DEATH & DISSYMMETRY

The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges

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power. The transition goes in the direction of growing power for the "son," the next-to-oldest generation of men. Symbolically, and this level may be seen as unconsciously informing the development of social institutions, the struggle between father and husband is a competition, *the* competition, between established power and the subject trying, on coming of age, to participate in, gain access to, or overthrow that power. It is a struggle *between men.*[27]

If it is true, and such is my contention, that *zanah* refers to the unfaithfulness of the daughter toward the father-owner, acted out when, willingly or not,[28] she leaves him to live temporarily with another man, then the "metaphor" representing the religious attitude of the people, that other form of "going astray," makes much more sense. It is God the Father who feels abandoned by the nubile daughter who is signified by the expression. The daughter/Israel, leaving her "natural" and unique father, the one who, as her creator, claims her faithful devotion or, in Freud's terms, her exclusive possession, goes away "after other gods," after any god, who seduces her with material goods, with golden images, but who did nothing to bring her into existence. The arbitrariness of the new relationship, the one that is not based on *existential contiguity*, the gratuitousness of the daughter's new engagement, is what strikes the father as unfair. This issue, the dichotomy between "natural" relationships based on creation/generation, or in other words the contiguity between father and daughter, and the arbitrariness of any other relationship, will turn out to be a crucial problem in the book.

Thus Yahweh does not escape the confusion of subject-positions that infects all thinking about virginity. The three stories of the unfortunate virgin daughters whom their fathers cannot give up, the violence of the bride-stealing scenes where the men, unable to be given wives, go out to catch them, and the setting on fire of Yahweh's nose—all of this becomes more and more coherent when seen as traces of an older, more drastic[29] form of patriarchy than the one the stories seem to promote.

The woman who is so utterly victimized in chapter 19, and who therefore alone deserves to be the second heroine of this study, can no longer be referred to as "the concubine." Like Bath, she comes to the story nameless. How can we name her, allow her subjectivity, while still doing justice to her as a figuration of (the lack of) subjectivity? The term that describes her in the text, *pilegesh*, means something like "patrilocal wife": a wife living in the house of the father, a wife who remains a daughter. Playing on the word "house," the motif that becomes so crucial in her story, on the word "daughter" as well as on

her place of origin—Bethlehem, "the house of bread"—this woman, who is defined by the location of her married life, will be given the name *Beth*, which is a form of the word *house*. It relates her by near-homophony to her fellow virgin daughter Bath, sacrificed like herself and like herself submitted to the power of the father; here as there the father is critical, in the sense of decisive, when the threshold of the house is transgressed.

So far, I have not yet accounted for Beth's status as a virgin daughter. Technically speaking, within the common, male view of virginity as bodily integrity, she cannot be a virgin. She has been "taken" by the Levite, and she went out of her father's house, in patrilocal unfaithfulness, to visit him. The reason for including her in Bath's group is because the ensuing struggle proves that the issue of property, concerning her, is not settled. At the same time, however, what I call struggle here is not an explicit and harsh fight. It is more of a competition, acted out in all courtesy, symbolically, that is. Significantly, on the narrative level of the story as a whole, and on the anthropological level of the transition from one type of sexual organization to the next, the competition not only takes place *in* the father's house; it is also *about* the father's house. It is his hospitality, his capacity to provide, his indispensibility as the source of the daily bread, which is at stake in the competition. If he lives in Bethlehem, house of bread, and if the story is structured around the tension between inside and outside the house, it is because the theme of this particular competition had to be enhanced.

When he follows Beth to her father's house, the Levite is referred to, exceptional as the expression is, as "her man." Her man arose and went after her to speak to her heart (the preposition *'al* again) to bring her back. After her initiative in turning the patrilocal marriage into a virilocal one, the man immediately understands that this change will entail an increase in his power. He sets out to retrieve Beth, not, as even Trible wrongly assumes, to "speak kindly to her," to resolve the matrimonial crisis, but to persuade her, rationally. The heart was the site of reason, not, as we as post-Romantics think, of feeling. In order to display his wealth and thus substantiate his claim, he brings along his servants and asses. The meaning of these details is double: they symbolize not only the husband's wealth, but also the idea of traveling. And travel there is going to be, again on two levels; literally they will be traveling to the new dwelling and symbolically this man opposes his dwelling to the father's house as an alternative way of living.

The father of the daughter receives him well. No wonder. Coming to visit the daughter, the man now behaves according to the rules

of the patrilocal institution. The verse is quite outspoken about the issue. Beth brings the man into the father's house, and "when the father of the girl *saw* him . . . he rejoiced to meet him." This time, the virgin daughter does not come out of the house; instead, she brings the man inside. The man is submitting to the law of the father. Is Beth married? In the father's eyes, she is; the Levite, however, is not content with this form of marriage, which makes him dependent upon the father-in-law.

The next seven verses are devoted to the attempts of Beth's father to retain the man—hence, to keep his daughter—and, on the man's part, to the slow passage from acceptance to rejection of this hospitality. The many days of this process should not be seen as an exact number of days but, as is usual in the Bible, as a representation of "a long time." The sequence makes no mention of Beth. Clearly, her presence is at stake, but her participation is not. While her role is the thematic issue of the scene, her subject-position is ignored. This dissymmetry is the figuration of the story of Beth: the woman caught between systems, between men. In this house of bread, staying (institutionally) and eating are one and the same thing. As for the generous reception, it is hardly likely that the Levite, a man who lives in a tent, would have been able to acquire, as a secondary woman, a slave, the daughter of the owner of the house of bread.

The final decision to leave the patrilocal house is taken, strangely, toward the end of the day. The realistic reader is inclined to wonder why, after so many days, the Levite could not have stayed one more night, in order to be able to make the dangerous trip through a foreign land in a single day. As subsequent events show, it would have been much wiser, either to make the decision earlier, or to wait one more night. That is precisely why it happens this way. The husband's inability is being represented. Narrative differs from "real life"; it has a different logic by which it can represent aspects of "real life" that would remain unseen in a realistic reading of the text. Beth has to be from Bethlehem to show that patrilocal marriage is at stake; similarly, the Levite has to make this unwise decision so that the symbolization of the competition can unfold. The lateness of the hour is expressed rather ambiguously as "the day has weakened." The speaker here, the father, warns the Levite in these words. The weakening of the day then comes to symbolize the weakening of the system, but this phrase is again ambiguous and can be read by each party to refer to the other's: competition leaves both parties weak. Danger, in the form of social unrest and aggression, is the unavoidable temporary consequence of revolutionary change. Within the isotopy of the Freudian confusion,

the threat from the father, his warning about danger, will be a stain on the daughter. She will have to pay for it dearly.

The next and last scene that will detain us here is the act of giving Beth up under the pressure of the threat of homosexual rape. The weakened Levite is further weakened and expels Beth. He performs this gesture of renunciation when he can no longer sustain the struggle. It is also the moment when Beth is not herself qualified as a virgin, but is juxtaposed to one. The scene follows upon the hospitality of an old man, father of a virgin daughter, who takes the group of travelers into his house. As a fellow Ephraimite, he protects the Levite against the threat of xenophobic aggression.

Social disorder is often represented as homosexual rape. Combining two forms of transgression, homosexual rape is, in this context, disrespect of two forms of property. The first is the property that a "nubile," rapeable being is defined as being, namely, possessed by some owner. The second is the "proper" relations of sexuality belonging to a social group. The "sons of Belial"—the negative description places the narrator clearly in one camp—who besiege the house explicitly demand the Levite, the guest, to be brought out for rape. The man who did not accept the rules of the patrilocal society, the man who broke the rules of "proper" sexual property, now has no business being safely inside the house of another father. Since the risks of autonomy are what he wanted, they are there to show him how deeply disturbing his desire is to the social order.

The father, his host, protects the man, as Beth's father did by insisting that he stay in the house. Both in Genesis 19 and in this story, the father protects his male guest through the offer of the two virgin daughters. However, the "sacred law of hospitality" is not sufficient to account for this dissymmetry in either case. In Genesis, it is true that the guests are divine messengers and the daughters Lot's own. And perhaps in Genesis giving priority to the property of the other over one's own makes Lot seem commendable—that is, if we ignore the nature of the gift and the subsequent fate of the daughters. But in the case of the host at Gibeah, not even this holds true: offering Beth, he disposes of somebody else's property. She belongs to the guest, hence, he should protect her as well. Or doesn't she? Does this father simply not acknowledge the virilocal marriage, so that he still considers Beth the property of her father? The gift of her would, then, both protect his guest and strip him of his otherness, turn him into a "proper" man submitted to the father. Beth, the stain of the "other" marriage, would be eliminated.

The daughter and the patrilocal wife are both offered as nubile,

that is as rapeable, stuff. The sons of Belial are explicitly invited to humiliate these daughters. But the men do not listen to him. They press the guest further. The story of Lot had stopped where the story of Beth enters its most horrible phase. Since the Levite is the man who tried to change the social order, he has to account for it; he has to show that he is up to his claims. He fails the test, utterly. With his last bit of power, enough to condemn his newly acquired wife to the most execrable of fates, he seizes her and throws her out, back into the old system. This gesture is his final renunciation of what he had tried in vain to accomplish, and it is this humiliation of him, not the fate of Beth, that the events of the next chapter will set out to avenge. He fails as the successor of the father, just as the fathers themselves failed to protect their daughters. They clung to their daughters, but they did not save them from exposure.

Seen in the light of social reform and the chaos ensuing from it, the daughter's fate receives ritual meaning. Victimized between two rival groups, she is quite literally sacrificed. Subjectivity is denied her; she becomes merely a role. It is the multiple meanings of the concept of virginity and the contradictions, confusions, and conflations it entails that qualify the virgin daughter for the role of sacrificial victim. It is my contention that there is, indeed, an intrinsic bond between the idea of virginity, the competition between fathers and next-generation men, and the extreme violence that takes the form of ritual sacrifice. It is to the idea of sacrifice itself that we shall now turn.

Beth's death will be seen here as a mock sacrifice, as an extreme case of violence without the slightest token of propriety, as the paradigm of cultural regression. It is not a pleasant task to analyze in detail the fate that befalls this female character. Such is, nevertheless, the goal of this section. The extreme violence can only be mastered if it is understood.

As opposed to Bath and Kallah, Beth's death is described in its successive stages in so much detail that it is almost not represented in itself. The gift of her, the rape and torture, and the dragging of her (body) on the donkey, and the slaughtering are the four major phases of what we can only refer to as Beth's murder. All four *are* the murder; therefore, the question of the exact moment of her death is irrelevant. The following analysis is meant to point out the ritual aspects of the treatment, the systematic relation to sacrifice it entails, and the ultimate resolution of the opposition between body and voice that is one of the founding figurations of biblical theology (Scarry 1985). As a parody of Girardian sacrifice, each of the four phases is characterized, not only by the countersacrificial aspects, but also by the violence practiced on a stand-in victim and by violence for its own sake. I will map out the two sets of aspects, sacrificial and violent, for each of the three stages of Beth's cruel execution.

Giving Beth Over

Each of the three stages is in itself elaborated with the deliberation and detail characteristic of sadistic discourse. Giving Beth over is in its turn a complete narrative cycle of opening, development, and closing of the sequence. As a first response to the knock on the door and the threat of homosexual rape, the host acts. Posing as a father, he offers the two young women, his own daughter/property and the other man's wife/property, as a gift to the rapists. His speech-act is the counterpart of Jephthah's vow. Both acts are conditional gifts. Jephthah requested victory over, safety from, a collective enemy as a condition for his gift. This father requests safety from a nonmilitary equivalent of a collective enemy. This is, therefore, again a moment where the political coherence shifts into the countercoherence. Jephthah offered an unknown person, but one who had to be his nubile daughter. This man offers a known set of persons, two equally nubile women, one of each sexual institution, a daughter and a wife: the one still the exclusive property of the father, still available for patrilocal marriage, the other, on her way to becoming a virilocal wife, yet resting in a patrilocal house. But Jephthah offered the gift to his helper, the *gibbor* who would provide the victory. This man offers the woman to the enemies themselves,

thus stripping from the sacrifice its central feature, the divine addressee. It is, therefore, a sacrifice, but one even more improper than Jephthah's.

As a second phase of this first sequence, the man takes hold of his wife. Grammatically, the sentence is ambiguous. It is not absolutely clear which of the two men does this. The representational mode of the story, however, gives some indication. If we look at roles, the husband is the only male participant who is only referred to as "the man"; the others have more specific "names." In terms of positions, the man is struggling to pose as just a *man,* an independent husband, rather than a patrilocal son-in-law. Moreover, the antecedent of "his" in the phrase "his [patrilocal] wife" is clearer when we assume that the husband is the man referred to. Moreover, as an agent in the fabula the husband is the subject of the act of "taking hold of her," a phrase repeated three times in the episode. The episode, then, depicts the act of turning a subject into an object, hence, a potential sacrificial victim.[21]

The act is the equivalent of Abraham's binding of Isaac. Again, as in Jephthah's case, the husband is motivated to the act by a desire to protect himself from the danger represented by the group of male enemies outside. Where the voice of the host fails to be effective, the husband hopes that the body of the woman will have the desired result. The meaning of this act is the same as that of Jephthah's: a gift as bargain. But a gift is meant to establish a relationship; this one only serves as a protection, through separation, from a negative relationship.

Although, again, the addressee characteristic of sacrifice is replaced by an "improper" addressee, a nonsacred one and one too close to the sacrificial agent, the sacrificial aspect of the gesture becomes clear when we compare it to the gift of young women, occurring in many myths and folktales, to an outside enemy like a dragon or some other monster. The film *King Kong,* despite its parodic aspects, confirms that the basic structure of the gift of a woman to an enemy is sacrificial. Instead of fighting the enemy, who is considered impossible to fight, the giver hopes he will be satisfied. The gesture is based on magic: the partial satisfaction is hoped to ward off the real, uncontrollable danger.

The third and closing phase of the sequence is the acceptance of the gift. It raises questions that no commentator so far has been able to answer. Why would the rapists, who refused to be satisfied with the offer of the two nubile women, accept the gift of only one? This is a major argument in favor of my interpretation of the story. Taking the two women would be pointless, since it is the man not the father who

has to be punished. The rapists are not interested in attacking the father's property. Rather, they want to eliminate the threat represented by the new institution that the man stands for. Taking the father's daughter *and* Beth would obscure their message. Taking only Beth, the token of the new institution, makes the man "normal," harmless; it strips him of his otherness. Seeing their acceptance of Beth in this light further supports the idea that the whole episode is to be seen as a ritual. The choice of the victim partially supports both Girard's and Jay's views of sacrifice. For Jay, it represents the issue of lineage, although the straight shedding of blood will soon be replaced by a still more direct attack on birth-giving. For Girard, it represents the scapegoat: the victim whose side nobody will adopt in protection, although the scapegoat is not arbitrarily chosen nor completely without relationship to the culprit. The rapists want precisely that victim who stands in for, who symbolizes, the threat to the social order. Either the man or the wife will serve their purpose, but the wife even better since she is *not* guilty (Girard) and since she bodily represents the issue (Jay). The host's daughter does not serve the purpose.

The sacrificial aspects of this first sequence are complemented by aspects of naked violence that turn the sacrifice into a parody, an excess, of Girardian sacrifice. The first phase, the opening of the sequence, is poetically designed to underscore this relationship between sacrifice and its parody. Verse 23 begins with the narrator's voice describing the subject as "the man, the master of the house," enhancing the position of power this father holds when the master *of the house* goes *out of the house.* Transgressing the limits of safety that the pounding on the door had already *entstellt*—displaced—the direction of the master is away from the husband and toward the aggressors (as opposed to Genesis 19).

The narrator's statement is followed by the host's speech. Being the master, the local figure, and the host, it is appropriate that he use his voice to protect his guest's body. His first word is "*do not.*" "Act not so wickedly," he says. The ground for the host's expectation that the mediating argument might be effective cannot surprise us anymore. The fact that the man has come into a father's house indicates that he has given up his attempt to establish the new institution and has submitted to the old one. He has dwelled too long in the father-house, eating the bread of communion, both in Beth's father's house and in this host's patrilocal house, to be able to stand for virilocality, in spite of his attempt to do so by taking Beth to his own house. Beth's father, warning him that the day was already weakened, had predicted this contamination. Therefore, the host has power over the daughters,

over his own, but also over the wife who does not belong on the road with a stranger, but who belongs in a father-house.

The end of verse 23 initiates a figure that encompasses verse 24 and that I call a chiasmus of entanglement: "Do not do this wanton thing," mirrored in the encouragement to do "what is good in your eyes." Seeing is the key that turns the bad into the good. The phrase comes straight from chapter 11: "behold my daughter" recalls the crucial phrase "behold his daughter" uttered by the narrator at Jephthah's confrontation with his victim. What Bath herself added in her story is here added by the father: "nubile." He thus turns her into an absolute object—"Behold my daughter, nubile, and his patrilocal wife [equally nubile]." The term that signified a future-oriented life-phase in the female voice becomes a synonym of rapability. *Behold* stands between two other occurrences of the act of focalization—"since [= seeing that] this man has come into my house"—"behold"—"do to them what is good in your eyes." The first focalization draws attention to the *act* of the man who is the subject of submission to the rules that his act signifies. The second one represents the objectification of the woman. After that turning point, the next focalization becomes the freedom of anarchy: submission to the rules on the one hand, free disposal of the objects on the other. The chiasmus reveals the reversal of values entailed by the difference in gender. Not only is the man subject and are the women objects, but the "wicked thing" becomes "good" when it is a humbling of the women. The sequence "do not do the wicked thing"—"humble them"—"do what is good in your eyes"—"do not this wanton thing" figures the ideologeme that differentiates values on the basis of gender.[22] Chiasmus being a figure of entanglement, the very fact that the ideologeme is expressed in such a figure further develops its meaning. It entangles within a causal relation the two aspects of rules and anarchy according to gender. The two sides of the dichotomy presuppose each other: rules can be enforced, but only at the price of freedom. Men can be protected, but only at the price of women. Such is the deeper meaning of the so-called "study of hospitality" that is enacted here.

The rapists, however, do not listen to the voice of the host. They do not want words, they want a body. Wounding the body is the affirmation of mastery they are seeking. The inefficacy of the father's voice inaugurates the next phase of the violence, but it is the husband who makes it possible. The man who failed to make it to his own house hands over the object of contempt and of contest: the woman.[23] Beth is given up in an ultimate act of power and of violence. The man lays hands on her, and throws her out into the night.

Overconsumption of Beth's Body

Once handed over by the husband, Beth is nothing more than an absolute object, a token of the man's/men's power to reduce her to that state. She will be raped and tortured all night, until the morning. The sacrificial meaning of this durative event[24] is antithetic to the prescriptions of the burnt offering. The interdiction against consuming the body of the victim is transgressed to excess. The collective rape is a collective sacrificial "meal," a fellowship meal of male bonding, wherein men, in solidarity with each other, share the consumption of the "other," the victim who does not belong to the group that the meal has the function to constitute.[25] As Jay (1985) points out, every negative is boundless, since its only feature is to be other than its positive. The opposite of the burnt offering, then, is dangerously close to the absolute impropriety that negates it: the absolute consumption of collective rape.

The third feature that turns this event into a systematic anti-sacrifice is the defilement that is rape. Where fire purifies, rape defiles, and the desacralization of the victim it entails is a comment on the desacralization that is, in the eyes of the patrilocal town, the attempt to defy the institution. The addressee of this act is not God, but society itself. And in a sense, society is as sacred, as vital, as the life-giving god. The woman who is unfaithful (*zanah*) to her father by following her husband becomes common property of everyone. For the opposite of the father, the nonfather, is a random category without positive limits.[26]

There is some narrative logic in the fact that this horrible response to the first and so far only action whose subject is the woman, the action of *zanah*, is in its turn followed by her second and last action. The sacrifice that, instead of providing light, took place during the dark night, ends, again, with an anti-sacrificial aberration: the victim is released. We cannot say: the woman is released, for she is a woman no more. She cannot really act. Her death is already occurring; only, it takes more time.[27] The woman who was able to be "unfaithful" to her father[28] and visit her husband in verse 2 is now, toward the end of her story, a dead body that can only drag herself, of all places, to a father's house.[29]

This gesture has been widely acclaimed as utterly dramatic, often taken to redeem the story's morals, which are otherwise so shaky. For the purpose of the present discussion, it suffices to take her gesture as ritual, as the final gesture of her dying body. Lying down at the door of the father's house, the institutional context which caused her death,

Beth's ultimate gesture resacralizes her as a sacrificial victim who, like Isaac, submits to her fate. While Isaac's submission saved him, Beth's does not, although it should. Because of its multi-indexical meaning, Beth's gesture is dramatic indeed, but not necessarily redemptive of the story. In its attempt to reach the house of safety, the hand designates the cause of her death: the father and the husband, the two competing men who found safety inside the house at the cost of her expulsion.

We can be brief about the violent aspect of the sequence. It is obvious that rape is not one form of violence, but a basic one. Penetrating the body, not with "the mouth of the sword" but with *zachar*, with masculinity itself, is inflicting an incurable wound, incurable, precisely, because it can never be forgotten: *zachar*, memory is the wound itself. Moreover, rape attacks, not the body in general, but the female body as female, the woman *as* woman, for her femaleness. At the moment of her undoing, Beth becomes the personification of femaleness: the pierced one, *neqebah*. Inflicting the memory of maleness, not *on* but *within* her body as the deadly wound that undoes her subjectivity—that is rape.

"They raped and tortured her": are these different acts? Torture is, according to Scarry (1985, 27–58), an attempt to unmake the victim's subjectivity by, first, unmaking her world. The bodily pain, next, is denied and translated into power. Rape, on the other hand, is an exercise of power. If rape is the destruction of the subject through her inside, torture starts at the outside. The two meet inside the body that ceases to be a body, because there is no subject left to experience it as her body. Both verbs, rape and torture, occur because in the compulsion to tell, the text needs to voice the body's experience, to express all the phases of the process of total destruction of a human, female being. The narrative compulsion uses all the means at its disposal to accomplish this impossible aim.[30] The two verbs are presented as durative and repetitive at the same time. They all raped her and tortured her, again and again, all night. Is Beth dead when the morning comes, and when she is, ironically, "released"? It does not matter, and of course she is.

Slaughter and Shattering

The final stage of the sacrifice of Beth starts when dawn chases the night away. The image of the woman lying on the threshold emerges from the dark; the narrative becomes more and more visual. This image forms the transition from the middle stage of the story to the final one. For the reader it is the most moving image of the whole story; not so for the husband, however. He literally steps over her body. As verse

27 has it, "he went out to go his way" before he even sees her. His purpose is to go his way in order to have his way. It seems that the whole event was just a bad dream, or, worse, has not affected him at all. But he cannot escape focalization: "Behold, the woman, his [patrilocal] wife, fallen down at the door of the house, her hands on the threshold." Her last act, her ritual gesture, is repeated, so that her husband cannot ignore her state, her request, and her accusation.

The man is, however, insensitive to the solemnity of the gesture. He who, during the night, had lain hold on her and thrown her out, repeats his authoritarian behavior: "Up!" is his command. And as if between them there had not been this irreversible verticalization of relations, he continues: "Let *us* be going," going *his* way. The response, however, is: "And none answered." Brought from one house to another, traveling from man to man, the woman can only refuse interpellation now that she has ceased to exist as a woman. Her answer is not "no"; there is no woman, "none" to answer. She has become voiceless. For the second time, then, the husband "takes hold" of her, more precisely, seizes her, as he will later seize the knife. Made an absolute object, she is now thrown over the donkey like a package.

Although failing to grasp the ritual significance of the woman's final gesture, the husband does participate in her sacrifice. The narrator uses sacrificial language, the language we know from Isaac's near-sacrifice, to make this clear. Once in his place—the word house, significantly, does not occur here—"he seized *the* knife." The definite article is replaced, by both the JPS (Slotki 1980, 303) and Soggin (1981, 289), by the indefinite form. Thus the commentators decline to respond to the intertextual reference to the other sacrificial text. Seizing *the* knife is, indeed, starting the sacrifice itself, for which the previous part was the preparation. But there is no divine voice, here, to intervene.

For the third time, the husband lays hold on his patrilocal wife—this time in order to put an end, if not to her life, in any case to her existence. Her bodily integrity, so effectively destroyed already by rape and torture, is further sacrificed, disintegrated: "He divided her according to her bones." The terminology is technical; it refers to butchery, to the slaughter of the sacrificial animal. Her body will be shattered, not like ashes on the wind, but like rotting flesh, not purified but defiled, and, according to the purity laws, doubly so. The raped body is now an untouchable, defiling body, an *abjection* (Kristeva 1982). The Levite, the priest who is supposed to be the "proper" sacrificial agent, is the executioner of this anti-sacrifice that reverses all the rules.

Already defiled, the body is now defiling, and the woman becomes after death the unwilling agent of the subsequent collective

butchery of intertribal war. Beth's end comments on the dialectic of body and voice (Scarry 1985). In a book where a man's voice can be deadly to the body, the woman's body becomes voice. In this final event, the sending out of her remains "throughout all the borders of Israel," the anti-sacrifice becomes the exemplary content of the refrain that begins and ends the story: "In those days there was no king in Israel."

With the husband as the final subject of violence in this episode, the sequence of subjects is a meaningful one: the father, the community, the husband. The latter's violence resides in all of his five actions. Speaking to her with a command is, in view of what he *sees* ("behold"), a first violence done to her state. Not responding to her triple signifying gesture is denying her in this her ultimate moment of being. Denying her, indeed, is what the rapists have been utterly preoccupied with doing and what is the very act of rape,[31] and the husband, repeating it, consecrates their deed, as *their* priest. "Taking" her is again confirming her state as absolute object; it is the arrogant mastery of man over things[32] that—in gender-relations, in relations between man and nature,[33] and in relations between parents and children—destroys the integrity of the other. Using the knife against her is participating in the torture that befell her the previous night. Cutting her to pieces is going even further.

Dismembering her dead body is not only a desacralization but also an erasure of all her remaining humanity. It is as if the man is trying, in overdoing the violence already done to her, retrospectively to affirm *his* mastery, as against the mastery of the rapists, over her. Even at this poignant moment, the moment of Beth's dismemberment, the men compete.

Sending out the pieces of what was once Beth, the man denies she has ever existed. For the pieces of her body are, in a last and ultimately violent lie, used against her. They are used to cover up his own violence against her by the accusation of the violence done by the rapists that, for all its horror, is outdone by the man's secret, private actions. Ironically again, and irony is the only possible mode left after the silencing of Beth's voice, the public act of sending her body out is a way of hiding, of not proclaiming, what has really happened. Moreover, it is an ironic reversal of Abraham's multiplication. The woman who could have provided this man with multiple descendants is destroyed by multiple men and then multiplied. This is a different kind of multiplication indeed.

After Gideon's sacrifice in chapter 6, no sacrifice is truly proper. Some of them are proper but ineffective because they are not initiated by the subject, like Manoah's, while others are both ineffective and improper. Beth's sacrifice can be read as a systematic critique of the social chaos of the period. It is an anti-sacrifice in that it is anti-sacral and desacralizing, in all its details. It is not a burnt offering but a "raw" sacrifice. Instead of pure ashes, rotting flesh is scattered—not vertically, given to the deity, but horizontally, sent to the tribes. Within the isotopy of Lévi-Strauss's opposition between "raw" and "cooked," it represents a regression, backward, away from culture. Within Scarry's view, it represents the unmaking of the world. Where non-use is required of the "proper" sacrifice, Beth's body is used over and over again, for competition, possession, rape, torture, and for messages written in body language, to be sent out where verbal language has failed.

The sacrifice is not followed up by a redressing of the crimes. It is followed by more crime. The competition cannot but go on, and go on in violence. The two scenes wherein the eleven united tribes are so concerned about the fate of Benjamin, the culprit that we might be moved by their generosity, receive a different meaning within the social structure that I have chosen as the basis of my reading. Saving the tribe, saving the integrity of the "body" of Israel, that is, may be one motivation. But making the Benjaminites adopt, by force, the new matrimonial institution is certainly a way to combine the rescue of the tribe, the revenge against their transgression, and the enforcement of the new order.[34] Indeed, the Benjaminites are forced to "take" wives, to abduct them, to take them to their own houses. The integrity of Israel is not only threatened by the lack of wives, but simultaneously threatened by the Benjaminite deviation from "proper" virilocal marriage. The issue, then, is patriliny, and patriliny being "unnatural," the basic cultural act of sacrifice must reconfirm it over and over again. As long as voice and body are opponents in the struggle for the enforcement of culture, women will "lift up their voices, and weep," even in death.