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Cut & Splice: Reading Judges 19 Cinematically

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Abstract

What is the purpose of the violence in Judges 19 and what does this narrative aim to accomplish in its readers? Phyllis Trible (1984), Cheryl Exum (1993), and more recently, Margaret Atwood (2019), suggest that this violence is viewed positively by the narrator and serves to reinforce patriarchal ideology. I propose that a different conclusion may be reached by adopting a 'grammatical-cinematic' approach. The goal of this approach is to read the biblical narrative through film, i.e., to tell the biblical story in the language of the cinema by focusing on the 'cinematic sensibilities' of the text. Using examples from Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, I argue that this approach can recover the agency and dignity of the woman and better visualize the brutality of violence. Finally, I argue that one can understand the object of the author's critique to be the events and characters of the narrative.

Keywords

religion & violence – Hebrew Bible/Old Testament – film studies – feminist criticism – narrative criticism

Introduction

From Margaret Atwood's recent novel, *The Testaments* (2019), comes an unexpected reading of Judges 19 that points to a more-than-sinister purpose behind the narrative. This long-awaited sequel follows roughly 15 years after the harrowing events that take place in the *Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Atwood's dystopian theocracy of Gilead utilizes a concubinage system to produce heirs for the country's leaders. These 'handmaids' are taught subservience by the

'Aunts,' who often quote or reference biblical narratives in their teaching. In *The Testaments*, Atwood reveals that the children of the elite members of society were also trained in the theological-ideology of Gilead.

In one of these lessons, Aunt Vidala tells the story of Judges 19 to Agnes and her classmates. She explains that the Handmaid (the woman) got what she deserved for running away (78). "'This story is God's way of telling us that we should be content with our lot and not rebel against it.' The man in charge should be honoured by the woman, she said. If not, this was the result. God always made the punishment fit the crime" (80). Becka, one of Agnes' classmates, has a trauma-induced breakdown when hearing the story. Another Aunt comforts her by giving an alternate reading: "The concubine was sorry for what she had done, and she wanted to make amends, so she sacrificed herself to keep the kind traveler from being killed by those wicked men.' . . . 'That was brave and noble of the concubine, don't you think?'" (79–80). Even this 'redemptive' reading continues to reinforce Gilead's theologically informed ideology.

Later in the novel, Agnes and Becka—now training to be Aunts themselves—are allowed to read the Bible. Agnes reads Judges 19–21 for herself and discovers the horrible truth: the concubine was not given a choice; there was no nobility in her act (302–04). This discovery causes Agnes to question and doubt her faith, both in Gilead's theology and in the society itself. As Agnes discusses what it feels like to lose her faith, Becka explains that she must choose between believing in Gilead or God. Agnes is afraid that she might not be able to believe in either one. From the vantage point of pop-culture (though Atwood herself is a highly accomplished writer), one can easily feel gripped by the ideological undercurrent: if you look closer at the biblical narrative, and especially Judges 19, you will discover something alarming that will ultimately dismantle your faith in God.

This example from pop-culture is a reverberating echo of ideological-critical readings found in feminist biblical scholarship, and also, a demonstration of the potency of such readings.[1] Atwood's example artfully forms an illustration of certain readings that take seriously the depiction and treatment of the woman in Judges 19 as an indication of the text's patriarchal origin or ideology. The narrative is also the embodiment of this patriarchal ideology. Like other scholars have suggested, most notably Phyllis Trible (1984) and Cheryl Exum (1993), Atwood understands the author or narrator of Judges 19 to be giving a positive evaluation of the events, speech-acts, or beliefs that occur in the text.[2]

1 I am not suggesting direct influence of biblical scholarship on Atwood's reading, though, it would not be surprising if this were the case.

2 Trible would probably prefer the term 'rhetorical criticism' to describe her work.

These ideological-critical readings are enticing in both academic circles and in pop-culture, namely because they have announced the discovery of a 'man behind the curtain' of the Bible. This man is in fact *the* man—the patriarchy. These readings valuably point out the fact that Judges 19 is not simply ancient entertainment, but a story designed to indoctrinate its audience. Moreover, these readings and concerns rightly reorient the reader to the interpretive and ethical difficulties of the text. 'Patriarchal' defines both the ancient world in which these texts were written as well as the successive historical periods that interpreted them. But if patriarchal ideology is better described in terms of a spectrum, then where might one place the ideology inscribed in Judges 19? Put another way, what exactly does this narrative aim to accomplish in its readers?

I wish to explore this question through the medium of film, using the cinematic grammar of Quentin Tarantino as a dialogical partner.[3] Although it is often used merely for entertainment, it has long been recognized that film is another medium of communication. To accomplish this goal, a film often combines visual, dialogical, narrative, and aesthetic elements which are synthesized by filmmakers to create a powerful and complex visual narrative. These elements of film, then, are not implemented haphazardly: what goes into a scene is intentional, aimed at communicating something which supports the overall purpose of the film. Before the end credits roll, audiences will

3 The interaction between film and faith is neither new, nor is it a narrow discipline. Often the connections between film and faith are broad (For an overview of the discussion see Christianson, Francis and Telford, 2005; Flesher and Torry, 2007; Marsh and Ortiz, 1998; Martin and Ostwalt, 1995; Reinhartz, 2013). However, our task is to describe how the *Bible* relates to film, and there exists two main approaches. The first focuses on the reception of the Bible in film. Of special interest to this approach are adaptions of biblical narratives and other films that make explicit mention or use of the Bible. Treating these films as texts that can be analyzed according to standard literary methods, these films can be understood to form part of the biblical text's or theology's reception history (Telford, 2005:24; Reinhartz, 2013:4; e.g. Cecil B DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*). Within this approach, scholars critique culture and society through an analysis of the film's use of theology. The second approach can be understood as dialogical, in that it brings an aspect of film in dialogue with a biblical text. The analysis of the Ehud narrative by Eric Christianson (2013) brings the narrative and themes of Spaghetti Westerns into dialogue with the biblical text to argue Judges may function as a social satire against the limits of violence. This essay by Christianson provides a helpful model for how one might read the Bible *with* film. More recently, Michelle Fletcher (2017:128) utilizes cinematic techniques and genre conventions to argue that reading Revelation through the lens of 'pastiche' will better account for how the Old Testament allusions function in the book. By using examples from Spaghetti Westerns and Film Noir, Fletcher shows, among other things, the usefulness of film in analyzing the biblical text itself. What distinguishes Fletcher's approach from Christianson's is that she allows cinematic techniques, not simply narrative content, to affect her interpretation of the biblical text.

experience thousands of minute hermeneutical decisions made by the cast and crew, director and producer.

I wish to suggest that understanding how these cinematic decisions are made may bring illumination to our reading of Judges 19. Part of this is learning how to visualize a text through the story-telling technique of film, that is, to allow the biblical narrator control over the film making process.[4] To begin, I will briefly explain how directors typically communicate through film according to a basic 'grammar'. Secondly, I will discuss how a specific director, Quentin Tarantino, uses that grammar in order to convey meaning through depictions of violence. Finally, I will bring the cinematic grammar of Tarantino into dialogue with Judges 19 to argue that the narrative of Judges 19 is critiquing Israel's actions rather than commending them.

The Grammar of Film

Like any art-form, film has at its foundation the desire to communicate, and thus, it also has its own set of rules and conventions to convey meaning. This communication is bound up in a complex visual and auditory 'language,' and its 'grammar' must be learned if it is to be analyzed and applied to the biblical text. Many have used the approach of semiotics to understand how what is on screen (i.e., the symbols) relates to world of the audience (Browne, 1998:13). Alexander Mackendrick (2004:xxxvi) director and long-time professor at California Institute of the Arts, explains that although the term 'grammar' may be misleading as there is no real language of the cinema, he hasn't found a suitable replacement. What forms part of his hesitation is that this language of the cinema can be misinterpreted to mean the dialogue within the film, but he argues that this 'film grammar' already existed in the era of silent films. These films communicated their emotional and dramatic stories without words, relying upon the 'invented use of film grammar' (Mackendrick, 2004:4). This phenomenon occurs because film often communicates much more than one can intend to say. Sydney Pollack, director of *Out of Africa*, explains,

> There is a grammar of filmmaking, a basic grammar that you depart from. Always. And I think it's important to learn the grammar first. Otherwise, it's like calling yourself an abstract painter because you cannot paint something that is real . . . You can make your own rules, and you can break all the rules you want . . . but I think before you do that, you need to un-

4 I am indebted to my colleague, Alex Kirk, for this phrase.

> derstand the basic grammar. The rules give you a standard, a reference, from which you can then create something original.[5]

Rules are meant to be broken, but they first must be learned. Good filmmaking requires a director to understand this basic grammar first before subverting it. Director David Cronenberg explains that the grammar of film provides the basis for what the audience expects. The job of the filmmaker is to use the flexibility of the grammar to find the balance between 'what's expected, what's necessary, and what's exciting.'[6] In order to produce a film, the filmmaker must decide what they want to communicate, and then process how they will achieve that communication through a dynamic visual medium. The filmmaker does all of this according to this film grammar.

This grammar is comprised mainly of three things. First, the filmmaker communicates by how a scene is staged. Everything in the shot, from costumes, décor, lighting, actors and their movement, can be utilized to create meaning (Baker, 2005:44). All of these directorial micro-decisions constitute the *mise-en-scène* and can import thematic meaning into a scene.[7] Secondly, meaning is communicated by how the filmmaker decides to film the scene (*mise-en-shot*). The various types of shots (close-up, tracking, wide-angle, point of view, etc.) all accomplish different things for the director. Additionally, both the perspective of the camera in relation to its subject matter and the distance of the shot can aid in a director's interest to create a particular emotional connection between the audience and a character.[8] Thus, it is crucial to pay attention to not just what is being filmed, but how. Finally, the filmmaker can communicate through how individual shots are edited together. Ultimately, editing is how the narrative is crafted together in an understandable way for the audience, but the process of arranging the selected shots reflect the overall purpose and concern of the filmmaker (Dick, 1998:73). The editing process affects the film at

5 Sydney Pollack, interview by Laurent Tirard, *Moviemakers' Master Class,* 18–19.

6 David Cronenberg, interview by Laurent Tirard, *Moviemakers' Master Class,* 105. See also, Joel and Ethan Coen, interview by Laurent Tirard, *Moviemakers' Master Class,* 160; Martin Scorsese, interview by Laurent Tirard, *Moviemakers' Master Class,* 63.

7 A good example of this is found in Martin Scorcese's Taxi Driver (1976). While the film is set in 1970's New York City, the director continually characterizes Robert De Niro's character as the cowboy of a Spaghetti Western. From his wardrobe to his weapon, De Niro's character becomes the typical Western hero who rids his town of crime and manages to save the damsel. Without these visual "western" elements, the effect is lost; it is only a story about a New York City cab driver.

8 A good example of this can be found in Stanley Kubrick's The Shining (1980). Identification and suspense are built as the camera tracks Danny Lawrence pedaling through the empty hotel hallways, ending with a shock encounter with the ghost twins.

a macro and micro level in that it affects both the overall shape and structure of the film (e.g. the non-linear story line of Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* [1994]), as well as how individual shots are spliced together to create a coherent and meaningful scene (e.g. how two actions may be presented simultaneously by the process of 'cross-cutting' [Dick, 1998:64]. This can create a complementary or contrastive relationship between the two actions [Hayward, 1996:59]).[9]

These three elements, *mise-en-scène*, *mise-en-shot*, and editing, make up the basic grammar of film. These are the fundamentals of making a film, but it is more important to know how these rules are followed, broken, or improved upon by certain directors. There is never just one way to film a scene, for the language of film is capable of telling different stories and conveying different meanings. Next, we will turn our attention to our auteur example, Quentin Tarantino, in order to understand how he utilizes this basic film grammar to convey meaning in his depiction of cinematic violence and gore.

The Grammar of Quentin Tarantino's Cinematic Violence

Quentin Tarantino's successful, albeit controversial films, are filled with examples of how a director is able to communicate meaning through the grammar of film. While the content of Tarantino's films could be a fruitful dialogue partner, for our purposes, he will provide useful examples of how a director can communicate meaning through his depictions of violence.

All of Tarantino's films feature shocking depictions of violence that are usually difficult to watch. His fight scenes are often filmed in long takes allowing the viewer to feel as if they are right in the action. Blood and gore also feature as an aesthetic of Tarantino's style. His movies in which revenge is the central narrative (e.g. *Kill Bill Vol. 1* [2003], *Kill Bill Vol. 2* [2004]. *Inglorious Basterds* [2009], *Django Unchained* [2012]), feature an exaggerated, excessive, and often absurd use of blood and gore. *Inglorious Basterds* delights in forcing the audience to watch as the Jewish-American guerilla squad scalp their slain Nazi enemies. Other films such as *Reservoir Dogs* [1992] and *Pulp Fiction* depict violence through realism. These different cinematic approaches to depicting violence can invoke different emotional responses. To complicate these, Tarantino

9 A good example of cross-cutting is in Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), where Marlon Brando's character approaches the antagonist Kurtz to slay him. Just as he strikes one of his many blows, the camera cuts to the ritual sacrifice of a bull happening outside of the temple. The scene continually cuts back and forth to these two actions in order to establish the connection that Kurtz is akin to a sacrificial offering.

regularly juxtaposes the violence with humor or comedic elements that can deepen the emotional confusion, frustration, and tension for his audience.

However, his violence is not without purpose, and this may be illuminating for our reading of Judges 19. Tarantino's screenplay, *Natural Born Killers* (1994), features a serial killing couple reminiscent of Bonnie and Clyde as the protagonists. Charismatic and cool, they become famous and are cheered on by an adoring fan base, despite their brutal acts of violence. Yet, the audience is not intended to do the same. Instead, Tarantino explains that the audience should be questioning their own emotional experience of the violence, 'Wait a minute, this isn't fun anymore. Why aren't I having fun? And why was I having fun at the beginning?'[10] For Tarantino, violence can be a means to communicate a message. It can act as a tool to shock the audience into critical self-reflection, and this critical self-reflection seems to be intentional rather than an ad hoc phenomenon of those with a conscience.

Tarantino also provides examples of how one can meaningfully depict violence in order to address social issues. For example, in *Django Unchained*, Tarantino utilizes the historical situation of chattel-slavery in the antebellum South in order to address the issue of racism (Schuchman, 2013). While the Western film genre usually skirts around the issues of slavery and other oppressive actions towards ethnic minorities, *Django Unchained* brings it to the foreground as the protagonist is a freed slave who fights to liberate his wife (Vognar, 2013:30). Akin to *Inglourious Basterds*, Tarantino presents a story of revenge, packed with violence and humor, that features the historical victims as the victors. Perhaps, as one review suggested, this more comedic approach can highlight certain aspects of the cruelty that the more serious discourse on slavery cannot (Carpio, 2013:12). Yet, it is not all humour as much of the Film's violence comes from showing the crueler aspects of slavery, which is Tarantino's way of forcing his audience to contemplate on the evils of slavery (Pulver, 2012).

Certain viewers may find Tarantino's depictions of violence to be gratuitous and disturbing. While the necessities of these depictions may be critiqued, what is important is to understand *how* and *why* he uses violence. Often, his nuanced perspective becomes drowned out in a sea of blood. Yet, it is when the violence is the most unbearable to watch and the most absurd it can be, that it communicates his point most profoundly. Something similar may be happening in Judges 19, and Tarantino provides helpful examples of how one might film this narrative.

10 Quentin Tarantino, "Answers First, Questions Later". Interviewed by Graham Fuller in *Quentin Tarantino: Interviews*, 60–61.

Taking a Grammatical-Cinematic Approach to Judges 19

The dialogical value between Quentin Tarantino and Judges 19 can be accessed through what can be called a grammatical-cinematic approach. The goal is to approach the biblical narrative through film, that is, tell the biblical story in the language of the cinema.[11] How this approach accomplishes this is by elucidating the text's 'cinematic sensibilities' i.e., things that are suited for cinematic depiction.[12] The nature of this enterprise is one of imaginative construction. As there are many ways to shoot a film, so there are an equal amount of ways to visualize the text. In essence, this approach treats the Bible as if it were a screenplay to be filmed and suggests how that might be accomplished. While there is a difference between reading a script and watching a movie, the space between them holds a dialogue that may benefit the biblical scholar. The polyvalency of this approach should be seen as a strength, not a weakness. Its efficacy lies in its ability to give concrete, visual depictions to the biblical text which produce readings that illuminate the often backgrounded or overlooked features of the text.

Through the use of film grammar, and drawing insight from the example of Tarantino, I aim to offer such a visualization that might aide our understanding of Judges 19. The way Tarantino constructs his films, especially how he depicts violence will provide us an example on which to base our own imaginative constructions of Judges 19. In particular, the grammatical-cinematic approach can reclaim a sense of agency for the oppressed and highlight the brutality and absurdity of violence. In so doing, this approach may help us understand what effect the narrative aims to accomplish in its readers.

The Agency of Suffering

Many have commented on the lack of agency with regard to the woman of Judges 19, as well as the treatment of the women at Jabesh Gilead and Shiloh in Judges 21 (see Trible, 1984:66). Here, women are treated by men as pieces of property, sexual objects, and wombs. However, a cinematic perspective may be able to restore the agency of the women in this narrative whilst highlighting their suffering.

Before turning to the narrative, we must address two major ambiguities: what is meant by פִּילֶגֶשׁ and the characterization/actions of the woman

11 For a similar approach to using film, see Copier, 2018:164–173.

12 This approach does not intend to comment on the historical author's aesthetic intentions, though questions of historical conventions of aesthetics and literary conventions are certainly helpful to biblical interpretation.

(Judg. 19:1–3). These ambiguities seem to be a result of narrative artistry or our distance as readers from the text's originating context. While the time-honored translation of פִּילֶגֶשׁ is "concubine," many have noted that this term doesn't fully communicate the proper status of the woman in the ears of modern audiences. Those who make such a claim opt for 'second wife,' 'wife of secondary status,' or may leave it untranslated (cf. Schneider, 2000:247–49). This unnamed woman (in a text full of unnamed characters) is additionally referenced as נַעֲרָה (girl, Judg. 19:4–6, 8–9), אָמָה (handmaid/female servant; Judg. 19:19), and finally as הָאִשָּׁה (the woman; Judg. 19:26). These show a complexity to the woman, even if these identifiers are in relationship to other men (Schneider, 2000:256). J. Cheryl Exum (1993:176) interprets this anonymity as a distancing strategy and an encouragement to the reader 'not to view her as a person in her own right.' To challenge this, Exum names the woman, 'Bath-sheber: the daughter of breaking.'[13] Though these suggestions are helpful, I will refer to the character only as the 'woman', partly because I do not want to address her in relation to the Levite or her Father, neither of whom treat her well, and partly because the anonymity may serve the interests of the storyteller.

As a result of the text's editorial and interpretive history, another textual ambiguity arises in the action of the woman. At face value, וַתִּזְנֶה עָלָיו would appear to mean 'play the harlot' or 'was unfaithful to him' (Judg. 19:2). This is the phrase used throughout the Hebrew Bible to describe both physical and spiritual acts of adultery (Gen. 38:24; Deut. 22:21; Ezek. 16:15). However, the construction of זָנָה followed by עַל is unusual and resists a straightforward translation.[14] Ezekiel 16:15–16 uses עַל in three separate ways. Its first use describes the causation of Israel's unfaithfulness (וַתִּבְטְחִי בְיָפְיֵךְ וַתִּזְנִי עַל־שְׁמֵךְ).[15] The second use describes the location of Israel's 'harlotry' with respect to the partner with whom the harlotry is performed (וַתִּשְׁפְּכִי אֶת־תַּזְנוּתַיִךְ עַל־כָּל־עוֹבֵר).[16] Its third use in verse 16 describes the physical location of the unfaithfulness (וַתִּקְחִי מִבִּגְדֵיךְ וַתַּעֲשִׂי־לָךְ בָּמוֹת טְלֵאוֹת וַתִּזְנִי עֲלֵיהֶם).[17] Hosea 9:1 further complicates the task with the phrase כִּי זָנִיתְ מֵעַל אֱלֹהַיִךְ.[18] The preposition introduces not the person who Israel was been unfaithful with, but the offended party, Israel's God.

13 Helen Paynter (2020:3) names the woman 'Beli Fachad': The Fearless One.

14 The common prepositions are אחרי, את, and אל.

15 'You trusted in your beauty, and you played the whore because of your renown' (author's translation).

16 'You poured our your harlotry upon (with) all who passed by' (author's translation).

17 'You took some of your garments and made for yourself colorful (or patched) shrines, and you played the whore on them' (author's translation). This does not indicate that Israel was unfaithful *with* the garments or shrines.

18 'for you have played the whore, departing from your God' (NRSV).

Some have argued that there is a possible secondary meaning, 'to be angry or hate.' This could be supported by the Akkadian *zenû* (Soggin, 1981:284), as well as a slight change from זָנָה to זָנַח.[19] Hamley (2015), however, explains that זָנַח is *never* used with the preposition עָל, making it an unlikely explanation. Exum (1993:179–80) explains that the woman's action to leave her husband would have been understood as sexual misconduct in its own right. A more recent feminist reading maintains that sexual infidelity is in view, but sees the woman's actions as analogous to those of Israel, i.e. Israel has rejected God by prostituting herself to the nations (Schulte, 2017:37).[20] Jacqueline Lapsley (2005:38) concludes that 'perhaps such ambiguity serves a different function: to dissuade the reader from attempting moral evaluations so early in the story.'[21] From a cinematic perspective, there is no need to resolve these ambiguities in the opening scene. A director may even choose to withhold important information about these characters from their audience. Perhaps something similar is happening in Judges 19.

The story begins with the woman as the primary agent. She leaves the Levite and causes him to come to 'speak to her heart.'[22] Yet, within her father's house, the woman seemingly disappears from the stage, and more importantly, as an agent. The story shifts to what Trible considers 'an exercise in male bonding' (Trible, 1984:68). Cynthia Edenburg (2016:19) notes that the father's joyful reception of the Levite and his lavish hospitality may have ulterior motives. 'He might have feared that the Levite would now demand restitution of the bride-price if the girl did not return to her husband. Moreover, he undoubtedly was glad at the prospect to be free of her upkeep.' Alternatively, Lapsley (2005:39–41) sees reconciliation at the heart of the father's actions. By entreating the Levite to 'strengthen his heart' or 'let his heart be glad,' the father reminds the Levite, along with the reader, of his intention to 'speak to her heart.' Lapsley (2005:40) writes,

19 This would make it read: she rejected/spurned him. Cf. *BHS* which suggests וַתִּזְנַח; LXX^{A} reads ὠργίσθη (he was angry).

20 Cf. Jordan, 1985:292–293, Contra Block, 1999:521–23.

21 Cf. Hamley (2015) who argues "Preserving the ambiguity of זָנָה, the uncertainty about the moral character of all protagonists, is a key part of the portrayal of the breakdown of social, political, ethical, and religious life" (61–62).

22 MT reads וַתְּבִיאֵהוּ בֵּית אָבִיהָ whereas LXX^{A} has ἐπορεύθη making the Levite the primary agent. The Hebrew waw-consecutive communicates the causative result of her actions rather than an additional narrative action: *And so, she caused him to come to her father's house.* This confirms the woman as agent while maintaining the MT's harder reading by keeping the causative force of the hiphil.

> The narrative draws attention to the absence of the young woman by stressing the togetherness of the two men . . . by means of the narrative clues, the narrator draws the reader's attention to the absence of the young woman, and so makes her absence a significant element in interpreting the story as a whole.

Whatever is made of these intentions, the woman's absence and lack of agency is stressed. The woman's absence is stressed again in the Levite's dialogue with his servant in 19:11–13; her lack of agency is stressed in the dialogue between the old man and the townspeople (Judg. 19:23–24). While the woman does not speak, is she truly silent in these scenes? Does the author encode some sort of communication from her character? I would argue yes—the woman's absence is a *felt* absence. Absence is a lack of presence, and an absence is best understood when one can pinpoint exactly what, or *whom*, is missing from a scene. The repetitions that Lapsley mentions draws the reader's attention to the absence of the woman, but simultaneously the character of the woman is present in the mind of reader! Why is the Levite talking to his servant and not his wife? Why does the old man decide the fate of his daughter and this woman? There is no doubt that the woman is treated by the Levite, the Old Man, and the people of the city, (and potentially, even her father) as an object in the story. Like a loud, buzzing, blinking neon sign, the text draws the reader's attention to this fact.

A grammatical-cinematic perspective may help clarify this absence/presence paradox by asking where the camera is located and from whose perspective is this scene shot.[23] As mentioned previously, one could film these scenes in a myriad of ways. If, for example, a film maker wanted to highlight the non-agency and absence of the woman, they could leave her out of these scenes all together—the perspective would be entirely male. However, due to the repeated hints by the narrator that bring the woman to mind, an alternative approach could highlight the physical presence of the woman. As the text calls the character of the woman to the reader's mind through her obvious absence, a cinematic portrayal of the scene captures this subject/object interplay through repeated shifts in camera perspective. This might look like a montage between the Levite's indifference and the close up of the woman as she looks out in silent judgement. The scene could be shot from the woman's perspective as she watches the men dine together. The father-in-law would continually glance towards the camera—towards her—alerting the audience

23 This is rhetorical, as the Bible is not a film. However, it does helpfully reorient our imaginations.

to her presence. With each mention of 'heart' the camera could shift to show the woman. With this, the audience can understand the woman's objectification, but also realize her presence at the same time. Through the use of this editing, the audience would connect the father's invitation to stay with the Levite's original intention. Yet, like the text, this cinematic construction does not need to specify the intentions of the father and whether he acts out of self-interest (Trible), self-preservation (Edenburg), or with the aim of reconciliation (Lapsley). The woman doesn't speak, but that doesn't mean she has to be silenced.[24] Through the medium of film, the woman can be seen to communicate, albeit in non-verbal ways. This would reaffirm her agency that the story began with. It is diminished, but not (yet) gone completely.

The agency and communication of the woman serve to highlight her suffering later in the narrative. By establishing the woman as subject rather than object early on in the film, the director invites the audience into identifying with her throughout the story. If the audience has been identifying with the woman, then they can more fully experience the suffering that she endures. But how should one film these scenes of brutal violence described in 19:25–26? Should one show the woman being raped? To this same question, Exum (1993:196) writes, 'How should we visualize these events? They are graphic and brutal: a woman's body is the object of mutilation by the man who gave it over to sexual abuse by a mob. If this scene and the gang rape that precedes it were portrayed in film today, we would label it pornographic.' Exum seems to have overstated her case. It is entirely possible to film a scene which contains explicit content such as sexual assault/rape without it becoming pornographic.[25] Exum's suggestion that this scene may be voyeuristic is much more likely, but still, is this the only way the text can be visualized? Does the author aim to produce erotic and sexual feelings in the reader through their description of the rape? Perhaps there is another motive at play.

24 An analogous example can be found in Martin Scorcese's recent film, *The Irishman* (2019). Frank Sheeran, dubbed "The Irishman" (Robert De Niro), carries out numerous jobs for the mafia over his lifetime, earning him respect and authority. His daughter, Peggy Sheeran (Anna Paquin) grows colder toward him as she realizes who her father truly is. All of this is communicated without her speaking. The confrontation comes to a head after De Niro's character murders a close family friend—a mobster himself and godfather to Peggy. Here, Paquin speaks seven words, her only line in a three and half hour film, before leaving her father for good. Through Peggy's silence and minimal dialogue, Scorsese is able to communicate the film's most salient point: a life of violence will cost you everything—including the relationships you most cherish and even yourself.

25 Cf. Paynter (2020:47).

In *Django Unchained,* Tarantino presents a helpful example of how abuse and violence can be filmed in a way that highlights the agency of the victim. Django's flashback of Broomhilda being whipped by the Brittle Brothers is a scene in which violence is depicted in a restrained way. The scene begins on a plantation with Django (Jamie Foxx) peering through a spyglass at Ellis Brittle. The camera cuts to a Spaghetti Western–style flashback. Django is begging Big John not to let Ellis Brittle whip Broomhilda (Kerry Washington) who is being strung up. Django is trying to reason with Big John from the Bible, but he is cut off as the scene jumps to a flashback of Django and his wife attempting to escape to freedom, the reason for their punishment. Flashing back to the dialogue, the diagonally-tilted camera angle is disquieting as Django offers to take his wife's punishment. The montage cuts between a close up of Broomhilda readying herself for the lashing, the flashback of them fleeing, and Django pleading with Big John. The whipping begins, but the blows are not shown. The *mise-en-scène* (Figure 1) shows her face in agony as her crucifix dangles from her arm, and what is heard is the whip and her terrible scream.[26]

At this moment, it cuts to the flashback as the husband and wife are being pursued as the background score swells with the lyrics, "looking for freedom." The second lashing is filmed as a deep-focus shot with Broomhilda seen waist-up in the foreground. Behind her in the mid-ground is Ellis Brittle whipping her, and in the background, but still in focus, is Django kneeling before Big John. The audience still cannot see her back. Django continues to beg as the camera tilts up towards the towering Big John. The scene ends with Big John speaking, "I like the way you beg, boy" and a final whipping sound that brings the audience back to Django looking at Ellis Brittle.

Tarantino's depiction of violence is gruesome but surprisingly lacks the expected amount of blood for both a whipping and Tarantino's trademark style.[27] Throughout the whipping, the focus is on Broomhilda's face as she contorts in agony and her wailing cries. The audience may imagine what her back looks like, but they only see the suffering of Broomhilda. It seems that Tarantino wanted to distance the audience from the carnage, choosing not to concentrate on the oppressors and their brutality *per se*, but on the victim and how *she* suffers. Even when the tables have turned, as they do immediately after the flashback, the attention is still on the agency of Django as he takes his

26 Perhaps this suggests that Tarantino identifies the suffering of slaves with the suffering of Christ. This theological connection between slavery and racism and the suffering of Christ has been made before (see Cone, 2011).

27 Cf. the showdown at the House of Blue Leaves in Quentin Tarantino's Kill Bill Vol. 1 (2003).

FIGURE 1 Broomhilda (Kerry Washington) cries in agony as she is whipped. Image from Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, 2012 (Columbia).

revenge.[28] Rather than concentrating on the physical effects of violence here, Tarantino highlights both the suffering and agency of Broomhilda and Django through a restrained use of violence.

Using this example of Tarantino, we can ask if the text exhibits any such restraint in its depiction of violence. Upon a second reading it would seem that the text does not demand such a pornographic approach as Exum has suggested, for the narrator provides a critical distance for the reader through the vocabulary used to describe the rape. The narrator does not linger on the events of the rape, using only two verbs to describe the atrocity. Much of the description is the duration of the events, 'all night until morning,' but is used to summarize what has taken place rather than to bring them into view. The concept of montage and narrative time may be helpful here. It would be difficult to establish the explicit visualization of 'all night until morning' without summarising—unless one wanted to watch 10+ hours of footage. The narrator 'fast forwards' through the tragic events of the night to the moment of the woman's release. The author's choice of words to describe the rape is peculiar. In other depictions of rape such as the rape of Dinah (Gen. 32) and Tamar (2 Sam. 13), the two words used are עָנָה and שָׁכַב. The Piel form of עָנָה means 'to humiliate or afflict.'[29] Yet, in a sexual context, עָנָה almost always denotes rape (see Gen. 34:2; Deut. 22:24, 29; 2 Sam. 13:12–22; Ezek. 22:10–11). In the description of the rape of Lot by his daughters (Gen. 19), only שָׁכַב is used as the daughters had no need for force to seduce their highly intoxicated father. In Judges 19, it would be expected that the author use עָנָה as he uses it when the host offers the woman

28 Django's revenge against the Brittle Brothers is almost bloodless, but deeply symbolic as the slave conquers both slave religion and his oppressors.

29 BDB, III-עָנָה.

to the men of Gibeah and in the Levite's own account of the night (Judg. 20:6). Yet, when it comes to describing the rape in 19:25, the author chooses to use יָדַע and עָלַל. The first word is highly euphemistic and is used throughout Israel's scriptures to describe consensual sex. Only by context, in the speech of the men of Gibeah and its parallel use in the Sodom and Gomorrah narrative (Gen 19), is this word used to suggest rape. The author's use of עָלַל also lacks the expected descriptive force. While 'abuse' makes the most sense here, the semantic meaning of עָלַל can range from humiliate (Exod. 10:2), to slay (Judg. 20:45), and even to glean a field (Deut. 24:21). However, nowhere else in the Old Testament does this word have a sexual connotation.[30] Thus, while the event in the text is certainly a rape, the explicit description of the rape in 19:25 is hindered by its use of such words which are atypical of the other clear depictions of rape. It seems that the author's aim was to communicate the event of the rape of the woman without depicting it in explicit or 'pornographic' detail.[31]

The author chooses to depict the agency of the woman instead of her condition. There is no mention of wounds or blood, or what state she is in. Rather, the narrator explains what time she returned—as the dawn was breaking. Lapsley (2005:46) notes that only here is she called "woman" in relation to herself as opposed to being the Levite's concubine. Once more, the battered woman is the subject of the verbs in 19:26. As the Levite gets ready to leave, presumably without her, he opens the door to find her laying at the threshold. The use of the particle הִנֵּה signals a new cognitive understanding of both the character and reader by means of a speech-act or action (Miller-Naudé and Van der Merwe, 2011:60). In the medium of film, this affect could be presented by means of a crash zoom, as if the Levite had been stepping through the door but the camera abruptly refocuses on the woman laying at the threshold.[32] Exum (1993:195) notes that the particle signals the reader that we are looking at the scene through the Levite's point of view. She writes, 'How does the sight of his wife's ravished body affect him? His attention, and thus ours, focuses on one part of the body: the hands. The hands, grasping the threshold of the house that harbors the men who sacrificed her to the mob, accuse him of denying her asylum.' What is in view here is the hands of the woman; hands clutching,

30 Perhaps the author used a word lacking such sexual connotation so that he could use the same word to describe the fate of the Benjaminites during the civil war in Judg. 20:45, creating a sardonic reversal of fortune.

31 Put a different way, the event in Judges 19:25 is a gang-rape without the explicit physical descriptions. It is a story, not a legal description in a criminal deposition.

32 The crash zoom is typical in Western movies. "The crash-zoom . . . is an attempt to re-create on screen an effect that has no real visual equivalent in daily life—the sudden mental concentration on a single detail in a large scene' (Sutcliffe, 2013; Cf. Lapsley, 2005:48)

reaching, grasping for safety and salvation, but as Block (1999:541) writes, 'all she could grasp was death.' As we look on through the eyes of the Levite, we behold the woman, his concubine, destroyed at the hands of violent and cowardly men.

The story continues with the Levite's curt and uncompassionate imperatives, calling for this battered woman to get up—something she obviously cannot do. To our shock, the viewpoint is still that of the Levite, as if we ourselves are looking down and have commanded this woman. Lapsley (2005:48) notes that 'the effect of this shared vision but divergent interpretations is to bring the reader into even fuller sympathy with the woman, and to further condemn the Levite as utterly devoid of compassion.' What is described or emphasized in these scenes is not the gross sexual violence or its explicit physical effects upon the woman. Rather, the narrative highlights the woman as an agent who suffers. She deserves loving care, deepest sympathy and highest respect—something that the Levite does not notice as he puts her on the donkey.

The Brutality and Absurdity of Violence

A grammatical-cinematic approach can also help biblical interpretation by visualizing the brutality of violence and, at times, uncovering its absurdity. Such is the case in Judges 19–21 as the narrator graphically describes the dismemberment of the woman, the Benjaminite-Israel civil war, and the tribal reconstruction. These scenes are rife with descriptions of graphic violence, but it is through the medium of film that they may be better understood as brutal and absurd.

Our analysis will keep to Judges 19:29–30, though one can find plenty of violent examples in the chapters that follow. Apparently outraged by the treatment of the woman, the Levite does what is right in his own eyes and cuts her up into twelve pieces. Treated as a sacrificial animal, the divided woman is spread about the land; however, the aim is judgement instead of peace and purification (Lapsley, 2005:48). Even though there are five distinct actions completed by the Levite, the *waw-consecutive* verbs blend together making the narrator's description seem terse and hurried. Because of this, the absurd brutality of the violence can and has been easily glossed over. How might grammatical-cinematic approach help restore the horror of this scene?

A scene from Django Unchained can once again can provide a helpful example of how the brutality of violence may be visualized. Django and Dr. Schultz (Christoph Waltz) are being introduced to Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio) in order to buy a Mandingo fighter. As Schultz and Django enter the room, the sound of two shirtless slaves wrestling to the death can be heard. Candie sits with his back turned to them, watching the fight. Django steps to the bar with

his back turned to the fight while Schultz joins Candie to watch the fight. In a medium shot, Candie and Schultz shake hands, just feet away from the off-screen wrestlers. The camera jumps to Django at the bar sipping a drink. Sheba, Candie's escort, walks to a vacant seat with a bottle of champagne. The focus in both of these shots is on the drinks and the condensation on the glasses. The scene jumps to the actual fight, a tight, overhead shot of the wrestlers, each of them covered in blood and sweat, mimicking the previous image. Additional wrestling sequences are cross-cut with Sheba drinking her beverage (and drinking in the violence), Django ignoring the fight, and Candie and the man he's betting against, Amerigo Vassepi, urging on their fighters.[33] The fight drags on as the exhausted slaves scramble to stay alive. Candie's fighter, Big Fred, eventually gains the upper hand by slamming his opponent repeatedly into the ground. Each fighter is covered in blood. Big Fred pins the other fighter and snaps his arm, breaking it. The broken arm is out of focus in the foreground as Vassepi's disappointed face is emphasized in the background. Candie ecstatically shouts for Big Fred to gouge out his opponent's eyes, and Big Fred obliges. The audience is spared this gruesome sight but are forced to watch Big Fred's face as he struggles to blind his opponent. The camera cuts to Schultz trying to hide his disgust while his escort looks on in horror. Candie is off screen, but still cheering on his fighter. The audience can hear Big Fred finally succeed in blinding his opponent while the camera shows a close up of colorful jellybeans that have been spilled in shock. This imagery mimics the gore that the audience may have expected. However, the camera does cut back with an overhead shot, showing the now eyeless face of the defeated wrestler. The camera quickly cuts to the reactions of the other characters around the room. Each character grimaces as they hear the wails of pain. Candie tosses a hammer to Big Fred so that he can end the fight. The camera concentrates on the hammer in Big Fred's hand as the rest of his body, covered with blood, is out of focus. As the hammer is brought down the camera cuts to an angle that is behind Big Fred, shielding the audience from any more gruesome images. The feet of the pinned slave cease their movement as the sound of the impact is heard; the spilled jellybeans are foregrounded and in focus. Candie congratulates Big Fred, who is still covered in blood, and Vassepi grabs his coat and walks over to bar next to Django.

This scene is one of the most disturbing in the film due to the intense realism of the violence. While the fight lasts a little over three minutes, only twenty

33 Vassepi is played by Franco Nero who starred as Django in the original 1967 movie. This deliberate choice of casting, the Old Django alongside the New, perhaps suggests the failure of the western genre to address the issue of slavery. The 'white-washing' of the west must be undone, but the mantle must first be passed. See Williams, 2016.

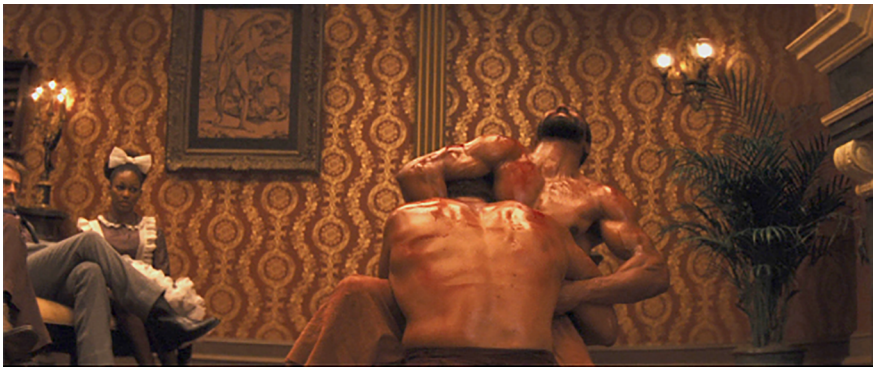

FIGURE 2 Two slaves fight to the death in front of an audience. Image from Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, 2012 (Columbia).

seconds of it are fully shown to the audience. Tarantino lets the audience imagine the more gruesome images while forcing them to look at the rest of the carnage.[34] Tarantino's use of violence here is intended to mortify the audience—to cause them to try to look away. By the use of quick cross-cut editing, Tarantino never allows the audience real reprieve as gory images immediately follow a close up of another character. Just when you are focused on Django's stoicism, the camera cuts back to the gruesome fight. Even if the audience chooses not to look, they still hear it. Differently than the scene discussed earlier that used restrained depictions of violence, Tarantino now shows us the full brutality of slavery. Candie cheers on the fight in a way that is reminiscent of gladiatorial games of ancient Rome, calling out suggestions to his fighter. During this scene, the camera focuses almost twice as long on Candie's face then it does on the actual fight. Tarantino wants to show us not only the cruelty of slavery but also the face of the one who perpetuates it.

In a similar manner, there are several indicators that the narrator wants readers to focus on the actions of the Levite. If the narrator has used euphemisms and distancing language in the description of the rape, here, the opposite occurs. To begin with, the Levite grabs hold of the knife (הַמַּאֲכֶלֶת). This common object is surprisingly only found in two other places: Genesis 22 and Proverbs 30:14. The fact that it is *the* knife and not *a* knife, should cause readers to pause.[35] Secondly, the narrator uses the same verb (יַּחֲזֵק) to describe the Levite seizing the woman here in verse 29 as they did in verse 25 where the

34 This is similar to the ear cutting scene in Tarantino's Reservoir Dogs (1992).

35 In Genesis 22, the narration slows to almost a standstill in describing the near-sacrifice of Isaac that is unapparelled in the Hebrew Bible. In Judges 19:29–30, something similar is happening, even if it is at a slightly faster pace and told in matter-of-fact language.

Levite throws the woman outside to be raped. Thirdly, the narrator uses the verb (נָתַח) to describe the Levite's violence to the woman–he cut her to pieces. This verb is typically used in a sacrificial context (Cf. Exod. 29:17; Lev. 1:6, 8:20; 1 Kings 18:23, 18:33), and significantly, in the description of Saul's cutting of the bulls (1 Sam. 11:7). Next, the narrator expands the description of the cutting-into-pieces with the phrase only found here, לַעֲצָמֶיהָ, meaning something like "according to the bones." (see Butler, 2009:406). What is most likely envisioned here is that the Levite with his presumed sacrificial precision, could manage to divide the woman without cutting through the actual bones. Perhaps this is an oblique reference to the practice of not breaking the bones of the paschal lamb (Exod. 12:46; Numb 9:12). Significantly, this phrase is *lacking* in the Levite's own description of the events in 20:4–7.[36] Moreover, this verb is also lacking in the narrator's description in 1 Samuel 11:7. The narrator also includes an exact number of pieces into which the woman was cut. Finally, the Levite sends (שָׁלַח) the dismembered woman to the whole of Israel.[37] The narrator uses the same verb to describe the Gibeonite rapists sending the woman away after they had finished, once again linking the actions of the Levite to those of the Gibeonites.

In this short verse there is a surplus of description that serves to enhance the visualization of the actions. Following the biblical narrator, how should readers visualize this scene? The amount of blood that would result from the Levite's action is quite a disturbing thought, but it is precisely this type of question that filmmakers would ask when staging a scene. Thinking about such questions as how the Levite cuts the woman into twelve pieces, how long does this take, and where the camera should focus—the woman, the knife cutting the limbs, or the Levite's face—forces the reader into contemplating the specific action. This action is brutal, and like the Mandingo fight, the reader desperately wants to look away, but the text will not let them. In the next verse, the reader is forced to look again with the tribes of Israel at the dismembered woman. One may choose to visualize Judges much differently than a Tarantino film, but to closely follow the text, the visualization should convey the sheer brutality of this disgusting, violent act.

36 The Levite is not a trustworthy narrator, as seen in his highly revisionist description of the events. One of the Levite's rhetorical strategies however is to mitigate any negative action of his own. So, the leaders of Gibeah intended to kill him, but instead raped and killed the woman. The Levite has omitted his own involvement and has made sure to mention that the woman was dead before he cut her up.

37 It is unclear if the twelve pieces of the woman were sent individually to each tribe or as a collection. Cf. Butler, 2009:428.

Scholars have tended to focus on the historical or symbolic referent of the Levite's action rather than on the violence itself. Susan Niditch (2008:194), for example, suggests that 'The woman is a visceral symbol of Israel's body politic, anticipating the way in which Israel is to be torn asunder by the civil war that follows her murder.' Klein (1989:173; Cf. Jordan, 1985:301–02) sees the concubine as a symbol of Israel as well, except that the symbolic warning is equally a condemnation against the woman. 'The concubine is sacrificed to her own passion . . . and she is literally reduced to pieces. The threat is implicit: YHWH's bride, Israel, will be divided, reduced from a functioning whole to its "dead" components. It must cease its "whoring".' Sara Milstein (2016) reads the entire pericope as a coded narrative that satirizes King Saul. Many of these suggestions are plausible within a reading of Judges 19, but some of them seem to gloss over the utter grotesqueness of the act. My fear is that if the dismembered woman becomes merely a symbol or a literary strategy in the mind of the reader, the violence committed against her may be construed as less serious than the thing to which the symbol points. The idolatry, the sin, the disunity, or a political opponent become the ultimate outrage for the readers, rather than the focus of the text: the rape and murder of the woman. The butchering of the woman is the tangible result, not the symbol, of covenantal disloyalty or political disunity. This is what is at stake when Israel does not follow their God: they carve up their own women.

After the Credits Roll: The Meaning and Purpose of Judges 19

A grammatical-cinematic approach can also shape how interpreters piece together the meaning of a text. When the credits roll, audiences ask, 'what was that all about?' The ending of this section, as well as the book of Judges as a whole, is bleak; there is no 'Hollywood ending' here (Younger, 2002:383). As mentioned earlier, Atwood is not the only one to see the reinforcement of patriarchal ideology as the purpose of the narrative.

Phyllis Trible has labelled Judges 19–21 a 'Text of Terror' and presents a compelling reading of the story that draws attention to the way the narrative silences the woman (1984). In her reading, the way the narrative is constructed and the actions of the characters are indicative of the views of the narrator, and thus the author himself. Regarding the woman, she writes, 'Appearing at the beginning and close of a story that rapes her, she is alone in a world of men. Neither the other characters *nor the narrator* recognizes her humanity' (emphasis mine, 1984: 80). Commenting on the Levite's (mis)telling of the events at Gibeah in Judges 20:4–7, Trible interprets the ambiguity as to who

murdered the woman as the *intentional strategy* of the narrator to 'protect his protagonist' (1984: 91 n. 57). For Trible the narrator, and in effect, the narrative itself, is complicit in the rape and murder of the woman in Judges 19 because they do not explicitly critique these acts (1984: 81).

Additionally, Cheryl Exum (1993:179–80) believes there to be a sub-textual meaning arising from the dominant patriarchal ideology that is present in the text. This story serves as a sharp rebuke and warning against any woman who would dare to exert sexual autonomy and leave her place. 'As narrative punishment for her sexual "misconduct", her sexual "freedom", she is sexually abused, after which sexuality is symbolically mutilated.' She explains that this is a subtext motivated by male fear of female sexuality and by the resultant need of patriarchy to control women (181, 197–98). Thus, Exum's Bath-Sheber was 'asking for it.' The woman deserted her husband and she got what she deserved (189).

These examples from Atwood, Trible, and Exum highlight the ambiguity of this text. The narrator makes no direct or explicit condemnation of the events, but neither does he explicitly approve of them. However, if the reader is prepared to visualize the narrative by attending to the cinematic sensibilities of the text, that is, to read *with* the biblical narrator, they can arrive at a very different conclusion after the end credits roll. Taking the grammatical-cinematic approach, one can we can see that the views of the narrator or author are not directly equivalent to the assumed attitudes or views expressed in the story. There is a critical distance between the story-teller and the story. Simply because rape and murder feature in a narrative, does not mean that the narrator or author univocally approves of these actions. Perhaps, the author tells the story in this way—highly ironic and filled with shocking amounts of horrific violence—because they intend to critique that violence (Kaminsky, 2006).[38] As mentioned, Trible has argued that the narrator remains complicit in the atrocities because there is no explicit condemnation of them (1984: 81).[39] From a literary perspective, Trible's argument could be used to characterize Margaret Atwood as 'pro-patriarchy' because she creates a dystopia in which women are oppressed and raped—a world she does not explicitly condemn! This would be a profound misreading of the text because the narrative's purpose is to

38 Joel Kaminsky notes the similarity between arguments about violence in the Bible and violence in Hollywood. He draws a comparison between Eastwood's *Unforgiven* and Judges 19–21 suggesting that both 'strongly critique the violence they describe' (Cf. Lapsley, 2005:36).

39 Textually, this may be an overstatement. The reaction of those who receive the woman's corpse in 19:30, as well as the resulting civil war seem to suggest the narrator is condemning the actions implicitly.

critique the ideology and actions of patriarchy.[40] From a cinematic perspective, Quentin Tarantino does not need to clarify at the end of *Django Unchained* that slavery was evil; he shows you throughout his film.

If the author is analogous to a director, then one also should not level such claims against the author of Judges 19. This is because the author is critiquing all of these actions. Lapsley puts it well, 'Why does the narrator not bluntly say that the behavior of the Levite was thoughtless, or even wicked? Because the power of the story lies not in the hard ethical answers it offers, but in its capacity to provoke the moral imagination of its readers' (2005: 42). The author does not need to explicitly condemn the Levite, because the story accomplishes that by showing the consequences of his actions: The tribe of Benjamin is almost obliterated and is only saved by massacring another city and abducting women (Lapsely, 2005: 59). In contrast to Exum, Younger (2002:362; Cf. Lapsley, 2005:45–6) points out that 'the text blames the men: the men of Gibeah, the Levite, and the host. The woman is the victim of evil men. Good, godly men treat women differently—even in a patriarchal world.' While the narrator's condemnation may not be explicit, it nevertheless can still be found.

Judges 19 is not only a 'Text of Terror,' but also a text of judgement. The final words in verse 30, 'consider Her, take counsel, speak,' invite the reader to pronounce a judgement. The narrator's condemnation is not explicit because its *modus operandi* is akin to film: it is more important to 'show' than to 'tell.' Overarching questions and concerns regarding the treatment of women and sexual violence will nevertheless remain for reader. No method or approach can ever truly mitigate the violence done to this woman. What a grammatical-cinematic approach can do however, is to bring the critique of this violence by the narrator into proper focus.

Filmography

Apocalypse Now. (1979) Directed by Francis Ford Coppola. Performed by Marlon Brando and Robert Duvall. United States: United Artists.

Django Unchained. (2012) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by Jamie Foxx and Christoph Waltz. United States: Columbia Pictures.

The Irishman. (2019) Directed by Martin Scorsese. Performed by Robert De Niro and Al Pacino. United States: Netflix.

40 The same thing is true for the recent television adaptation *The Handmaid's Tale* (2017–), created by Bruce Miller and starring Elizabeth Moss.

Inglourious Basterds. (2009) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by Brad Pitt and Christoph Waltz. United States: Universal.

Kill Bill Vol. 1. (2003) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by Uma Thurman and Lucy Liu. United States: Miramax Films.

Kill Bill Vol. 2. (2004) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by Uma Thurman and David Carradine. United States: Miramax Films.

Natural Born Killers. (1994) Directed by Oliver Stone. Performed by Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis. United States: Regency Enterprises.

Pulp Fiction. (1994) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by John Travolta and Samuel L. Jackson. United States: Miramax Films.

Reservoir Dogs. (1992) Directed by Quentin Tarantino. Performed by Harvey Keitel and Tim Roth. United States: Miramax Films.

The Shining. (1980) Directed by Stanley Kubrick. Performed by Jack Nicholson and Shelley Duvall. United States: Warner Bros.

Taxi Driver. (1976) Directed by Martin Scorsese. Performed by Robert De Niro and Jodie Foster. United States: Columbia Pictures.

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