wife or his Egyptian wife? According to this verse, it is both. Rather than offer possible explanations, as many scholars have before,[8] I suggest instead that this contradiction like all the other problematic features concerning women and the verb *yalad* in the genealogies may be understood as symptomatic of the difficulties this masculine discourse faces when women enter this representational framework. Immediately following this verse is more evidence of this struggle:

> The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, father of Keilah the Gar-
> mite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite (4:19).

With this verse, it is as if our author got so caught up situating a woman within his patriarchal schema that he forgot to finish his sentence and give us the names of her sons.

The nervousness around the figures of women is particularly noticeable in the genealogies of Hetzron and Meneshah. When Hetzron takes the daughter of Machir, the ensuing line is given to Machir himself, not Hetzron. And yet, what begins as Machir's line in 7:15 is attributed to Machir's son Gilead in 7:17. But even more obviously problematic is the explicit contradiction concerning Calev and Chur. According to 2:19, Chur is Calev's first born, while 2:50a makes

Calev the son of Chur. These contradictions alert us to the tension between father and son when it comes to genealogical 'ownership.' The father must produce a son to hold any genealogical weight. And yet, the son must himself become a father of a son. Once he does so, there is a chance his name will be greater than his father's. 'Woman,' then, comes to symbolise this tension. She is necessary for the production of sons and the continuation of the father's story. Yet when she appears, she disconcerts the logic of representation. Perhaps this disruption results because her very production threatens the father with the end of his story? Her success in producing sons for the father also guarantees the end of the father's story.

A BREAKDOWN OF REALISM

Finally, we have the very interesting case of 1 Chr. 2:18a:

> And Calev, the son of Hezron, begot (*holith*, caused to bear?) Azuvah, a wife
> ('*ishah*), and Yerioth (1 Chr. 2: 18a).

In this verse a man 'causes to bear' (*holith*), with the direct objects of this causative verb being his own women/wives. Calev apparently begets his own wives (well, one a wife, '*ishah*, the other a…?) Both of the women's names are preceded by the word '*eth* in the Hebrew, which usually is the mark of the direct object in a Hebrew sentence. While '*eth* can also be a preposition that means 'with,' in the entire genealogical discourse the syntax of masculine subject, *holith* ('he caused to bear'), direct object marked by '*eth* is consistent. Given that in the seventy-five other cases where *holith* is used the direct object of this verb is always marked with '*eth*, I insist that we read this verse as a slip pointing to the fantasy of male birth; in this case, a man bears those who 'in reality' are the only ones who can bear. Actually, this verse highlights the problematic nature of this masculine causative verb. As I suggested earlier, given the patriarchal cultural assumptions underwriting the ancient Hebrew texts, we would *indeed* expect a female character to be the direct object of the masculine causative form of the verb 'to bear:' men *cause* women to give birth, in the sense that all agency is assigned to the male as subject, not the female (who is a mere vessel in the process). And yet, this is an anomalous construct, the effect of which is an explicit statement describing the unconscious phantasy at work in Chronicles: *the male body capable of birth*.

SPEAKING OF BIRTH…

Speech is very rare in genealogies, and in 1 Chr. 1-9, only two characters are given direct speech. They are Jabez and his un-named mother. In 1 Chr. 4:9, Jabez' mother is given direct speech, and her speech concerns the acts of birthing and naming. This speech is followed by Jabez' prayer to the god ('*elohim*) of Israel. To be sure, direct speech is not a defining feature of genealogies. Indeed, it is an anomaly, like Jabez himself, who seems to dangle without a clear paternal line. While he is included in the Judahite line, there is no explicit mention of his father, nor of any line of males issuing from him. There are no connecting male names for Jabez, no clear line of descent through men, and yet, he 'was more honoured than his brothers.' Perhaps his name was left off the list of the sons of Ashur (1 Chr. 4: 5-8), and his mother was either Helah or Naarah? Nevertheless, he appears only in relation to his nameless mother, his indirect partner in speech in the genealogical material:

Now Jabez (*yabez*) was more honoured than his brothers; but his mother called his name Jabez, saying, 'Because I bore (*yaladti*) in pain (*be'ozeb*).' Jabez called on the god of Israel, saying, 'Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from evil (*mera'ah*) so that it might not hurt me!' And god granted what he asked (1 Chr. 4: 9-10).

His mother calls his name, Jabez, a play on the word for pain (*'ozeb*). Jabez' mother plays with letters and words. She turns them over and around, bringing poetry to the least poetic of forms, genealogy. Indeed, consonantally, this word *'zb* can also mean 'to shape or fashion,' giving subjective status, we might say, to the maternal body in pain as a productive, creative subject; an agent of creation. Related to this verb root is the noun, *'azab*, 'idol.' So, Jabez' mother's creative play with words, which speaks to the productive maternal body in pain, also evokes a mediating figure between the human and the divine. One created by her? Her speech act not only refers directly to her body in pain but also evokes the creativity of fashioning an object of (female) divinity, one of the most hated things in this ancient text.

All this, for Jabez, is problematic. He must immediately call on his surrogate father (the god of Israel), his instrument of change who has the potential power to negate the symbolic authority of the mother's play with words – words about her body and its experience. An experience no man can truly 'know.' The mother's play with words will stick to her son in the form of a name. This name from a mother who speaks poetically, who is interested in turning letters around, seducing and seduced by word-things to make meaning of her life at a certain point is rich in meaning. It speaks of her experience, some how. But it also identifies a man without a clear paternal history; his name binds him to his mother, to her body and its language (of the divine?) In the act of naming, this woman speaks of her body and its experience without any mention of him at all ('for I bore in pain'). No wonder he is nervous.

Of course, the *mater delorosa*, the suffering mother, is an old favourite in the masculine imaginary. The maternal body in pain, especially, is a particular bodily experience pertaining to 'woman' that man can imagine, with more or less accuracy, and he is able to convince himself that he may know something about the one thing his body will never do. It is no real surprise that Jabez' mother is given birth pain as the experience upon which she will draw, for it comes at the moment when a male is born. The birth itself is generally the only experience of the production of life that is given direct, symbolic reference in masculine representations (the womb, however, will saturate his imaginary universe). But the female body has bled, had intercourse, stopped bleeding monthly, swollen with fluids, produced hormones that effect the moods through which experience will filter, etc., etc., etc. Jabez' mother, potentially, had a wealth of corporeal experiences with which to play. But she was given (and she gives us) only one, the most important, because it is the most comprehensible, one. She contributes to the genealogical economy through the production of a son. Her 'experience' must speak to that.

Even so, what does Jabez want? What can the father grant him? The father can bless him (*brk*) and enlarge his boundaries, provide for him in needy times (literally, the Hebrew reads 'your hand might be with me'). The father can also offer him protection from the evil brought upon him by his mother's interpretive and creative speech. Something about his name and its relationship to maternal-corporeal pain spoken poetically by the mother seems to insist that

wealth and paternal assistance are not forthcoming for Jabez, only suffering. With a mother whose interruptive narrative (her *poesis*) of naming connects the son to the incontrovertible fact of biological birth, of feminine-maternal, corporeal production, he finds himself in exile from the symbolic paternal line and its mono-production. Given this banishment from masculine mono-production, why might Jabez be the most honoured among his brothers? In tearing himself away from the mother, in turning to the father (the god of Israel) for intercession, does his honour enlarge along with his borders (i.e. his material claim)? Apparently.

The mother's creative words threaten the coherence of patrilineage and require intervention by the father of fathers. On the surface, here in the genealogies of Chronicles, the son's words to the father ultimately seem to have greater power than the mother's words to or for herself. 'Elohim grants Jabez his requests. But isn't the god of Israel's intervention somewhat limited? Honour, blessings, enlarged borders, assistance in the times of need, and protection from evil may have been issued to Jabez, but his story has ended. There is no line of sons (not even any lesser sons, i.e., daughters) issuing from Jabez. Ultimately (as the genealogies teach us) this production of sons is the only guarantee of historical success. Jabez is frozen in history with a mother who dared to play with words, dared to speak her experience, dared to bring her body into language; dared even to equate this body with the divine and her representation. Her poetic play with words, her maternal *poesis*, effects a patrilineal, genealogical *caesura*. And someone forgot to name her. Perhaps our author was anxious?

SUMMARY

In 1 Chronicles 1-9, of the ninety-one uses of the masculine forms of the verb *yalad*, there are only three problematic instances (2:9, 18a, 48). While this suggests that masculine birthing verbs present very little problem concerning the construction of genealogical meaning and sense, the instances where these masculine verbs struggle to do so all relate to the problem of gender. The problem of sense in 2:9 occurs because the sons' names appear as the definite objects of a passive masculine verb (*yalad* in the Niph'al). Without a maternal source named (as in 2:3a and 3:1ff), in conjunction with an active feminine form of *yalad*, the 'slip' here indicates a certain jarring. 'Man' understands himself as the active subject of birth, but in 'reality,' he is really the indirect object of that feminine act. Children are born 'to or for' him. Or, of course, 'he' is the direct object of that act; he is the son born by a woman's body. In 1 Chr. 2:48 there is a feminine subject of a masculine verb *yalad*, 'to bear,' and 2:18a has a man begetting women. In other words, we can say that at certain moments in this genealogical discourse biological 'reality' is proving problematic for our author.

Why must the feminine be restricted to the symbolic function of the production of sons for the father, while the maternal body itself remains unacknowledged? The psychoanalytic concept of disavowal is instructive here. The orthodox Freudian definition of disavowal is the denial and acceptance of some external feature of reality, usually the absence of the mother's penis. For Freud, disavowal is the defense mechanism that underwrites fetishism and the psychoses. However, in the genealogies, it is the debt to maternal origin that clearly is being disavowed. That is, material-maternal origin is (seemingly paradoxically) both denied and affirmed in the genealogical discourse. In 'reality' only women can birth children. Indeed, maternal origin does seem to be acknowledged in several cases where the feminine verb appears, while 'woman' is also principally understood as the son's mother. And yet, the genealogical discourse in Chronicles not only

presents patrilineage as the standard, with fathers and sons presented as constitutive of almost all of Israel's past and present familial make-up, but also presents masculine reproduction as the standard through the overwhelming dominance of masculine subjects of the verb 'to bear.' The silent machinery of this discourse is the father's production of the son; the discursive movement through time in 1 Chronicles 1-9 largely consists of a phantasmatic, non-corporeal mechanical movement from father to son, to his son, and so on. In other words, corporeal origins are remarkably unacknowledged and are replaced instead by the generative succession of male names.

One of the principal symptoms of this phantasy of monosexual, masculine production occurs in 1 Chronicles 4:9-10. When a woman speaks of *her body* and one of its corporeal experiences – precisely, a bodily act that only a woman's body is capable of performing in 'reality' – genealogical identity, which hangs desperately on the father-son line, ceases to function well. Indeed, the story of the son ends. The effects of this self-referential maternal speech, along with the effects of the feminine forms of the verb to bear in the genealogies, alert us to the fact that the affirmation of maternal origin in this masculine discourse is purely symbolic. In other words, it seems that *the necessity of the material-maternal* must remain silent so that patrilineal, patriarchal, symbolic order is sustainable and hegemonic.

While women are present in the genealogies, their silence is maintained through this disavowal. The silence of maternal-matter functions as a necessary silence for the masculine subject of this production of the past. Indeed, the disavowal of this material-maternal debt is readable precisely through the slips, contradictions, and breakdowns of meaning in these genealogies. However, it is 1 Chr. 4:9 that most dramatically reveals how problematic the mother's self-referential speech is for the masculine subject of this discourse. I have argued that it is the type of speech given by Jabez' mother that is important to hear. Jabez' mother not only speaks about her birthing body, but she also plays with those words concerning the birthing body when she names her son, even evoking a relationship between the maternal body and the representation of divinity itself. Her speech is a poetic play with words and meanings, an act that both acknowledges the (un-representable) maternal body and allows for the suggestion of a feminine relationship to the divine, one created by herself. Jabez' mother's speech causes the masculine subject grave fears for his own socio-symbolic survival. In fact, 1 Chr. 4:9 asserts, if you like, that there is a direct connection between women's speech and this disavowed maternal-corporeal origin which sustains the phantasy of masculine mono-production. In this particular recounting of the past, when a woman speaks *poetically* about her body in birth (without any mention of the son at all in relation to this verbal act), the son is given no paternal heritage, and no sons who will continue *his* story. It would seem that poetic maternal speech shatters the continuity and certainty of patrilineal discourse, with its smoothly functioning logic of progress from the father to the son.

I suggest that 1 Chr. 4:9, while generally considered of minor relevance or importance in traditional Chronicles scholarship, in fact reveals the logical kernel at the heart of this literary production of the past, first in the genealogies and later (though I can not go into any detail here) in the narrative of Chronicles. The logic of this discourse, its silent machinery, is the progression from father to son which relies upon an unacknowledged or silenced debt to original materiality/maternality. This maternal origin is thus effectively silenced through the disavowal of Mother-matter (both the acceptance and denial of the biological fact of maternal birth) and instead, 'woman' is interned as the symbolic (re)producer of the son for man.

I now want to turn to the speech of another mother, Athalia, before returning to Maacah. Again, I am arguing that to understand Maacah's 'real' crime in Chronicles, we need to examine the effects of maternal representation or speech.

THE MOTHER'S MURDEROUS SPEECH: ATHALIAH

We are first introduced to Athaliah in 2 Chr. 21:6, where we are told that Jehoram 'walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. And he did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh.' This daughter of Ahab is Athaliah. Though she is not named as such, we know this is the case because in 2 Chr. 22:2 it is revealed that the mother of Ahaziah (Jehoram's son) is Athaliah, the grandaughter[9] of Omri, who is the father of Ahab. Furthermore, it seems that Athaliah has considerable influence over her husband (Jehoram), and their son (Ahaziah) after him. Ahaziah also 'walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly. He did what was evil in the sight of Yahweh, as the house of Ahab had done; for after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his undoing' (2 Chr. 22:3-4). Athaliah's influence is responsible for the wrong doings of both her husband and her son. We know, then, from the beginning of her story, that she is a treacherous figure.

Importantly, she is also the only mother that speaks in the entire narrative of Chronicles (1 Chr. 10 – 2 Chr. 36). Jabez' un-named mother (1 Chr. 4:9) and Athaliah are the only two mothers in Chronicles who are given verbal speech. Eventually, Athaliah becomes a queen who reigns for six years in Judah, though she is never referred to as 'queen' (*malkah*) but only as 'mother' (*'em*):

> And Athaliah, the mother (*'em*) of Ahaziah, saw that her son had died, and she
> arose and she spoke (*wattedabber*) with all the progeny ('all the seed') of the
> kingdom in the house of Judah (2 Chr. 22:10).

While we are not told what these spoken words are, it seems that Athaliah's speech is murderous. The next verse tells us that Joash's sister, Jehoshabeath, saves him from the fate of the other young princes, who are murdered by Athaliah:

> Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, stealthily took Joash, the son of
> Ahaziah, from among the sons of the king being killed, and she put him and
> his nurse in the room of couches. Jehoshabeath, daughter of king Jehoram, wife
> of Jehoiada the priest, hid him from Athaliah because she was the sister of
> Ahaziah. And she did not kill him (2 Chr. 22:11).

So, Athaliah hears of her son's murder, kills the rest of the king's sons (her grandsons?), and rules 'over the land' for six years (22:12). However, instead of just saying that Athaliah murders the royal sons, the text states explicitly that she spoke with them, all the offspring of the royal family of Judah. This way of describing her actions is very curious.[10] The use of the verb root *dbr* 'to speak' may seem odd given that the effects of Athaliah's actions in 22:11 are the murder of the king's sons.[11] However, I wish to point out that just as with the account of Jabez' mother, here a mother's speech threatens the coherence and continuity of the male line. There is a consist-

ency in this respect in both the genealogy and the narrative. However, in the Chronicles narrative concerning Athaliah, this threat of maternal speech is made explicit. Her speech effectively murders the sons and threatens both the Davidic line and patriliny itself. Dramatically, male-only rule and ('blessed') male succession – the fundamental mechanics of the narrative in Chronicles – have ceased for the moment as a consequence of this mother's speech act.

Jehoshabeath (who may be Athaliah's daughter, though this is not stated explicitly, only that she is Jehoram's daughter and Ahaziah's sister; the mother-daughter relationship is, after all, no real concern in Chronicles) hides Joash, the now fatherless son whose story prematurely arises with the effects of his mother's speech. Importantly, she hides him in the room of couches (or bedchamber) in the temple. We find ourselves in the intimate heart of the symbolic father's house (the temple) protected from the murderous (grand)mother who speaks. Is it possible that we are in the Holy of Holies, the 'womb' of the temple?[12] Jehoshabeath (Athaliah's own daughter?) protects the Davidic line, the blessed line of patrilineal succession, by hiding the only surviving son in the house that glorifies the father and his name; such a dutiful father's daughter. Even her name bears allegiance to the father, for in Hebrew Jehoshabeath means 'Yahweh is an oath.' The speech act, oath, and its synonymity with the symbolic father Yahweh, is almost in contradiction to Athaliah's murderous speech act, which threatens to bring down the system of patriliny and patriarchal rule itself. The daughter is branded with a name that bears witness to her allegiance to the father (and his form as/of speech).

Interestingly, the issue of cultic purity arises within this story of a ruling mother. In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada (priest and husband of Jehoshabeath) gathers the army together (23:1) and plots to depose Athaliah and return the Davidic king (Joash) to the throne. As part of his plan, he instructs the men he has garnered – the Captains of the Hundreds, the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and the heads of the father's (houses) in Israel – to protect the king's house and the house of Yahweh. Furthermore, he says:

> Let no one into the house of Yahweh, except the priests and the Levites who
> minister. They may come in, for they are holy. And all the people will keep a
> watchful guard of Yahweh (2 Chr. 23:6).

The final sentence in this verse is rather strange. Is Yahweh present, and indeed, guard-able by people? Apart from that odd comment, has the father (Yahweh) literally returned with the presence of Athaliah, of 'Israel,' ruling Judah?[13] I note that the issues of holiness and the threat of impurity have once again arisen. Also, when Athaliah reappears in the story, she comes towards the people and the house of Yahweh (23:12). At that moment she realises that they have made Joash king and she tears her garments and says 'Greatest of conspiracies!' (*qesher qasher*; 23:13). At this point Jehoiada instructs the captains of the hundreds to:

> 'Bring her out from between the ranks and anyone who follows her will be
> killed by the sword,' for the priest said, 'You will not kill her (in?) the house
> of Yahweh (23:14).

So, they bring her to the gate of horses and kill her there (23:15). To depose a woman and return to the preferred system of patrilineal succession requires careful consideration and protection of the holiest space that houses the symbolic father, the name of Yahweh and his law. When Ath-

aliah cries out 'Greatest of conspiracies!' (*qesher qasher*; 23:13) it seems obvious that she is referring to Jehoiada's conspiracy. However, I think another reading is possible. Through the hyperbole of the spoken words of this ruling mother, can we not hear 'woman' straining to charge these men with a crime of violence against her maternal body: the conspiratorial binding of men together against 'woman' for the use of her (silenced) body as foundation and guarantee of their holy order? I think this is why Athaliah must be killed twice (23:15, 21): firstly, and simply, because she is a mother who speaks, with her speech undoing patrilineal patriarchy for six years (an extended *caesura*, indeed), and secondly, because she literally figures the return of the repressed (silenced) maternal body. Difficult, indeed, to get rid of a silence that speaks…

'A HORRID THING,' A 'THING TO SHUDDER AT' (THE MAACAH OF 2 CHRONICLES 15:16)

Maacah, Asa's mother, is a mother engaged in representational activity, though, unlike Jabez' mother and Athaliah, she is given visual instead of verbal speech. In her son Asa's story, we encounter a strange moment when Asa effectively removes his mother from her position of power because she makes an idol for Asherah (2 Chr. 15). This event occurs after the words of warning from the prophet Azaria son of Oded concerning Yahweh's willingness to be with his people so long as they are with him (15:2-7), and follows Asa's reforms (vv 8-15). Asa removes his mother Maacah from her position as 'powerful woman' (*gebirah*, usually poorly translated as 'queen mother') 'because she made for Asherah a *miphlazeth* (a 'horrid thing' or 'thing to shudder at'):

> And also, he deposed Maacah, the mother of King Asa, from her position of
> power (*gebirah*), for she had made a horrid thing (*miphlazeth*, 'a thing to
> shudder at') for Asherah. And Asa cut down her horrid thing, pulverized [it]
> into dust (*wayyadeq*) and he burnt [it] in the Wadi Kidron (2 Chr. 15:16).

It would seem that the mother practices a different religion from her son, one that is not to be tolerated. Here the king's mother is worshipping Asherah while her son has entered into a covenant with Yahweh, 'the god of their fathers' (2 Chr. 15:12). In fact, Asa has spent quite a bit of his reign ridding the land of the foreign altars, the high places, the sun pillars; 14:2; 4), shattering the sacred pillars, hewing down the asherim (14:2), and taking away the detested things from the land of Judah, Benjamin, and the cities he had taken from the hill country of Ephraim (15:8). This act of his, destroying an idol, is consistent with his dedication to destroying anything that is against the laws of Yahweh.

It is worth noting that there is some ambiguity as to what exactly Maacah has made for the goddess. The word here is *miphlazeth* – 'a horrid thing' or 'a thing to shudder at.' This word appears only in relation to Maacah's story.[14] What she makes for Asherah is not a sacred pillar or *asherah* (tree or pole). This *miphlazeth* is no simple idol, but something worse, something that could make one fear for one's life, indeed something that causes one's *body* to be affected, something that must be utterly ground down to dust and (somewhat redundantly, even impotently) burnt in the dry Wadi Kidron. Actually, Asa doesn't just grind it into dust. *wayyadeq* is the (causative) Hiph'il form of *dqq* (which means to crush, pulverise, thresh, or to be fine). This stronger form of the verb expresses greater subjective agency on the part of Asa. He doesn't just pulverize the horrid thing, he pounds it and pounds it until it is dust.

Is it simply that Maacah makes an image of a divinity that is troubling, or is it that she makes an image of the feminine as divine? Wouldn't this make our masculine subject of Chronicles shudder, bring his body very viscerally to the surface? Not only would the feminine be divinized, but there would be an exchange taking place between two female figures, Maacah, the king's mother, and Asherah, the goddess. The image would be feminine and the exchange would be between two women, one human, the other divine.

Importantly, according to Luce Irigaray (1993: 62), women need a notion of the feminine as divine to enable the distinction between mother and daughter, and between women themselves, thus enabling an ethical rather than aggressive relation between women:

> If women have no God, they are unable either to communicate or commune with one another. They need, we need, an infinite if they are to share a *little*. Otherwise sharing implies fusion-confusion, division, and dislocation within themselves, among themselves. If I am unable to form a relationship with some horizon of accomplishment for my gender, I am unable to share while accomplishing my becoming.
>
> Our theological tradition presents some difficulty as far as God in the feminine gender is concerned. There is no woman God, no female trinity: mother, daughter, spirit. This paralyzes the infinite of becoming woman since she is fixed in the role of mother through whom the son of God is made flesh.[15]

By offering an image of the female form as Maacah does, the distance between the material and the transcendent would be traversed and brought into proximity. This feminine imagery would challenge the very ground of material existence, the unacknowledged building block of sacred space that guarantees the *containment* of the divine as *masculine*.[16] Does this exchange *of* the feminine and *between* the feminine bring materiality and divinity into a sensuate embrace, so much so that the mediating thing is, in this instance, something to shudder at, something to cause the gravest fears? Is this proximity of the human with the divine the reason for Asa seeking (somewhat hysterically) to destroy the *miphlazeth*? There are indeed, many possibilities. Let me, nevertheless, suggest that whatever the case, the pressing threat, here, is an exchange between women – a symbolic exchange between women of language and speech.[17] An exchange, if you like, between mother and daughter. Perhaps what Maacah really represents is the threat of a woman-to-woman sociality.[18] This would, of course, be significant, as up until this point in the genealogical and narrative discourses the silencing of the possibility of such a thing has been quite successful. There are no words expressed between mother and daughter. Maacah, herself is given no verbal speech. And yet, it is clear that her visual representation or 'speech' is disturbing in this masculine re-telling of Israel's religio-political past.

Furthermore, if we return to 1 Chr. 4:9, Jabez' mother's poetic naming speech, we can recall that she plays with the word for pain (*'ozeb*). Jabez' name (*yabez*) comes about through his mother's rearrangement of consonants, taking poetic licence to give his name something of an etymology: 'But his mother called his name Jabez, saying, "for I bore in pain."' But importantly for our discussion here, consonantally this word *'zb* can also mean 'to shape or fashion.' Furthermore, related to this verb root is the noun, *'azab*, 'idol.' I suggested earlier that Jabez' mother's creative play with words, which speaks to the productive body in pain, also evokes a mediating

figure between the human and the divine, perhaps even one created by her. Her speech act not only refers directly to her birthing body in pain but also evokes the creativity of fashioning an object of divinity. Remember that Jabez has no paternal line; he has no discernible paternal ancestry, no line of sons issuing forth from him, and thus no story at all. I argued that Jabez is frozen in history with a mother who dared to play poetically with words, dared to speak about her birthing experience, dared to bring her maternal body into language, and dared even to equate this maternal body with the divine and her representation.

CONCLUSION

I think when we bring Jabez' mother speech, Athaliah's murderous speech, and Maacah's creative act together, in light of the dominant phantasy at work in Chronicles (a phantasy of masculine, monosexual production sustained by the silence/non-representation of the maternal body), we can understand why Asa must take his mother's (patriarchally-defined) power away from her. It is not simply because she makes an image or an idol. It is because she is a woman and a mother who seeks to represent herself, her *corporeally productive* self, as divine. In creating an image of her body as a divinity, she creates an ideal with which she can communicate *as woman*, opening up the possibility of a woman-to-woman sociality. Athaliah's speech, like Jabez' mother's, literally disassembles the stability, even the existence of patrilineal succession and patriarchal rule. It is Jehoshabeath, who may even be Athaliah's daughter, who ultimately saves the day. Woman-against-woman is required in this imaginary male world, not woman-to-woman or woman-with-woman. According to Chronicles, the symbolic and social order that not only enables man's regal position within patriarchy, but also his very stability as a masculine subject of history, both come under threat when a mother seeks to engage in representation, when a mother 'speaks' creatively. This is why Maacah must be removed.

ENDNOTES

1   The term *gebirah* is a somewhat ambiguous term. It has often been translated, rather benignly, as 'Queen Mother.' The nature of power held by women given this appellative in the Hebrew Bible is unclear. See Ben-Barak (1994) and Spanier (1994).

2   *Wayyadeq* is the (causative) Hiph'il form of *daqaq*, which means to crush, pulverise, thresh, or to be fine. Thus, whilst already a strong verbal act, the causative form of *daqaq* adds a greater sense of subjective agency and force. It could be translated as 'and he pounds [it] and he pounds [it] *and he pounds* [it] until it was dust.'

3   The relationship between silence and the maternal body in masculine thinking and writing is explored in detail in Boulous Walker (1998).

4   A number of scholars have argued for the significance of the genealogies in relation to the narrative material. Certain themes of the narrative material are said to be consistent with the genealogical material itself. See Braun (1986): 6–7; Johnson (1988): 47–57; Myers (1965): 6. For a rhetorical critical approach, see Duke (1999): 119–20. In my forthcoming book (Kelso 2007), I show how the phantasy of monosexual, masculine production sustains both the genealogical and narrative forms of representing Israel's past in Chronicles. In the genealogies, as I shall argue here, the maternal body is disavowed – paradoxically, both denied and affirmed. In the narrative, the maternal body is thoroughly repressed.

[5] While it is also common to biblical genealogies in general, especially the so-called 'priestly' genealogies, its problematic usage in Chronicles may in fact highlight its more general usage in the biblical corpus as also worth investigating.

[6] 1 Chr. 2:10-13 (7 times), 18(1), 20 (2) 22 (1, 36-41 (12), 44 (2) 46 (1); 4:2 (2), 8(1), 11(1), 12 (1), 14 (2); 5:30-40 (20); 7:32 (1); 8:1 (1), 7 (1), 8 (1), 11 (1), 32(1), 33 (3), 34 (1), 36 (3), 37 (1); 9:38 (1), 39 (3), 40 (1), 42 (3), 43 (1).

[7] The Hebrew word *pilegesh* is usually translated as 'concubine.' However, as Mieke Bal (1988) has argued, it can also mean 'patrilocal wife.' The word is believed to refer to an older system of marriage, where the husband moves in with his wife's family, rather than the wife leaving her family to live with her husband's kin. The translation 'concubine' is thus very problematic, so I maintain the Hebrew word instead.

[8] For example, Japhet (1993: 114) follows Curtis' (1910: 111) textual manipulations whereby 4:18b is transposed to after 4:17a, thus enabling Mered to have his two wives who each produce sons for him.

[9] The Hebrew has the word for 'daughter' (*bath*). There is no Hebrew word for 'granddaughter.'

[10] Generally, the use of the verb *dbr* in this text is considered by traditional biblical scholarship to be an error on the part of the author or scribe.

[11] The story from Kings opens the following way. 'Athaliah (was) the mother of Ahaziah, and she saw that her son had died. She arose and she put to death (*watte'abbed*, Pi'el of '*bd*: 'she made perish') all the progeny of the kingdom' (2 Kings 11:1).

[12] In the tradition of the Jewish Sages, the bedchamber here in Chronicles refers to the Holy of Holies in the Temple. See Rabbi Moshe Eisemann (1992: 164).

[13] In Chronicles, Jacob (the father of Judah) is known consistently as 'Israel.' Thus, the territories of 'Israel' in the north and 'Judah' in the south may be understood, in familial terms, as father and son respectively.

[14] See the parallel text concerning Maacah's deposition (1 Kings 15:13), which is the only other place where this word appears.

[15] Those familiar with Irigaray's work will know that she is not simply insisting that women worship a goddess figure, either one revived from ancient or other cultures, nor one invented (as in New Age figures of the goddess). The issue of the impossibility of a feminine divine is both linguistic and philosophical, particularly in terms of the inherent structures of representation and thinking in the West. It is a utopian project, in other words, one that is productively bound by the impossibility of a consummate finality. However, the process of (re)thinking, (re)speaking, (re)writing, (re)reading, etc. as 'divine women' is of the utmost importance, according to Irigaray, if radical social change is to occur in the patriarchal social orders of the West.

[16] Doesn't the very word which measures out space, including, most importantly, sacred space – 'cubit' (*'mh*) – reveal this logic in itself? The first two consonants of this useful word and concept, give us another word, *'m*, meaning 'mother.' In this word which represents a standardised unit of measurement, 'mother' is here present as measuring out space for the masculine subject. 'She' serves to help standardise his measurements, enabling him to convert space in to place. But, reduced to a standard of spatial measurement, how can 'her' own spatial aspects, her own womb-space, even her self *in space* be taken in to account?

[17] As I have argued elsewhere, this is also the pressing threat at work in Genesis 34. See Kelso 2003.

[18] For Irigaray, a non-destructive sociality of women (mothers and daughter, 'sisters' amongst themselves) is indeed a threatening idea for patriarchal societies. The mother-daughter relationship constitutes a real threat to this social order that requires both the separation of the mother and the daughter, and their lack of subjective distinction as prisoners of the maternal site within the symbolic. 'In our societies, the mother/daughter, daughter/mother relationship constitutes a highly explosive nucleus. Thinking it, and changing it, is equivalent to shaking the foundations of the patriarchal order' (Irigaray 1991: 50).

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