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CONVENTIONS/CONTRAVENTIONS: THE MEANINGS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FOR THE JUDGES 19 CONCUBINE

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Role behavior for men is localized primarily in the public sphere. .
. . Women's role behavior is confined to the private sphere of
society.¹

Women, here as elsewhere in pre-modern society, are set to do
duty as representatives of the private, as men do duty as tokens of
the public. Women are typically of the inside, the domestic
sphere, while men are of the outside, the common sphere.²

. . . the public domain is not intended for women.³

Ordering the social world into two main spheres -- one of them labelled the 'public', the other the 'private' (or 'domestic') -- has been a commonplace tendency in western culture since at least the nineteenth century. Even today, the influence of this construct is readily identifiable in the writings of a whole kaleidoscope of humanists and social scientists -- including biblical scholars (note the opening citations). At least one of the reasons for this construct's longstanding influence seems to be its explanatory power vis-a-vis constructions of gender. The spheres of public and private are often implicated in notions about the role identifications of men and women; social world distinctions come to be part and parcel of gender distinctions.

But precisely because the public/private dichotomy also impacts understandings of gender, feminist theory has recently had cause to re-examine, and indeed, problematize, certain aspects of this dichotomy.⁴ One area that has come under re-examination involves querying what precisely is being referred to by the concepts of 'public' and 'private'. In other words, what

sort of opposition is being portrayed? Is the distinction construed as that between work and family, so that public vs. private has primarily an economic dimension? Or is it rather an opposition between government (public) and the individual (private), with public and private then operating primarily in the realm of politics? Is the reference mainly to social space, wherein public means outside and private means inside?⁵ An even more tricky question is how these different dimensions of public and private might overlap, and how our analyses can be constructed to adequately account for such complications.

Another broad area of critique involves its gendered dimensions. To what extent are the equations made between women and the private and men and the public actually true? Are women always, and only, associated with the private? Are men always, and only, associated with the public? What happens when one considers also differences of class and ethnicity, along with gender, in mapping out the position of women and men? An even more far-reaching question also needs to be broached: how appropriate is it to utilize a construct created and largely perpetuated by western culture in analyses of non-western societies and cultures?⁶

The objectives of this paper are set within the parameters of this more general and diverse problematizing of the public-private dichotomy. The focus here will be on the dichotomy's spatial dimensions and the ways in which it interacts with certain ideas about women. An analysis of the portrayal of the concubine in Judges 19 will ground these issues more precisely by mapping out this woman's movements, and the meanings of those movements, against the background of commonplace assumptions about women and social space. In order to convey clearly the analytical points I wish to make the story's narrative flow will be disrupted; analyzing episodes 'out of order' will better highlight the spatial features of the text and the resulting effects on the concubine. Hence, in the first section to follow, two of the narrative's

episodes will provide the focus for showing how the story occasionally confirms traditional assumptions about women and social space. A second section will then analyze how, in not less than five scenes, these assumptions are contravened. The third section will bring the pieces together, first by summarizing the main points of my analysis while following the narrative's temporal sequence, and then by probing into some of the implications of this analysis for the examination of other biblical texts.

Conventions: Traditional Meanings Find Confirmation

The citations that open this paper indicate well some of the conventional meanings of social space for women: viz, women belong, and are presumably, safe, inside; and, conversely, they do not belong outside. In what ways are these meanings of social space confirmed in the story of the Judges 19 concubine?⁷

For such confirmation we need look no further than one of the last episodes of the story, the one in which the woman is thrust outside of a house and then raped by a gang of men for an entire night (cf. v. 25).⁸ Insofar as this woman is out in a public place, at night, and alone, her positioning, and the ends to which it brings her, confirm the conventional wisdom that says, 'A woman has no business being out alone at night,' and 'Anything that might happen to her there, she deserves -- she was just asking for it!'⁹

According to J. Cheryl Exum, the narrated rape of this woman 'is perhaps the most gruesome and violent tale in the Bible'.¹⁰ But herein resides a rather pathetic irony, for the rape itself, at least, is not narrated: the text limits its report of the woman's victimization at the hands of all these men to just one half-verse (v. 25b -- 'They wantonly raped her, and abused her all

through the night until the morning. And as the dawn began to break, they let her go'.) More precisely, the narrative forecloses on any information that might shed a sure light on the woman's thoughts, feelings, and/or physical reactions. Is it at least partly because, according to the conventions of social space, this woman is not supposed to be where she is, so that the narrative does not see her? Indeed, is the text, given the conventions, somehow unable to see her? The text's abstention from insight into the woman's thoughts, feelings, words, and/or actions may be part and parcel of its construction, and acceptance of, the notion that the outside is a proscribed place for women. Her inner life is irrelevant, just as physically she should not exist in this place.¹¹

The rape and abuse visited upon this woman who finds herself 'out of place' must be considered all the more tragic, and ironic, when one realizes that she had little, if any, choice in the matter. Being outside is a result of an action taken by her husband, a panicked maneuver meant to save his own skin. This man, a Levite, is on a return journey with his concubine and servant to his own home in Ephraim. Although he has had to stop over in Gibeah, its presumed strangeness is mitigated by a fellow Ephraimite, an inhabitant of the town, who takes them in for the night. When the men of Gibeah, having heard about the visitors, surround the house and demand that the Levite be brought out to them so that they can have intercourse with him, the host attempts some appeasing negotiations, in which he offers instead the Levite's concubine as well as his own virgin daughter. At this point the Levite rather abruptly preempts the situation: he seizes his concubine and 'put her out to them' (v. 25a). The narrative says nothing about the Levite talking over the situation with his concubine. He does not 'consult with her or even speak to her';¹² indeed, he does not relate to her at all. Yet, however much her lack of self-

determination with regard to her movements might mitigate the responsibility attached to her, it does not save her: being at the beck and call of one man leads to her rape by many men.

In going out, even if against her will, this woman seemingly violates socio-cultural norms about women in public places: she is thereby punished. This episode thus confirms traditional assumptions about the public as a proscribed place for women. This same message is emphasized, more subtly, in another episode that takes place earlier in the story. Here "the rules" for women out in public are followed -- and though the woman of Judges 19 is not exactly rewarded for her obedience, neither does she come to any harm.

This earlier episode concerns the first stage of the journey back to the Levite's home in Ephraim (vv. 10-15); in it the woman is portrayed as a quiet, unobtrusive, submissive creature. In fact, her very presence is not even acknowledged by the text until after we are informed that the Levite has secured his provisions for the homeward journey. Verse 10b reads 'He had with him a couple of saddled donkeys and his concubine was with him'. Now, although the text does not say so explicitly, it is easy to assume that the two beasts of burden are loaded down with most, if not all, of the supplies needed for overnight travelling on roads made hostile by the anarchic social conditions of the time. After all, later the Levite will make clear to their potential Ephraimite host that they carry with them more than enough food and other provisions to satisfy the needs of both themselves and their animals (cf. v. 19). Consequently, verse 10b, in that it mentions animals first and only then the concubine, seems to place the burden of significance on the materiel needed for the journey, rather than the woman, who is, as we will see, the point of all this journeying in the first place.

The ordering of information in this verse is particularly instructive if we compare it to

that of verse three. This earlier verse, commenting as it does on the Levite's initial journey from his Ephraimite home to Bethlehem, also speaks of the man's two donkeys. But here the narrative precedes any mention of them with an introduction to the Levite's male servant: v. 3 -- 'He had with him his servant and a couple of donkeys'. In Judges 19, then, a man has priority over beasts -- even when the man is only a servant. The same cannot be said for the concubine. Her introduction into the journeying scene (vv. 10-15) comes only after that of a 'couple of asses'.¹³

The woman's relative non-presence in vv. 10-15 is effected additionally by the fact that she has no name and no voice, either in this episode or anywhere else in Judges 19. Having no name is a trait she shares with all of the narrative's other characters. Like them, she is instead identified for the most part by the social roles she takes on, roles which, for her, work predominantly to keep her in varying relations to specific men.¹⁴ In having no voice, though, she ends up standing in sharp contrast to the male characters, all of whom talk at some point in the story.¹⁵ In the particular episode under consideration, when decisions need to be made about where to stop and spend the night, negotiations are carried out exclusively by the Levite and his male servant. In terms of the narrative, it is the servant who first brings up the subject (v. 11 -- 'Come now, let us turn aside to this city of the Jebusites, and spend the night in it!'). Having heard his voice for the first time ever, we then hear the Levite's first articulated speech of the narrative, as he replies to his servant's suggestions (vv. 12-13 -- 'We will not turn aside into a city of foreigners, who do not belong to the people of Israel; but we will continue on to Gibeah . . . Come, Let us try to reach one of these places, and spend the night at Gibeah or at Ramah'). Their conversation implies that conditions of gender are more of a hindrance to cooperation between individuals than is class. It is the man and his male servant who work out the travel

plans; the woman is firmly excluded. Once again -- just as in the scenes that recorded the Levite's preparations for journeying -- the male servant takes precedence over the concubine.

The conventions of social space expect that a woman journeying with her husband and his male servant out on public roads be subdued, docile, deferential, self-abasing. And so this concubine is. Nameless and voiceless, she scarcely has any presence at all. Esteemed less than the baggage for the journey, she is subjected to the will of all others -- even servants. Men make all the decisions affecting her. Like a child, she is 'seen (though barely!) and not heard'. Truly, in her behavior here she has become the type of woman guaranteed to meet the approval of western cultural conventions.

Contraventions: Traditional Meanings Are Upended

The previous section analyzed textual episodes in which the concubine's behavior confirmed traditional expectations about a woman's place in the social world. We turn now to narrative incidents in Judges 19 in which the woman's actions (and the actions to which she is subjected) contravene accepted notions about the meanings of public and private for women. But if the 'conventions' connected with the location of this concubine can be found in only two episodes of this story, both of which involve her location out in public, the 'contraventions' encompass not less than five episodes, two of which are in public and three in private.

It has been little emphasized, yet the narrativized events of Judges 19 are all set in motion consequent to the initiative of the concubine. Subsequent events in the story unfold because the concubine 'went away from him [i.e., the Levite] to her father's house at Bethlehem in Judah . . . ' (v. 2). However, in sharp contrast to the later journeys involving men, the text here passes over

in silence the travel experiences of this woman. By inference, though, her successful journeying must have been a remarkable accomplishment. She would have had to make her way through all the highways and byways that lead from the remote uplands of the hill country of Ephraim down to Bethlehem, a city in the southern tribal area of Judah. Since she was probably traversing this country alone (the text never even hints at a travel companion) and on foot, the concubine would have had to be extremely self-reliant in order to successfully navigate whatever challenges and dangers the open road might have presented. Is not the independence of this woman 'on the move' quite remarkable?

But what motivates her to take this journey in the first place? If we follow the Masoretic (Hebrew) Text (supported by the Syriac), she 'played the harlot against him' (v. 2a). But if she really did commit adultery, or become a prostitute (and the Hebrew zana can readily mean either¹⁶), why would she return to her father's house? And why, under circumstances that supposedly would bring shame to him, would a father welcome her back -- even to the extent of providing a place for her in his house for 'some four months' (v. 2b)? And why, finally, would a husband in such a case go to such lengths to work for her return to his house?

These (con)textual lapses in logic encourage many scholars to follow the Greek and Old Latin versions and their rendering of the text as 'she became angry with him' (retroverted to the Hebrew zanah¹⁷). Such a reading resonates more readily with verse three -- 'Then her husband set out after her, to speak tenderly to her and bring her back'. The conciliatory motives attributed to the Levite, as well as the matter-of-fact tone in which the text here presents them, suggests merely 'a tiff [between husband and wife] and not a serious breach on the woman's part of any obligation or trust'.¹⁸ Besides, '[n]othing in the [subsequent] account of the interchanges between

the two men indicates, or even suggests that the woman was adulterous'.¹⁹

No matter what translation one adopts, however, the concubine's reason for leaving still remains obscured. We are left just as much in the dark if we ask 'Why did she play the harlot?', as if we ask 'Why did she become angry?'. Either way, the text is little interested in her point of view, leaving it to a few interested readers to impute her possible motive. Danna Nolan Fewell and David Gunn, for example, suggest that in light of the Levite's later behavior towards her, she might well have been subjected to his abuse.²⁰

Most scholars, however, fall in line with the text's investment, which, instead of being interested in her reason for leaving, is directed towards the very fact of her leaving. The refusal to probe for the woman's reason results in the understanding that her leaving is not really consequent to anything at all (be it anger, abuse, or a lovers' tiff). The fact of her leaving overwhelms her reason for doing so, such that leaving can be seen as coeval with 'playing a harlot'. Thus, whether or not she literally became a whore, it is easy to become inveigled into branding her as one just because she left her husband.²¹

One might, indeed, also read the text's focus on the act of her leaving -- rather than her motive for doing so -- as a match for, or a corollary of, her unusual spatial positioning. Leaving a husband is unconventional. And her act of self-will is all the more remarkable in that -- unlike cases where women's initiatives act to further or save men (as in Exod. 1.15-19) -- this woman seemingly acts on her own behalf.²² Moreover, because her independence and initiative have the additional result of locating her in quite public places -- where women alone are just not supposed to be! -- her unorthodox behavior acquires yet a further piquancy.

As M. O'Connor has observed, this woman, here at the beginning of the narrative, seems

'remarkably free in her movements'.²³ But her daring acts of autonomy do not come to an end once she has successfully achieved her goal of arriving at her father's house. Her independence of movement out in the public domain has a sequel in the immediately following episodic fragment. According to the text, the Levite does eventually react to his wife's leaving -- though it takes him four months to do so. (And just why it takes him so long to go after his concubine is a matter of no little speculation.²⁴ But the text does not say; it merely reports that he goes after her.) In all likelihood, when he makes the journey he follows the same roadways earlier trod by the woman; but, probably unlike her, he is well-provisioned and cared for, having with him 'his servant and a couple of donkeys' (v. 3).

At this point, translational differences again become evident. The NRSV follows the Greek and its reading of 'When he reached her father's house' (v. 3). But many other English translations (NIV, NEB, as well as some commentators²⁵) manifest a preference for the Masoretic Text and what it says: 'she brought him in to her father's house'. A major difference, and point of contention here is, of course, the subject of the verb. Does the text continue the pattern set up by the earlier phrases of verse 3, wherein it is the Levite's activities that are narratively at the center of attention? Or does this phrase signal a switch of subject, with the concubine and her movements as the new locus of interest? If the former, the disputed phrase marks the last in a series of clauses devoted to the Levite; what follows centers on the activities and interests of the concubine's father (cf. v. 3b-4a). If the latter, that is, reading with the MT 'she brought him . . .', the text accords the woman a brief subjectivity before switching its attention to her father.

If the latter translation is followed, the text's insertion of the concubine as subject here -- in between the two men -- dovetails nicely with what her actions as the subject accomplish: the

bringing together of the two of them. That is, just as on the textual level she functions as an intermediary of her husband and father, so narratively it is she who mediates the meeting of the two men. And in accomplishing this latter she once again appears out in public. After all, in order to bring her husband in to the house, the text thereby presupposes that at some point she stepped out of it, ostensibly to be the first to meet and greet the Levite. Displaying a mastery over her own movements, she thus, additionally, directs the movements of her husband, the culmination of which is the introduction to her father. An implicit affirmation of her initiative here -- at least on the part of her father -- can be found in the manner in which the father then greets the Levite: 'with joy' (v. 3).

Yet it is this verse that also brings to an end this woman's assertion of her self. The text compresses into the first three verses of the Judges 19 narrative practically all the activities of this woman that mark her as something more and other than chattel -- as, instead, a human being with thoughts and feelings of her own, who is able and willing to act independently in consequence of them. As glimpses only, her movements in these verses still have the power to tantalize, particularly because she acts so freely and autonomously in places normally considered the province of men. If in doing so the meanings of her actions represent a reversal of 'what is expected' of women out in public, the very next episode further upsets traditional expectations, for the text here will make her disappear -- and from precisely the place that is supposed to be a woman's especial domain.

When the Levite makes the journey from his home in Ephraim down to Bethlehem, he does so, ostensibly, in order 'to speak tenderly to her [i.e., the concubine]' (v. 3), presumably with the hope that he can convince her to return with him. But if he does, indeed, so speak with

her, we have no record of it. Instead, the text is full of the activities and words of the Levite and his Bethlehemite host. The narrative reports that after being conducted into the house, the Levite is urged by the concubine's father to stay for awhile (v. 4). His sojourn probably lasts longer than he ever intended, extending, as it does, for some five days. This five-day visit is subdivided by the text into three time periods of shrinking lengths: three days (v. 4), another day and night (vv. 5-7), and a final day (vv. 8-9). And since as the three periods decrease in time, the accounts of them increase, a buildup of tension is produced (will the Levite leave today, or not?).²⁶ But common to all three periods of time is the information that 'the two men sat and ate and drank together' (v. 6; see also vv. 4 and 8). The text thus seems extraordinarily taken with the meal times of these two men!

And just where is the woman while this dizzying round of dinner parties is going on? She seems to have vanished. The camaraderie that occurs around the dinner table in the privacy of a home is here narrated in such a way that it acknowledges only the presence of men -- the woman is excluded. Her erasure here is especially ironic, insofar as one of the few assumptions about the activities of women that does seem to hold up cross-culturally and over time is that the preparation of food is most often their particular care and responsibility. Indeed, Carol Meyers, in her soci-anthropological analysis of Israel during, roughly, the period of the Judges, emphatically identifies women as those who dominated in the preparing and processing of foodstuffs -- most of which probably took place in the domestic compound.²⁷ Of course, preparing a meal is not the same as partaking of it.²⁸ And we also have to contend with the fact that the 'tasks performed by women . . . tend to be nearly invisible in written records' [my emphasis].²⁹ And so it is that here in the Judges 19 text, when the scene shifts into a domestic

space, attention is focused on what the men are doing there: eating and drinking and making merry. What the woman likely did in this place -- making ready all the meals (to say nothing of partaking in them) -- is effaced.

Just as the activities of the woman in the domestic domain are ignored, so, too, are her wishes. At the end of five days of dining, the Levite finally wins through with his desire to leave. In the process of leave-taking, though, the desires of the woman fail to be taken into consideration -- by either the husband or the father. Did the concubine want to return with the husband from whom she had recently fled, and the men somehow divined, and so affirmed, her change of heart? Or did she put up some resistance to leaving that is ignored by the text? Or was it rather that the woman at this point in the unfolding of events realized it was futile to resist the plans made for her by men, and so she submitted quietly, against her wishes, going along after the saddled donkeys on the same road that had earlier brought her to her father's house?

The way in which the concubine manages to disappear from inside a house already near the beginning of Judges 19 is, in and of itself, rather disquieting. But it can also be read as a foreshadowing of the later effacement of both her and the virgin daughter of the old man of Gibeah while inside his house. Here the erasure prefigures particularly tragic ends -- at least for the concubine. The episode begins innocuously enough, with everyone at their ease around a supper table.³⁰ The merriment is, nonetheless, shortlived. Soon the men of Gibeah come knocking at the door with their outrageous demands. The subsequent dialogue takes place between men out in public, when the old Ephraimite host goes out of his house trying to placate the Gibeahites (v. 23). In the meantime, the two women remain inside, as the host's words soon make apparent: v. 24 -- 'Here are my virgin daughter and his concubine; let me bring them out

now'. They are mentioned together, just as they are together in having no voice or power in this place. Do they also stand together inside and overhear the suggested plans of the virgin's father for them both? However that might be, they do not, as it turns out, share in the same fate.

Whatever temporary togetherness they share is cut off by the actions of another male character -- this time, the Levite -- who forces his concubine outside. If the virgin daughter thereby slides back into invisibility behind closed doors, it nonetheless spares her from the gang-rape to which the concubine is then subjected.

After the rape we are made privy to the only words spoken by the Levite to his concubine in the entire narrative: v. 28 -- 'Get up, . . . we are going'. The Levite speaks these words while the woman lays collapsed at the doorway of the house, to which she has somehow returned after the night of abuse at the hands of the men of Gibeah. But the woman does not, in any way, respond to him. Is she conscious (but exhausted)? Unconscious? Or dead? The text leaves us in limbo about her state of being here, just as her spatial positioning is insecure, insofar as her threshold positioning puts her both (or neither) inside and outside.

The abrupt command of the Levite inaugurates the final episode of the story, one which also exemplifies probably the most shocking reversal of the traditional assumptions about public and private. Immediately following his words, the Levite loads the woman onto his donkey and so returns to his own home (v. 28). The circuitous route of their travels, which began with their departure from Ephraim in vv. 1-2, has now reached closure. Of course, when they left they did so separately; here they are together. Yet their 'togetherness' involves the transformation of the woman into a voiceless, lifeless object packed onto the back of an animal. Her condition is such that the Levite -- whom the text now, for the first time, calls 'her master' (v. 27) -- meets no

challenge from her in determining the destination of their journey: his own home.

Upon their arrival the Levite is the author of further activity -- all of which is directed onto the concubine. In rapid succession, four verbs report how the Levite 'took a knife, and grasping his concubine he cut her into twelve pieces, limb by limb, and sent her throughout all the territory of Israel' (v. 29; my emphasis). The brutality of this act, whereby the concubine is dismembered by her own husband, has oft received comment.³¹ What has not so often been noted, though, is the location of this brutal act, and the way in which it further highlights the act's brutality. The reported activity of the Levite is preceded by the information that 'he entered his house' (v. 29). Hence, the location of the dismemberment was inside, in a space not only normally associated with women, but also one with assumed connotations of safety and security for them. In this episode, though, such meanings are sharply reversed: the house becomes the setting for the most violent abuse inflicted upon her. Indeed, since the text is never forthcoming about the time of her death, her dying might well be coeval with her dismemberment. Thus, the place that is expected to serve as the secure center of a woman's life (and the locus of whatever authority she may have), becomes, for this woman, the site where her husband finally, and most horrifically, destroys her.

Conclusions

In attempting to highlight codes of gender and social space in this narrative I have focused on where the featured characters -- particularly the concubine -- are located when they do and say whatever it is they do and say. Moreover, in order to make vivid the narrative's public/private patternings, I have also purposefully broken with the temporal sequence. Let me

now briefly reconfigure my reading so as to consider events and their locations according to the text's temporal ordering. What emerges, quite clearly, is a story whose tragic dimensions for the concubine increase with each subsequent scene.

In the beginning the concubine amazes us with her independence and initiative as she travels, alone, on the public highways of ancient Palestine. Her autonomy out in the open continues, even though in a more subdued fashion, in the next scene when she comes out of her father's house to meet the Levite and then bring him to her father. At this point, though, the narrative seemingly reacts to her expressions of selfhood out in the public domain by shelving all further acts of independence on her part.

The text's first strategy is to mute her presence in the private domain, making her vanish inside her father's house. This unexpected reversal of the traditional meanings of private, inside places for women is then furthered by her submissive behavior out in public -- here very much in line with customary expectations -- when the Levite, concubine, and servant take to the roads on their return to Ephraim. Then, as if to affirm that the lesson about submission has been well-learned both in private and in public, the narrative again makes the concubine invisible inside. This time her vanishing occurs inside the Ephraimite's house at Gibeah, alongside the disappearance of the virgin daughter of the Ephraimite host.

But the concubine's non-presence, whether in private or public, seems to be somehow inadequate to the demands of the narrative. So the text enacts a second strategy whereby it makes the concubine the victim of overt violence. It does so, first, by subjecting her to gang-rape at the hands of the men of Gibeah out in their city's streets and alleys. Even though the location of this attack confirms traditional expectations about the place (and safety) of women,

the attack itself still has the power to stun us with its viciousness. But even this is not enough: public victimization by a whole gang of strange men has its sequel in private victimization by one intimately-known man. The concubine is dismembered -- and possibly killed -- by her own husband, an occurrence that takes place inside of his home. The end of Judges 19 thus brings with it the penultimate reversal of traditional expectations about women and place.

My reading of Judges 19 has taken on a rather circumscribed task: to analyze the spatial aspects of the public-private construct and its implications for the concubine. But even this fairly restricted frame of reading shows that more is going on in this text than we might have hitherto suspected.³² The simplistic equation of woman and private does not always work in Judges 19 -- nor does the notion that the public is entirely off-limits to her. A more disquieting observation can also be made: just as she is not safe in public, neither is her private positioning any guarantee of safety. The concubine in Judges 19 has no secure place of her own.

Is this story merely the exception that proves the rule? That is, does the text here play on our assumptions about public/private as a way of further highlighting the chaotic nature of Israelite society during the period of the Judges (and so promoting the conclusion that a monarchy is necessary)? Or does this text, in its seeming violation of our assumptions, negate the very meaningfulness, and hence the usefulness, of this dichotomy as a category for analysis?

Answers to such questions at least partly depend on work that attends to the spatial dynamics of other biblical narratives, and/or other biblical characters.³³ In the interim, though, the results of this analysis should at least render us more cautious in our use of the public-private construct -- especially, perhaps, the gendered meanings we attribute to the construct. Otherwise, the construct may lead us to assume, rather than helping us to illuminate and explain, too much

about how gender really works.³⁴ A 'messier' truth might well need to be acknowledged -- one that is more open to seeing both the diversity and complexity of the spatial positioning of women (and men) in the Hebrew Bible.

NOTES

1. N. Steinberg, 'Gender Roles in the Rebekah Cycle', USQR 39 (1984), p. 185.
2. M. O'Connor, 'The Women in the Book of Judges', Hebrew Annual Review 10 (1986), p. 279.
3. N. Steinberg, 'Gender Roles in the Rebekah Cycle', p. 186.
4. See especially the discussions in: M. Z. Rosaldo, 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding', SIGNS 5 (1980), pp. 389-417; L. J. Nicholson, 'Feminist Theory: The Private and the Public', in Beyond Domination: New Perspectives on Women and Philosophy (ed. C. C. Gould; Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984), pp. 221-30; A. Yeatman, 'Gender and the Differentiation of Social Life into Public and Domestic Domains', Social Analysis 15 (1984), pp. 32-49; J. Sharistanian, 'Introduction: Women's Lives in the Public and Domestic Spheres' and 'Conclusion: The Public/Domestic Model and the Study of Contemporary Women's Lives', in Beyond the Public/Domestic Dichotomy: Contemporary Perspectives on Women's Public Lives (ed. J. Sharistanian; Contributions in Women's Studies, 78; Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 1-10, 179-84; H. L. Moore, 'Gender and Status: Explaining the Position of Women', in Feminism and Anthropology (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988), esp. pp. 21-24.
5. Cf. the discussion in N. O. Keohane, 'Preface', in Gendered Domains: Rethinking Public and Private in Women's History (ed. D. O. Helly and S. M. Reverby; Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. ix-xii.
6. These questions are broached variously in the following: the previously-cited M. Z. Rosaldo, 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology'; A. L. Tsing and S. J. Yanagisako, 'Feminism and Kinship Theory', Current Anthropology 24 (1983), esp. pp. 511-12; C. Bose, 'Dual Spheres', in Analyzing Gender (ed. B. B. Hess and M. M. Ferree; Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1987), pp. 267-85; H. L. Moore, 'Gender and Status: Explaining the Position of Women', pp. 12-41; C. Turbin, 'Beyond Dichotomies: Interdependence in Mid-Nineteenth Century Working Class Families in the United States', Gender and History 1 (1989), pp. 293-308.
7. Alongside, or instead of, the traditional translation of the Hebrew pileges as 'concubine,' one often finds now the term 'secondary wife.' In support of this latter, Yair Zakovitch argues that the vocabulary used to describe the woman's relationship to the Levite does indeed connote marriage. Y. Zakovitch, "The Woman's Rights in the Biblical Law of Divorce," The Jewish Law Annual 4 (1981), p. 38. Moreover, as J. Cheryl Exum points out, this translation might be preferred because it grants higher esteem to this woman (especially for modern readers of English). And yet, Exum also adds that it is "an odd feature of this story" that no primary wife is mentioned. J. Cheryl Exum, Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), p. 177. The question is thus raised: Are we to understand the term 'secondary wife' quantitatively (number of wives) or qualitatively (relative status, regardless of whether or not other wives are present)? Meanwhile, the choice between 'secondary wife' and 'concubine' might well depend at least partly on the context in which the term pileges is employed. In light of this paper's analysis of Judges 19, the term 'concubine' is to be preferred, not just despite, but also because of, its connotations of expendability and low status.

8. All verse references, unless otherwise marked, are to Judges 19. Also, unless indications to the contrary are made, scriptural references follow the NRSV.

9. See the similar comments made by J. Cheryl Exum in her discussion of both the Judges 19 story and the story of Bathsheba: 'It is well known that in cases of rape the issue of the woman's responsibility is often raised. Why was she dressed like that? What was she doing alone at night in that neighborhood?' J. C. Exum, Fragmented Women, p. 188.

10. Ibid., 171.

11. In general, of course, Hebrew narrative is reticent about reporting on the thoughts and feelings of its characters -- at least directly. Instead, determining the inner life of a character depends often on making inferences based on the character's reported words and/or actions. In this episode, however, not only is nothing conveyed about the woman's thoughts and/or feelings, there is also nothing recorded about what, if anything, she said or did. Hence, no real means at all is provided for accessing what this woman is thinking and/or feeling during the rape (cf. Tamar in 2 Sam. 13.12-13).

12. S. Niditch, 'The 'Sodomite' Theme in Judges 19-20: Family, Community, and Social Disintegration', CBQ 44 (1982), p. 370.

13. So reads the RSV translation of this phrase.

14. 'Concubine' (Hebrew pileges) is the most oft-used term for her, articulating as it does her relationship to the Levite. 'Maid-servant' (Hebrew amah) is employed in v. 19. By inference, she inhabits the role of daughter (see vv. 3-9), though she is never explicitly identified as such. Only once does the narrator refer to her simply as 'the woman' (Hebrew issa; see v. 26).

15. The virgin daughter of the Ephraimite host shares the same voiceless condition as her 'sister'. In this story, at least, all men speak, but no women do.

16. See S. Erlandsson, 'zanah, z nunim; z nuth; taznuth', in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament, Vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmans, 1980), pp. 99-104.

17. See R. G. Boling, Judges (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), pp. 273-74; J. A. Soggin, Judges (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 284; S. Niditch, 'The "Sodomite" Theme in Judges 19-20', p. 366; V. H. Matthews, 'Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19', Biblical Theology Bulletin 22 (1992), p. 7. Both the NRSV and the NEB translations also utilize this reading for this phrase.

18. L. Simons, '"An Immortality Rather than a Life": Milton and the Concubine of Judges 19-21', in Old Testament Women in Western Literature (ed. R.-J. Frontain and J. Wojcik; Conway, AR: UCA Press, 1991), p. 153.

19. Ibid., p. 154 (author's emphasis).

20. See D. N. Fewell and D. M. Gunn, Gender, Power, and Promise: The Subject of the Bible's First Story (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), p. 133.

21. Ibid., p. 133.

22. L. Simons, "'An Immortality Rather than a Life'", p. 151.
23. M. O'Connor, 'The Women in the Book of Judges', p. 281.
24. See D. N. Fewell and D. Gunn, Gender, Power, & Promise, p. 133.
25. See M. Bal, Death and Dissymmetry (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 181; V. H. Matthews, 'Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19', p. 7.
26. P. Tribble, Texts of Terror (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 68.
27. C. Meyers, Discovering Eve (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 145-48.
28. Recall the story in Gen. 18.1-10; although Sarah makes the cakes for Abraham and his three visitors, she remains inside the tent while the others sup outside.
29. C. Meyers, Discovering Eve, p. 145.
30. Still, even here we might well ask if the two women are actually present or not. That is, does the third common plural verb (see v. 22) include them? Or are they kept hidden behind the scene, just as earlier the concubine was made invisible inside the house of her father?
31. E.g., P. Tribble, Texts of Terror, pp. 80-81; D. N. Fewell and D. Gunn, Gender, Power, & Promise, pp. 134-35; J. C. Exum, Fragmented Women, p. 196.
32. Cf. David Jobling's comment (written about biblical texts pertaining to the Second Temple period): "there is too much going on in texts for us to control." D. Jobling, 'Text and the World -- An Unbridgeable Gap? A Response to Carroll, Høglund and Smith', in Second Temple Studies. I. Persian Period (ed. P. R. Davies; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), p. 181.
33. But see my 'Living on the Edge: The Liminality of Daughters in Genesis to 2 Samuel', in A Feminist Companion Samuel and Kings (ed. A. Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), esp. pp. 36-40 [published under the name of Karla G. Shargent].
34. See M. Z. Rosaldo, 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology', p. 399.

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ABSTRACT

In this analysis of Judges 19, I look at where the woman is located, and the meanings for her of those locations, in the various episodes that involve her.

Among the findings is that the oft-used construct equating the private with women (and safety) is not always confirmed here; nor is the converse, that the public is off-limits to women because it is the more proper sphere of men. The analysis thus suggests caution is needed in our use of the public-private construct, especially the gendered meanings we might associate with that construct. As well, it encourages a more general attentiveness to the spatial dynamics of biblical narrative and its role in the portrayal of biblical characters.