

BOOK REVIEWS

BIBLICAL STUDIES

Rhiannon Graybill. *Are We Not Men? Unstable Masculinity in the Hebrew Prophets*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. xii + 198 pp.
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The result of a project begun as a doctoral dissertation at the University of California, Berkeley, *Are We Not Men?* is a welcome contribution to feminist, queer, and prophecy studies.

“This is a book about men and their bodies,” Graybill begins, specifically the bodies of male prophets that behave in perplexing, unsettling, or humiliating ways (1). Prophecy both depends upon bodies and makes demands of them (think Isaiah’s nakedness or Jeremiah’s suffering). Prophecy transforms prophets, particularly by disturbing their masculinity. The author describes this destabilizing of a prophet’s body as “queerness,” meaning that “the prophetic body is a queer body” (6). (In her usage, “queer” means both generally peculiar and nonnormative in terms of sexuality; she does not ascribe a sexual identity to individual prophets.) The monograph both studies the queer prophetic body “as an object” and queers the prophetic body “as a critical practice” (7).

Addressing the question of why studying masculinity is worthwhile, Graybill appraises the fields of sex and gender studies and charts a new, better path forward. She considers masculinity part of feminist studies, arguing against the too-common situation where men are neutral and “gender” substitutes for “women.” “My work in masculinity grows out of this feminist commitment to sex the masculine” (12), she says, in a paragraph that should be required reading for biblical scholars.

Chapter 1 portrays Moses’s body as *other*: special, disabled, and feminized. The prophet is sometimes presented as a model of hegemonic masculinity, but his masculinity is unstable. Despite Moses’s mother calling him “good” at birth, his body is insufficient, endangering the prophet’s mission. His heavy mouth and tongue require God to appoint a spokesperson; others must support Moses’s sagging arms during battle. Contact with God produces a physical change in the prophet’s face and requires Moses to veil himself, which Graybill claims is “a predominantly feminine practice” (32). Only in death does his body become whole. These peculiarities, and his intimacy with Yahweh, make Moses’s body queer. Though his body is deficient, it is also essential to his prophecy.

This reviewer would quibble with several points. Graybill describes Moses’s rhetorical question, “Did I conceive this entire people?” (Numbers 11:12) as the prophet “describing his own body as female,” though only metaphorically (33). The reverse could be true, that Moses emphasizes his maleness by using incorrect figurative speech. The contention that Moses’s son’s circumcision shows Moses’s own fluidity because the son is “the extension of Moses” is insufficiently defended

(43). A diachronic note might have helped, too, tracing how different authors viewed Moses's body. Nevertheless, the provocative study of Moses's body is effective.

A discussion of the marriage texts of Hosea 1–3 follows in chapter 2. Rather than simply witnessing the gendered violence contained therein, Graybill engages with the material by bringing it into conversation with modern lowbrow horror movies. "Hosea 1–3 resembles a horror film—and in particular ... a possession film—in the violence it imagines inflicting upon the female body and especially in the emphasis it places on bodily openness" (50). The bodies of Gomer, the woman in Hosea 3, and the feminized Israel are "opened" (Israel is stripped naked, Gomer is promiscuous). This displaced openness destabilizes Hosea's masculinity, as he acts against hegemonic masculinity by marrying women who have had prior male lovers. Prophecy also opens—feminizes, even queers—the prophet by turning him into a medium between the people and Yahweh. Just as possession movies with female leads are really about the male heroes who must destroy evil and "close" the opening of a possessed woman, Hosea 1–3 is about masculine "psychic drama" (60). But while the female figures are restored or redeemed (Yahweh will now "speak gently" to Israel), the character Hosea learns nothing and remains rage filled and unstable.

The next chapter treats Jeremiah's unusual—queer—voice in the Confessions, a term used to describe several complaint passages found between chapters 11–20. His crying out (in pain, anger, alarm, pleasure), sometimes by compulsion, is gendered, in that "[t]o vocalize pain and suffering is to use the voice *as a woman*" (78). Graybill reads Jeremiah's speech through the prism of the medical/mental condition hysteria, bringing forth psychoanalytical arguments from Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer. Jeremiah is not a hysteric himself, but the sound, form, and content of his Confessions resemble hysterics' voices, including their speech difficulties. For example, as hysteria can displace shameful speech onto the body (Freud's "somatic compliance"), pain interrupts Jeremiah's speeches. Graybill draws a fascinating parallel between the revulsion witnesses to hysteria feel and Jeremiah's own repulsiveness to his ancient audience.

Chapter 4 concerns the theophany and dramatic sign acts in Ezekiel 1–5. Graybill reads Ezekiel in conjunction with an early twentieth-century memoir by Daniel Paul Schreber, *Memoirs of My Mental Illness*, in which the previously institutionalized author believes himself a prophet. Saving the world requires Schreber's sexual penetration, or "unmanning," as his body transforms into the form of a woman. Yahweh's divine scroll literally penetrates the unmanned Ezekiel, and the prophet's enthusiasm shows his "fundamentally masochistic and submissive position" (105). The prophet's body is opened and transformed, therefore queered.

Synthesizing the previous four prophetic case studies (Moses, Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel), chapter 5 reargues that the prophetic body is queer—in turn disturbed, hysterical, unmanned, fluid, and open. (Jonah and Miriam receive limited but effective case studies as well.) The prophetic body experiences pain and pleasure, happiness and unhappiness; masculinity, embodiment, and gender are all queered.

Graybill's scholarship is thoughtful, and her viewpoint is new and important. Less necessary to her thesis are her intertextual forays into *The Exorcist* or Freud and Breuer's *Studies in Hysteria*, as perhaps frameworks can be borrowed from disparate fields without leading readers to explore the fields themselves. Her excellent observations about Ezekiel's "unmanning" would still stand were the discussion of Schreber's memoir greatly truncated; the value of the hysteria lens applied to Jeremiah might be clearer with less attention on Freud's famous patient Dora.

Despite this minor question of focus, this slim monograph is a significant contribution to queer and gender studies. Biblical scholars will find much to gain by wrestling with Graybill's innovative readings.

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Ken Brown. *The Vision in Job 4 and Its Role in the Book: Reframing the Development of the Joban Dialogues*. Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 75. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015. xi + 350 pp.
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It is unusual in biblical studies to encounter a monograph of this quality, combining sustained and high-caliber philological work with a broad hermeneutical agenda. Ken Brown's *Vision* is a modestly revised doctoral dissertation written at the Georg-August University in Göttingen under the joint supervision of Hermann Spieckermann and Nathan MacDonald (of Cambridge University).

The starting point of the analysis is the literally hair-raising vision of a spirit belonging to the divine circle reported in Job 4:12–21. According to the spirit, the deity finds fault with the angels, *kal va-homer* with lowly human beings. N. H. Tur-Sinai (Torczyner), H. L. Ginsberg, G. V. Smith, and E. L. Greenstein, in particular, had advanced arguments maintaining that this vision, related early in the book of Job, is misplaced.¹ In the received text, it appears in the middle of the first discourse of Eliphaz. It should, however, be attributed to Job. Brown writes that he originally set out to disprove this thesis, which had been largely ignored by scholars, even though it was promulgated at first by two of the greatest modern Hebrew philologists, Tur-Sinai and Ginsberg. But as Brown studied the

1. N. H. Torczyner (Tur-Sinai), *Das Buch Hiob* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1920); H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," in *Congress Volume: Rome 1968*. VT Supp. 17 (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 88–111; G. V. Smith, "Job IV 12–21: Is It Eliphaz's Vision?," *VT* 40 (1990): 453–63; E. L. Greenstein, "A Forensic Understanding of the Speech from the Whirlwind," in *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. M. V. Fox et al. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 258; idem, "The Extent of Job's First Speech" [in Hebrew], in *Studies in Bible and Exegesis, 6: Presented to Menachem Cohen*, ed. Shmu'el Vargon et al. (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2005), 245–62.