

STARING DOWN THE VIOLENCE: SURVEILLANCE IN GENESIS

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ABSTRACT

This article advances the hypothesis that surveillance studies can inform a postcolonial feminist reading of Genesis narratives. The method of reading uses the overall metaphor of the omnividence (the ability to see all) of the few acting upon the many. Of particular use in this study are literary poetics, ethnic and gender profiling, assemblage and data doubles, shame and honour, and a reimagining of the “omniscient” third person narrator. Persian and Assyrian period intelligence gathering and surveillance is investigated as an influence on the text. That is, the narrator and characters report events after seeing them through a particular nationalistic and legal ideological lens. In one account of narrative surveillance in the story of Dinah and Shechem, in Gen 34, the narrator demonstrates bias. To counter-read this, sousveillance techniques in the narrative can be understood as not only a means of profiling but also a means of resisting this profiling. Drawing on the practical theology of Eric Stoddart, cultural theory and postcolonial feminist thinking, resistance strategies of (in)visibility in the narrative imaginary are posed for those who are under the eye of powerful forces.

KEYWORDS

Pentateuch, cultural theory, postcolonial feminist criticism

INTRODUCTION

In the politics of power, the exercise of control includes access to as much information as possible. Moreover, this access must include the freedom to interpret the resulting data. This concern is no different for those who engage in biblical studies. Therefore, this article will use the discipline of

surveillance studies as a basis for reading a narrative of Genesis, using a sociological lens to highlight the power of the surveillant gaze, and the ways in which this works in narrative. In the emerging discipline of surveillance studies, surveillance is defined as the employment of large scale social visual monitoring to detect perceived threats to security. Recently, social participation in watching has been defined by the term *veillance*, representing a visual field of gazes.¹ Surveillance comes from the French “to watch over/from above”, and is used in this article as a lens for understanding the nature of authoritative visual monitoring for order and control, with the attending risks and results.

The legal or social norms assumed by the biblical narrator and other characters to justify violence are subverted by the seeing actions of other characters. This process, which could be understood as “surveillance from below” (or *sousveillance*),² deconstructs the tendency to seek security from such legal and social norms. *Sousveillance* is looking back either from a physical position below or a hierarchically subordinate position. These kind of multiple viewpoints (from below) in the text illustrate the limitations of narratorial omniscience. Readers position themselves so that they monitor both the narrative gazes and how these gazes illustrate issues of theodicy and violence. This is especially relevant for those readers who identify with voiceless characters existing under a ubiquitous gaze.

The control exercised by this ubiquitous gaze is represented in the biblical text through tropes of seeing from above or beyond the characters, whether the trope of surveillance is utilized by the narrator, other characters, or the reader. The nature of this “all-seeing” is dependent on the characterization and visual relationships between narrative participants. Resistance to this seeing is represented through the returned gaze of the voiceless *subaltern* (mass populations and marginal groups that are not included or represented

1 Mir Adnan Ali and Steve Mann, “The Inevitability of the Transition from a Surveillance-Society to a Veillance-Society: Moral and Economic Grounding for *Sousveillance*,” in *International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS): Social Implications of Wearable Computing and Augmented Reality in Everyday Life*, ed. Steve Mann (Toronto: Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, 2013), 243–54.

2 Surveillance is often used for dominant power or the discourse about control, whereas *sousveillance* is more “rhizomic and heterogeneous.” Steve Mann and Joseph Ferenbok, “New Media and the Power Politics of *Sousveillance* in a Surveillance-Dominated World,” *Surveillance & Society* 11, no. 1/2 (2013): 19.

in political structures).³ These subaltern groups are also represented in the text by those female characters experiencing *double colonization* (comprised of a doubled layer of subordination, by both imperial and androcentric ideologies).⁴ The two important postcolonial themes, of the subaltern gaze and double colonization, are unpacked here through the study of narratorial and character vision. In particular, this article will advance the hypothesis that surveillance studies can inform a postcolonial feminist reading of Genesis 34.

SURVEILLANCE STUDIES

The rise of the modern surveillance state has occasioned the discipline of surveillance studies.⁵ This area of research is underwritten by modern liberal notions of personhood, privacy and security. The practice of surveillance results in safety or danger for those who are watched. The assumptions that rule and interpret observations conform to unanimous social and legal expectations. This situation is tolerated because, to a part or whole of society, political monitoring from a larger administrative power is for the protection of citizens and the political interests of the state from threats. These threats may be individuals or groups, with groups usually following a non-conforming individual or ideology. Sometimes these individuals or groups need to negotiate different kinds of visibility strategies to manipulate surveillance and to better represent themselves to the authorities. In this way, those who are not in power can conduct their own *sousveillance*, and

3 Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. Joseph L. Buttigieg, trans. Joseph L. Buttigieg, vol. 2 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 91. The postcolonial subaltern refers to those for which biblical studies could, “revalorize the hidden or occluded accounts of numerous groups—women, minorities, the disadvantaged and the displaced.” R.S. Sugirtharajah, “From Orientalist to Post-Colonial: Notes on Reading Practices,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 10, no. 1 (1996): 24.

4 First coined by Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford, *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-Colonial Women’s Writing* (Mundelstrup, Denmark: Oxford Dangaroo Press, 1986). See also Musa W. Dube, “Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible,” in *Hope Abundant*, ed. Kwok Pui-lan (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2010), 98.

5 For example, see David Lyon, *Surveillance Studies: An Overview* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 13–14; Gary T. Marx, “Ethics for the New Surveillance,” *Information Society* 14, no. 3 (1998): 171–85, and Andrea Mubi Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory and Social Research* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

therefore all parties in society engage in watching. They may then have an amount of control over any consequences of surveillance.⁶

For example, a proverb used in Afghanistan since the Russian invasion is, “Look at the sky, then choose your turban.”⁷ This is much like the choice of high visibility for Dinah, the daughter of Leah and Jacob and her adjustment of her social self, in a willingness to absorb the consequences of visibility. Many of the ancestral Genesis narratives use recognition and event re-presentation to direct blame, violence or justification for the actions of characters.⁸ But the gaze can also be reciprocated in *sousveillance* “from below” by the gaze of the voiceless, such as Dinah.

Instead of being punitive, modern surveillance exists because of widespread public participation in data collection and categorizing rhetoric. “Participatory surveillance” invites mutual protection for the whole community as they become visible to each other to watch each other.⁹ Surveillance studies is concerned with a mass gaze rather than a singular, panoptic gaze. Michel Foucault, in his study of the nineteenth century Panopticon of Jeremy Bentham, was aware of the problems of the panoptic vision in governing social behaviour. Visual observation alone is unable to provide full knowledge.¹⁰ The Panopticon of Bentham does not change individuals; rather, it merely alters the

6 I am indebted to Eric Stoddart for his work in practical theology and surveillance. For example, in Exod 1, Moses is in danger of being murdered by the administration of Pharaoh, which elicits a response from the midwives in an act of conspiracy. In the end, Moses is taken up by the highly visible person of Pharaoh's daughter. Now that he is visible, Moses could be fooling the bureaucracy by subverting his visibility. Eric Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society: Watching and Being Watched* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 160.

7 Deborah Storie, Executive Director, International Assistance Mission (IAM), Afghanistan, personal communication.

8 There are surveillance/*sousveillance* themes in other narratives that are not strictly trickster tales, involving perceiving and investigating scenes of confusion, destruction or violence. See Gen 4:9–10; 6:5, 8; 11:5–6.

9 First coined by Anders Albrechtslund, “Online Social Networking as Participatory Surveillance,” *First Monday* 13, no. 3 (2008): <http://www.firstmonday.org/article/view/2142/1949>. See also Slavoj Žižek, *Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?: Five Interventions on the Misuse of a Notion* (London: Verso, 2001), 256.

10 “Visibility is a trap.” Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed. (New York: Pantheon/Vintage Books, 1977), 200.

presentation of their social self.¹¹ Stephen Moore notes that the biblical omniscient narrator can be an illustration of panoptic and surveillant powers.¹² However, there is a difference between Panopticism and surveillance, as between a social performance and a desire for public order.

The larger socio-political world of the Neo-Assyrian and Persian empires, which I assume in this article to be a factor behind the written text of Genesis, included the realities of imperial surveillance. Persian imperial monitoring was gradually separated from the divine gaze and given a place of power comparable to it. This is of particular interest when reading Genesis narratives that describe the causes of disaster, danger and security.¹³ The ancient political situation included monitoring their own governing administrative persons and other local populations by anonymous others who were the mediated “eyes and ears of the king.”¹⁴ Instead of a direct Persian authorization of the Torah as autonomous local law, surveillance was implemented by the designation of local and Persian officials in order to watch for general social deviance.¹⁵ Ezra, according to Lisbeth Fried,

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- 11 Because of the influence of Enlightenment ideas on social surveillance, Foucault saw surface behavioural change as a discipline stemming from being watched. It is noted that his panoptic is reliant on the power of scientific observation as truth, leading only to social pragmatic behaviour rather than deep personal change. David Rosen and Aaron Santesso, *The Watchman in Pieces: Surveillance, Literature and Liberal Personhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 56–59, 103.
 - 12 Stephen D. Moore, “The Gospel of the Look,” in *The Bible in Theory: Critical and Postcritical Essays*, ed. Stephen D. Moore (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010), 70.
 - 13 The premodern social world differs from the modernist “risk society,” but the two can be compared through the basic human desire for security. Individualism changed the notion of the causes of disaster from the gods to that of personal responsibility and choice. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter, Theory, Culture and Society (London: Sage, 1992), 136. See David J. Chalcraft, “Sociology and the Book of Chronicles: Risk, Ontological Security, Moral Panics, and Types of Narrative,” in *What Was Authoritative for Chronicles?*, ed. Ehud Ben Zvi and Diana Vikander Edelman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 201–27.
 - 14 This was a Persian practice, but it was later carried on by Greek powers. Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition*, Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2014), 13.
 - 15 The Heidelberg School of pentateuchal theory suggests that Persian colonial administration was behind the composition of the text so that it could be acceptable as local law. This view, however, has complications which have produced reassessments. For example, while it could be said that prohibition of exogamy in Deut 7 was part of an Israelite ethos, the accompanying violence toward outsiders surely would not have been palatable to Persian readers. Jean Louis Ska, “‘Persian Imperial Authorisation’: Some Question Marks,” in *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch*, ed. James W. Watts (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001), 169.

was personally mandated with carrying out surveillance activities on behalf of the king, both through himself and through local Persian officials. He engages in לְבַקֵּר (lbqr'), a role which is translated in LXX "episkopos" (ἐπισκοπος), a term for those who are monitoring for the good order of the king (Ezra 4:15, 19; 6:1; 7:14). Fried sees Ezra as therefore a separate entity to religious leaders or governors, mediating information to Persia so as to enable a general sense of order rather than enforce the Torah itself.¹⁶ The concept of a universal "god" (Ezra 7:14) in related Persian literature is an inclusive generic term,¹⁷ different from earlier associations of kings with god-like powers.¹⁸ Biblical references to Persian political and military procedures and linguistic forms are inserted to ensure the strengthening of the Torah's authority.¹⁹ In the same way, surveillance does not impose law, but gives to the watchers authority and a sense of order.

READING BIBLICAL NARRATIVE THROUGH SURVEILLANCE

The use of surveillance as a theme for reading biblical texts is neither an anachronism nor a strictly historical study. In this article, rather, I seek to create a literary link with the origins and character of this political and social practice.²⁰ In my literary study of Genesis, assuming Persian era

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- 16 Fried, *Ezra and the Law*, 12–21. See also Barbara E. Thiering, "MEBAQQER and EPISKOPOS in the Light of the Temple Scroll," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 100, no. 1 (1981): 64–69; R.C. Steiner, "The MBQR at Qumran, the EPISKOPOS in the Athenian Empire, and the Meaning of LBQR' in Ezra 7:14: On the Relation of Ezra's Mission to the Persian Legal Project," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 120, no. 4 (2001): 629.
- 17 Konrad Schmid, "The Persian Imperial Authorization as a Historical Problem and as a Biblical Construct: A Plea for Distinctions in the Current Debate," in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 37n50.
- 18 Steven W. Holloway, *Assur Is King! Assur Is King!: Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (Culture and History of the Ancient Near East; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002), 181–82.
- 19 Exod 18:21; Deut 16:18; Ezra 7:16, 17, 18, 21, 23, 24, 26. Fried, *Ezra and the Law*, 21–23.
- 20 As Peter Dubovský writes, "... the shift was part of the zeitgeist of the final phase of high empire, in which Assyria was increasingly concerned with the control of territory, for which information was crucial, rather than with its acquisition by force." Moreover, Raymond Cohen comments: "Whether Ancient Near Eastern diplomacy was in fact the biological ancestor of modern diplomacy cannot yet be definitively determined, but the implication is there." Peter Dubovský, "Sennacherib's Invasion of the Levant through the Eyes of Assyrian Intelligence Services," in *Sennacherib at the Gates of Jerusalem: Story, History and Historiography*, ed. Isaac Kalimi and Seth Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 249; Raymond Cohen, "On Diplomacy in the Ancient Near East: The Amarna Letters," *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 7, no. 2 (1996): 247.

readers, the legacy of the social effects of surveillance is read as embedded in the narrative structure. Other biblical genres also illustrate this influence.²¹ Narration in Genesis uses some features of surveillance through observations of powerful characters using this procedure: gathering information, checking reports and then adding additional comments.²² Complexes of characters (including the narrator) represent events and themselves poly-visually, that is, through multiple viewpoints. Depending on the particular gaze, this watching can be to police sexuality, maintain social contracts and civility, and gain information to manipulate data or represent others. Many of the narratives use recognition and event representation to direct blame, violence or justification for the actions of characters.²³ Particular characters can be identified as resisters to being watched, such as Dinah and the people of Shechem. The connection between modern and ancient issues of social and political surveillance highlights the enduring discussion on the struggle between security and freedom, or privacy and public order.

The method of reading narrative through surveillance questions the legitimacy of *omnividence* (the ability to see all), particularly through the narrator and divine character, as a basis for political and ethical decisions. The biblical narrator is often described as omniscient; however, I suggest that the narrator is better described as an omnivident interpreter of information. Analysing the omnivident gaze in literature is not concerned with subjectivity itself, but with the limits of text and narration to ultimately provide all knowledge. A routine surveillant gaze in a familiar and universal social context is inherently limited and therefore can be interrupted in the pursuit of security, identity or categorization. Using the language of surveillance, this is termed *profiling*. A profile is a visually built assembly of data which falls short of complete omniscience. Profiling creates a *data double* which is a virtual portrayal of a person or group, by means of *assemblage*.²⁴ The narrator

21 James Crenshaw describes the trace of a “multi-tiered bureaucracy” that hovers in the background of Qoheleth, and which transforms traditional clan based economies and monitors the peasant population. James L. Crenshaw, *Qoheleth: The Ironic Wink* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2013), 56–57.

22 Dubovský, “Sennacherib’s Invasion,” 276.

23 There are surveillance/sousveillance themes in other narratives that are not strictly trickster tales, involving perceiving and investigating scenes of confusion, destruction or violence. See Genesis 4:9–10; 6:5, 8; 11:5–6.

24 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari describe the concept of assemblage as a whole, but made up of pieces of multiple puzzles and filled with gaps. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 71, 88–91, 323–37, 503–5; Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006), 3.

assembles reports of the direct speech or perception of characters to move the plot forward, condemn or excuse the actions of characters, or create a sense of security or justice. This assembly can be based on particular ideological lenses (for example, androcentric and ethnocentric).

This profiling may be questioned due to the assembly of component data as incomplete and therefore liable to misinterpretation. There are ways in which the characters under suspicion act as an inner-biblical critique of this. The gaze of the reader also counters this by looking into the narrative world and understanding it as constructed by surveillant seeing. Jean-Paul Sartre's parable on furtive staring helps to illustrate some of this complexity. The parable uses a triangulation of seeing subjects. A starrer is driven to look at another scene through a keyhole, assuming that no one can see that they are looking at another. However, a third person then sees the starrer in the process of seeing, in order to make a judgment on them. The starrer then becomes aware of this other eye on them and feels shame. Both the starrer and the one observing the starrer become self-aware with regard to their compulsion to visual voyeurism.²⁵

Similarly, when a reader looks through the biblical narrator's eyes, there is a visual hunger for knowledge which the narrator is expected to present. But because seeing does not necessarily reveal all thought and intention, the reader needs to be more active in interpretation than is often acknowledged. If there is too much passivity, the reader can remain as uncertain as the narrator, and both can simply remain voyeurs. The reader needs to be the active catalyst for awareness, without becoming dominant or the only subject active in their own seeing.²⁶ This acknowledgment of multiple sources of vision is a kind of reading-as-looking, which creates an ethical vocation for the reader.

The theme of surveillance can be read as exercised in Genesis narratives through the gaze of the characters, including the deity, and the use of language of authority and influence. Within the biblical storyworld of the Genesis ancestors, the deity appears to see all. By way of the verb for seeing (ראו), many characters are depicted as looking to this omniscience of the deity for justice on social matters. For example, Jacob says plainly that Yhwh has "seen my affliction" (31:42) and Leah points out, through

25 Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), 259–60.

26 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: Karnac, 2004), 90.

naming, that Yhwh must “see” her son Reuben (29:32) for her to be vindicated. Isaac tries to see his son, calling out to other eyes, perhaps Yhwh’s. Ironically, Isaac could not see at all. Yhwh is absent but is invoked by visual metaphor when Isaac tries to “see the smell of my son, it is like the smell of a field that Yhwh has blessed” (27:27). Similarly, the story of Dinah in Gen 34 links covenantal politics and the visual, as the divine gaze hovers above the text by means of the Israelite nationalist narration. Those who are othered by this narration will be accepted “if you become like us” (34:15, 22), bearing visual evidence of circumcision. The difference between seeing, partially or wholly, and the nature of the event reported by seeing is an opportunity to negotiate a covenant.

DINAH’S PROFILE

Whether for ethnic or gendered reasons, the storyworld of Gen 34 is concerned with the representation of social and legal norms through surveying eyes. I have chosen Gen 34 because it illustrates the visual narratology involved in characters adjusting their social performance of civility, as postcolonial feminist theory describes.²⁷ Dinah does not change her social self, but uses sousveillance to deconstruct the other characters’ profiling. In the story, Dinah goes out to the town of Shechem from Jacob’s camp and is reported to be “defiled” by the prince of the city, Shechem (34:1–2). After a change of heart, the “rapist” expresses love for Dinah (34:3, 8). Marriage is then suggested by Shechem’s father, Hamor the Hivite, to Jacob and his sons. Despite the temptation for Jacob to accumulate land and wealth from an alliance with the Shechemites, he keeps quiet (34:5). He lets his sons discuss it, although the narrator neither recommends nor censures this behaviour. The negotiations of such marriages are labelled by the narrator as “deceitful” (34:13);²⁸ yet the narrator creates a deceptive, temporary conciliation. The narrator does praise Shechem, however, for the fact that he is so honoured by his own people that he convinces all the men to be circumcized (34:14–17). After the circumcisions, the city is subjected to such violent actions that Jacob is alarmed for his own safety from retribution (34:25–26, 30). The men are murdered and the women and goods are taken away, along with Dinah (34:27–29). Visual data on the legal and moral actions of prince

27 Musa W. Dube, “Toward a Post-Colonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible,” in *Hope Abundant* ed. Kwok Pui-lan (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 98.

28 Yairah Amit, *Hidden Polemics in Biblical Narrative*, Biblical Interpretation Series, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 190.

Shechem and the status of Dinah are furnished by the narrator throughout the narrative. However, the gaze of the narrator reveals information selectively while the multiple gazes of other characters act and react to the polemical language. The violence against the Shechemites overshadows a violent act of silencing and classifying Dinah. She in turn uses her gaze to counter the narrator. For both the Shechemites and Dinah, the text may be read within a strategy of postcolonial visual resistance to violence, through the metaphor of surveillance.

Surveillance and sousveillance occur in a veillant field in which the imperial and gendered political monitoring or resistance to monitoring seeks to determine the meaning of the event in 34:1–2. The narrator sets the scene by describing the actions of characters crossing in and out of the visibility of the camp, the city, and the storyworld. Dinah goes out in 34:1 “to see into the daughters of the land” (לְרִאֵת בְּבָנוֹת הָאֶרֶץ). She is challenging her meagre visibility in surrounding texts (30:21; 46:15), by making herself visible and taking on a pre-emptive gazing role.²⁹ The prince of Shechem, in turn, “sees her” (וַיִּרְאֵהָ). This illustrates Sartre’s parable: the narrator is looking at Shechem look at Dinah looking at the women in an attempt to represent Shechem’s seeing as illicit. But the reader can interrogate the narrator’s seeing. After seeing her, Shechem “takes” her (לָקַח) “lays” her (שָׁכַב) and “humbles/humiliates” her (עָנָה), in a cumbersome series of feminine pronoun forms in v.2.³⁰ What this humbling means remains ambiguous compared to the appearance of the word עָנָה in other parts of the ancestor narratives.³¹ The combination of investigation through seeing and actions creates profiles for Shechem and Dinah, which persist throughout the rest of the narrative.

To argue firmly for or against rape either emphasizes the narrator’s viewpoint or makes assumptions about Dinah and her gaze.³² The data on Dinah is merely that of visual images described in legal and social terms, creating a data double that is only a speculative facsimile, or assemblage, of her actual person. The entire passage leaves Dinah mute. Although she has

29 The complex is similar to 2 Sam 11:2, except that Dinah, unlike Bathsheba, unambiguously chooses visibility and returns a gaze.

30 This is different in construction to the more efficient עָמָה שָׁכַב “he lay with her” in 2 Sam 11:4.

31 For example, Hagar in Gen 16:6 and 9.

32 I find Frank Yamada’s argument on the violent potential of the semantics of עָנָה insufficient to resolve the ambiguity. עָנָה can apply equally to sexual violence and to social shaming. Frank M. Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible: A Literary Analysis of Three Rape Narratives* (New York: Lang, 2008), 37–38.

no dialogue, she has a fearlessly visible presence as the subject of a narratorial gaze. While the Rabbis blamed the violence on Dinah's action of going out and seeing,³³ the combined gaze of her own people, Shechem, and the narrator illustrates structural violence.³⁴ One method of resistance while living under surveillance is to abandon talking about visual categories of private or public as good or bad, and instead to structure seeing into everyday living, in strategies of (*in*)visibility. The term (*in*)visibility has been developed by practical theologian Eric Stoddart, who writes on the theological and ethical implications of living in a modern surveillance society. The emphasis is on the praxis of theology within the social circumstances of being visible or invisible.³⁵

At first the narrator describes the expositional event as that of Dinah as “humbled/humiliated” (ענה, 34:2), then changes her status to “defiled” (טמא, 34:5, 13, 27). Rather than any deed, it is Dinah herself that is referred to as unclean (34:5, 13, 27), possibly alluding to the use of טמא in Leviticus (see particularly 20:3 and 22:4, within the Holiness Code). The narrator uses the *piel* טמא, three times, to describe Dinah, carefully telescoping the event to the reader through socio-legal Levitical ideas, bypassing other characters.³⁶ It becomes ethically problematic, then, that the narrator boldly reports an act of “defiling.”³⁷ Indeed, the report to Jacob in 34:5 has no detail, no

33 “What caused all this? The fact that ‘Dinah went out.’ When God creates woman, she is declared ‘a storer’ (Is 3.16).” *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis: A New American Translation*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 106 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 80.4–5, 148–49.

34 Ellen Van Wolde considers the assumption of rape for this event to be entirely misplaced. E. J. van Wolde, “Does *Innâ* Denote Rape? A Semantic Analysis of a Controversial Word,” *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 4 (2002): 542. The type of sexual position suggested also indicates humbling/humiliation to the Rabbis. *Gen. Rab.*, 7D, 149.

35 Eric Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society: Watching and Being Watched* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 7.

36 The narrator, being economical, relays information to the characters without elaborating to the reader. “By telescoping the audience’s attention toward the drama of the individual in distress, the freighted symbolism of the tragic story focuses attention on crisis as an *experience*—diverting attention from the social, structural, and political dimensions of disaster.” Julia Watts Belser, “The Ethics of Representing Disaster: Rabbinic and Contemporary Depictions of Women in Narratives of Catastrophe,” *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 41, no. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2013): <http://bulletin.hds.harvard.edu/articles/winterspring2013/ethics-representing-disaster> (emphasis in original).

37 Sarah Shectman sees an ethical problem with using the verb טמא because the form in the *piel* is never used for defiling a person. It is unusual to say the least. Sarah Shectman, *Women in the Pentateuch: A Feminist and Source-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 101n.48.

reaction by Jacob and no connection to the mind of any character.³⁸ The narrator simply has no category for Dinah's sexual expression. The polemic becomes more centred on the use of **אָנָן** as an excuse for violence, without witnesses giving any evidence for this.

Dinah is placed in different designations and profiles in her descriptions according to the symbolic world of the political and visible body. To the narrator in 34:1, she is the “daughter of Leah” (**בַּת־לֵאָה**), then she is referred to as “the one born” **יְלֵדָה** to Jacob, before crossing into the visibility of consorting with the daughters of Shechem. Julie Kelso sees the frequent use of **לֵד** as meaning “this one whose duty it is to bear for a man.” This is the symbolic centre of both the hiddenness of the mother-daughter relationship and the exchange of women, in the eyes of both the male family of Jacob and Hamor.³⁹ The importance of the body in social and political control has been described in surveillance studies as *bio-politics*, because the visibility of certain bodies is part of the asymmetrical power relation that sustains surveillance.⁴⁰ This kind of relationship sets up a place for uses of (in)visibility, depending on the political purpose. It illustrates the sousveillance of Dinah as occurring through her visible body, as this is the carrier of her gaze.

Jacob hears the news of Dinah's “defilement,” but does he accept it? Is this news part of the dominant surveillance profiling that is resisted by (in)visibility?⁴¹ The narrator tells us that Jacob hears the “news” in 34:5, and he stays quiet until the sons also hear. But they do not hear it from Jacob. It is ambiguous in translation as to when the brothers hear. Are they in the

38 As Laurence Turner notes, “But no reaction to the rape itself is ever recorded; that is left to her brothers and the narrator (34:7).” Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis*. 2nd ed., Readings: A New Biblical Commentary (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2009), 152.

39 Julie Kelso, “Reading the Silence of Women in Genesis 34,” in *Redirected Travel: Alternative Journeys and Places in Biblical Studies*, ed. Roland Boer and Edgar W. Conrad (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 93.

40 Brighenti, *Visibility in Social Theory*, 148–50.

41 Lyn Bechtel writes, “. . . as a mediating pair Dinah and Jacob fit together nicely. Dinah has no voice, only action in the beginning of the story; Jacob has no action, only voice at the end of the story.” Lyn M. Bechtel, “What If Dinah Is Not Raped? (Genesis 34),” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 19, no. 62 (1994): 36.

field when they hear, and then return, or do they return from the field first?⁴² Whichever it is, the information about Dinah comes to her family from a formless and bureaucratic source.

Jacob's actions are contrary to the readers' expectations of behaviour on hearing such news.⁴³ This could be explained in that while Jacob is seen to be receiving news, the report of the nature of that news is filled in by the narrator, particularly by using profiling language in 34:7, "a disgrace" (נְבִלָה) in Israel. This disgrace, to Meir Sternberg, comes either from the brothers' minds or the narrator through a ׀ clause. The clause indicates that the narrator is looking over the situation and making a judgment. The ׀ clause is mirrored by the dialogue of the sons in 34:14, "for it would be a reproach" (כִּי־יִרְפָּה) and in 34:31 "as a prostitute" (הַכֹּזֵבֶת). Sternberg, however, directly connects the information in the narrator's mind to the minds of characters. The reader is expected to assume that the narrator is relating feelings of the characters.⁴⁴ This misses a crucial difference between the narrator as omniscient and the narrator as an omnivident mediator of the narrative information.

The brothers reply to Jacob's condemnation of the violence by asking, "Should we treat our sister like a prostitute (הַכֹּזֵבֶת)?" (34:31). This occurs after they take her out of Shechem's house (34:26). Indeed, later one brother does treat a female relative in this way.⁴⁵ Why would they change their perception of the situation from "defiled" to "prostitution"? This change of attitude illustrates Dinah's alternating legal and social status in the narrative. Legal structures maintain imperial powers, but social civility structures establish the ideological justification for those powers. Dinah has been re-categorized, but the shame produced is a justification for violence. Rather than maternal or virginal, Dinah is no longer considered the body that would produce children or be exchanged: הַכֹּזֵבֶת. If her visibility cannot be controlled, it must be named: firstly, as a defiled vessel; then as

42 Meir Sternberg asks, "Does the discourse reflect the painful feelings of the brothers ('They were grieved and very angry because *they felt that* he had committed an outrage' etc.)? Or does it interpolate an evaluative comment on the narrator's own part, designed to justify their feelings ('They were grieved and very angry, and *no wonder*, since he had committed an outrage' etc.)?" He continues, "We have here, in short, the kind of perspectival ambiguity traditionally thought to be peculiar to the age of the novel ... What is the narrator's standing in and attitude to the explanatory statement? Its weight crucially depends on the answer." Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 454.

43 Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 448.

44 Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 454–55.

45 Judah also fails to uncover the identity of Tamar in 38:15 and treats her as a נְהִיָּה.

a prostitute, which is the dangerous body that is both tolerated and illicit. Dinah is therefore categorized as a null vessel which is not for production. She has already been exchanged.⁴⁶ As a reference for the maintenance of social behaviour, prohibitions on the sexual activity of women change according to where and how women are seen. This kind of categorization of Dinah is based on an *oscillating visibility*, that is, a political strategy which changes status according to alternating invisibility and visibility.⁴⁷ The sons of Jacob are, however, also later subject to a similar splitting of self in an overturn of their violence (Gen 42:24; 49:5–7).

SHECHEM UNDER SURVEILLANCE

The Judean/Samaritan conflict is the subject of Gen 34, through ironic twists between inclusive and exclusive views on marriage and cultic activity. Deuteronomistic praise for Shechem or contentions against it in the Pentateuch depend on schisms over the politics of foreigners, women and exogamy.⁴⁸ There are other well-known polemics in biblical narrative that lay the foundation of Shechem as a threat.⁴⁹ The city is also criticized through references to idolatry.⁵⁰ This contrasts with the favourable accounts of Shechem as covenant space of Josh 24 and the northern capital of Jeroboam (1 Kgs 12:1). In Genesis, however, Shechem is not a point of reference for idolatry until Jacob buries idols “under the oak which was near Shechem”

46 Kelso, “Reading the Silence of Women in Genesis 34,” 103.

47 Oscillating visibility depends on the definition of risk that falls on one group or another as suspect. Stoddart, *Theological Perspectives on a Surveillance Society*, 162.

48 Christophe Nihan uses pentateuchal evidence to argue for a history of conciliation and tension surrounding a Northern break with Judah. Many pentateuchal narratives are an inner-Judean redefining process of synthesizing different scribal traditions after the collapse of the state. Gen 34 is part of this Torah retained by the people of Samaria in a schism dated not earlier than the 2nd century BCE. Christophe Nihan, “The Torah between Samaria and Judah: Shechem and Gerizim in Deuteronomy and Joshua,” in *The Pentateuch as Torah: New Models for Understanding Its Promulgation and Acceptance*, ed. Gary N. Knoppers and Bernard M. Levinson (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 189–99. See Deut 11:29–30, Josh 8:30–35, and Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 197.

49 Yairah Amit lists narrative evidence including the use of the location of Shechem, designating its people as Hivites (Northerners), and the Shechemites as a threat to Israelite extinction. Yairah Amit, “The Lost Honor of Dinah, Daughter of Jacob,” in *In Praise of Editing in the Hebrew Bible: Collected Essays in Retrospect*, ed. Yairah Amit (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012), 60–66. Abimelech rises from Shechem in Judg 9 only to be the victim of the violence of a woman, who can in turn be compared to King David who is a perpetrator of violence against a woman (2 Sam 11:21).

50 1 Kgs 16:32; 2 Kgs 17:24–41.

(Gen 35:4). The presence of these gods is not destroyed, but is merely made invisible, a lingering threat of the continuing practice of worship there. This renders Shechem as an entity that has a particular profile, providing reasons of security as justification for surveillance in the Northern region. In the burial of Joseph from Egypt at Shechem, this negative status is again challenged.⁵¹ Outside of Genesis, the site was changed from the name Shechem to Samaria, which Yairah Amit calls an attempt to “strip the city of its holiness.”⁵² Within the storyworld of Gen 34, the people of Shechem resist the surveillance of the narrator and the resulting profiling of their city. By employing visibility strategies, the controlling tendency of the narration to create this data double of Shechem is exposed.

The layers of gender, family and tribe are overlapping concerns that drive the actions of both the Shechemites and Jacob’s family.⁵³ Tribal and national ethnocentrism in biblical narrative has a tendency to create boundaries and deal with the ongoing tension of security. The sons of Jacob have to buy land and live in tents while the people of Shechem live in a city with houses. Dinah and prince Shechem are contrasted by the formulas: “daughter of ... / son of ...” to create an ethnic binary opposition, yet both Dinah and Shechem seek to interact with the other group.⁵⁴ The only way that the sons of Jacob can get what they want, the power and possessions of those in the land, is to use the narrator’s rhetoric to deceive and attack Shechem, further profiling them through association with wordplay on “foreign” (נכר) gods (35:2) and the fear produced by foreignness (35:5).⁵⁵ The brothers trick these insiders, accusing them of being outsiders through profiling them as not looking “as we are” (34:15). In return, Hamor and Shechem also report Jacob’s family to their city elders, to try to subsume their property (34:23a) after it had been already partially sold to Jacob (33:19).

Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn critique Meir Sternberg for describing the narratorial use of shame and honour from an androcentric

51 Josh 24:32.

52 Amit, *Hidden Polemics*, 199.

53 Westermann posits two sources eventually combined by P, one concerned with family, the other with the tribe. Claus Westermann and John J. Scullion, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985), 535–37.

54 Yamada, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible*, 32–33.

55 Recognizing someone in disguise and equating this with foreignness is a common feature of the Jacob/Joseph cycle (27:23; 31:32; 35:4; 37:32, 33; 38:25–26; 42:7–8). Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 11.

perspective to gain readerly empathy with the sons of Jacob.⁵⁶ In fact, any kind of empathy cannot transfer directly from the narrator to any character, but is a process agreed and engaged between the narrator and the reader. The brothers are described as angry because Shechem “lay with” Dinah, and they do not comment on the narrator’s description of an internal, tribal Israelite “disgrace” in 34:7 (זָבָחָהּ). This is actually from the external surveillant eye of the narrator on the larger political situation, creating a nationalistic stance. The brothers only comment directly on the unsuitable nature or “the disgrace” (זָבָחָהּ) of the match for their own religious and ethnic reasons (34:14).⁵⁷ The brothers see the authority of their tribal shame/honour lens as competing with political imperial surveillance from Shechem (the city and the individual) which may threaten their honour. Competing surveillant views in the veillant field of the story create violence.

In contrast to these characters, Jacob’s silence is loud, as he hears of the encounter between Dinah and Shechem (34:5). Shechem is also silent as to any confession of wrongdoing. Hamor comes to negotiate and request Dinah for his son without any reference to the narrator’s condemnation (34:6, 8–12). The exchange of ideas between the watching narrator and the sons of Jacob (viewed via the reader) colours the story with transgression that may otherwise be missing.⁵⁸ The narrator does not connect directly with any characters on the ground, but is monitoring and assembling data for the reader. This creates a problem with any empathetic position for the reader. In the storyworld, the transgression is against the honour of the males in the families rather than against Dinah. The women of Shechem receive Dinah’s gaze to acknowledge their place below the male competition, but above the landless. The narrator participates in this double colonization, and is unable to categorize Dinah (or the women of Shechem) except by shame and honour rhetoric. The brothers are interested in gaining cultural status over the more powerful Shechemites and retaining their honour in the face of this event. Shechem is characterized by the narrator in 34:19 as “honoured” (כָּבֵד) so that the Shechemites can also compete for power. Above this political posturing of characters for tribal agendas, the narrator is interested in trying to fit the scopic information collected on Dinah and Shechem into a

56 Danna Nolan Fewell and David M. Gunn, “Tipping the Balance: Sternberg’s Reader and the Rape of Dinah,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110, no. 2 (1991): 193–211.

57 For not being the bearer of a son, Dinah is compared with Rachel who is “liberated” from disgrace in 30:23.

58 Fewell and Gunn, “Tipping the Balance,” 201n13.

nationalistic and legal agenda. As a result, there are cross-purposes in the plot and differing reasons for deceit.

CONCLUSION

At points throughout the narrative of Gen 34, the narrator makes reports based on a kind of omnivident literary mechanism, commenting on the sons of Jacob as they carry out deception and murder. The mimetic actions of Jacob's sons are uncritical, whereas Dinah and the people of Shechem are not so easily convinced. The narrator relays information to the reader about what is seen and makes statements about what others see. This narrator shows undoubted omnividence, but the reader can look to question the intent of the narrator (and characters) through the gap between an event taking place and the report of the event. This vision of the narrator reflects the character of surveillance: data collection, interpretation and representation of an event or person to a wider audience by the discretion of an authority. Each instance of a report and its conclusions should be examined for distortions and to identify which lenses the narrator and characters are using.

The difference between surveillant seeing and the seeing between characters is that the surveying eye uses a depersonalized, authoritative gaze. Were the actions of Jacob's sons based on their own seeing? Or is it the result of the narrator monitoring the situation with another lens? The intelligence reports seem to be insufficiently accurate or complete to fill the gaps in Dinah's identity. The linguistic and social messages of the narrator are a misinterpretation of the information gathered by surveillance, with chaotic results. Jacob is like a bureaucracy that is partially or totally uninformed of reported material. His sons base their actions on their own tribal and honour assumptions which are then interpreted through the narrator. The kind of surveillant seeing here from the narrator suggests an inspection that is mechanical, through an impersonal corporate gaze, androcentric and xenophobic, punishing by misperception and resulting in destruction. Each character's gaze is not innocent, but the difference is that they may have differing, nationalistic, tribal or family agendas. Nonetheless, Dinah need not be collateral damage in the story of nationalistic enmity with Samaritans and the control of women. The reader may question the links between perception and resulting action by revealing the kinds of surveillance and profiling which incite violence.