Divination in 1 Samuel 28 and Beyond: An African Study in the Politics of Translation

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the language of divination in the HB, particularly in 1 Samuel 28:3-27—the oft-called “Witch of Endor” passage. My thesis is that much of the vocabulary of divination in this passage and beyond has been mistranslated in authorized English and other translations used in Africa and in scholarly writings. I argue that the woman of Endor is not a witch, which is a label that has a long negative social history and has often led to violence against those so labeled. The woman of Endor is, rather, a diviner, much like other ancient Near Eastern and modern African diviners. She resists an inner-biblical conquest theology and a monologic authoritarian view of divination to assist King Saul by various means, including invoking the spirit of a departed person, Samuel. I suggest that the violence done to the woman of Endor through such mistranslation stems from ideological forces that have been in ascendancy during such periods of translation. These ideological forces have attempted to exert an extra-biblical monologic authoritarian view of divination in the HB in order to serve their own Christian, imperial-colonial, and misogynist interests, all of which have been particularly problematic in the African missionary context. Translators steeped in such ideology, whether consciously or unconsciously, mistranslated what is fundamentally a heteroglossic, polyvalent, dialogic text that seeks to undermine any authoritarian voices in regard to divination.
To demonstrate my thesis, I carry out a Hebrew word-study shaped by the theories of Mikhail M. Bakhtin regarding the utterance, heteroglossia, and dialogism in order to understand the designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings of the many divinatory terms in the Hebrew Bible. I then examine 1 Samuel 28 and a number of prior translations thereof, using the ideological framework of African-feminist-postcolonial biblical interpreters and translation theories to uncover the hidden ideology or transcript of these translations. Finally, using African contextual / cultural hermeneutics and cross-cultural translation theory, I offer new English, French, and Kisanga translations of this passage that are both faithful to the original text and more appropriate to an inculturated-liberation African Christian hermeneutic, theology, and praxis.
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PROLOGUE

A MAN-WOMAN OF THE DISANGA READS THE BIBLE FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PLACE

Who is the writer or the author of texts? I work by way of language, by voice, by music, not only work but am written by a certain type of language. Our Russian poets insist on the fact that they write but that they are also written by Russians, which I’m sure is absolutely true. It’s true of all poets, that they are being written through by a certain type of tongue…. But how do we define a writer? Who is the author of a poem that is written by a tongue? A sore point with everybody who reads is of course the problem of translation. It’s true that it’s a wonderful thing that books should be written in a foreign tongue; but it’s a painful thing for all readers standing at the door of that tongue, except if we are inhabitants of this precise language.1


My history as a Congo-born person is important as I read the biblical text. Thus, this prologue, which is much in the nature of the beginning “Life Context of the Interpretation” section of each contextual or cross-cultural commentary of Daniel Patte, ed. The Global Bible Commentary (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004). This dissertation, and especially this Prologue, is additionally one more effort to demythologize and, therefore, decolonize the Congo and its people. In this, I respond to what Samuel Henry Nelson articulates so well, namely, the Congo represents best all that is mysterious about Africa to the West: “The equatorial forest region of the Congo basin has long fascinated and intrigued the outside world. The perceived primitive, untamed, and ‘lost world’ quality of the forest and its inhabitants has made it a favorite among Western authors seeking an exotic setting or symbolic metaphor for their work. As a result of decades of popular literature, film, and folklore, the word ‘Congo’ tends to evoke vivid images of primeval darkness, unfathomable mystery, and dreadful savagery. In the Western mind, perhaps no other region in the continent more fully embodies the myth and magic of Africa.” Samuel Henry Nelson, Colonialism in the Congo Basin 1880–1940, Monographs in International Studies: African Series 64 (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1994), 1.
This dissertation arises out of my lived experience in growing up in what is now known as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (hereinafter called either the Congo or DRC) in Central Africa. I am Sanga, meaning that I was born into the Sanga (sometimes known as the Basanga) people. We live in the very southeastern corner of the nation in the Disanga region of the Katanga Province and speak the Kisanga language. The term Disanga has three different aspects: an etymological, an historical, and a geographic aspect. Etymologically, the term comes from the verbal form kusanga, which means to meet and the verbal form kuisanga, which means to meet together. The Disanga is then a crossroads or a place of gathering. The Basanga think of it etymologically as simply a place at the crossroads. Historically, the definition arises from the physical location itself. The Disanga is located in the Katanga region, which is a place where people once gathered and still do. The Basanga constitute a

---

2 Basanga is the plural form of Musanga. We do not know the origins of the Sanga people, but we are a people with a long history and are part of the Bantu peoples.

3 Kisanga is also known by the names Sanga, Southern Luba and Luba-Sanga. Its classification is part of the Bantoid group (Southern/Narrow Bantu/Central/Luba) of the Niger-Congo languages. See further Raymond G. Gordon, Jr., “Sanga,” in Ethnologue: Languages of the World, edited by M. Paul Lewis, 16th ed. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International, 2009; online version: http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=sng. This encyclopedia entry reports that Kisanga is also known as Luba-Garenganze, but I disagree. For more on the Kisanga language, see J. M. Jenniges, Traité de kiluba-sanga tel qu’il est parlé au secteur du haut-Luapula (Katanga) et régions limitrophes (Bruxelles: État indépendant du Congo, 1908); Hadelin D. Roland, Grammaire de la langue kisanga (Haut-Katanga) (Saint-André lez Bruges: Missions Bénédictines, 1937); Hadelin D. Roland, Vocabulaire français-kisanga (Saint-André lez Bruges: Missions Bénédictines, 1938).

4 I thank my good friend, the Rev. Jacques Kaweshi Buta-Bukomo, a Musanga pastor, who wrote much about the history and traditions of the Basanga people to me for this project. I rely heavily here and in other parts of this work on his knowledge about the Basanga people.
heterogeneous people. This historical definition implies the joining of a native people with other peoples who were attracted by the mineral and animal riches of the region. Thus, the Disanga is also known as the Disanga nyama na Bantu meaning the gathering of animals and people. Finally, geographically, a stream exists in the Disanga called the Kasanga, which runs through the center of the land and ties two rivers together. Thus, Disanga also means the territory where the stream, the Kasanga, is at its center. The Disanga is bordered by four cardinal points: the Mitwaba village in the north, the Musofi (the source of Lwalaba) in the south, the Kyembe in the east, and the Mutshatsha in the west. The entire region is located in the southern most part of the southeast corner of the DRC, from the western border that abuts Angola, through the major cities of Kolwezi, Likasi, and Lubumbashi as one travels east, until one reaches the eastern border and Zambia. There are approximately 1.5 million Basanga. In its broadest meaning, then, the Basanga are all those who speak the Kisanga language.

I was born in the late 1950s, when the Congo was occupied by colonial Belgium, and was called Congo Belge (Belgian Congo). The first westerners to arrive in the Congo were Portuguese explorers, who came in the fifteenth century. They found the Bantu kingdom in the area. From 1876 to 1909, King Leopold II of Belgium led an international cartel in exploiting the resources of the region around the Congo River. The Belgians established the Congo as a colony officially in 1908. As George Nzongola-Ntalaja states: “The strategic position of the country in the center of Africa and its enormous natural wealth have made it a prime candidate for imperial ambitions and the envy of adventurers, mercenaries and looters of all kinds.” George Nzongola-Ntalaja, The Congo from Leopold to Kabila: A People’s History (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press; New York: Palgrave, 2002), 258. The Democratic Republic of the Congo gained its independence in 1960 under the leadership of Patrice Lumumba. In 1965, Col. Joseph Mobutu seized power and declared himself president in a coup. He changed the name of the country to Zaire. He controlled the government for 32 years. Ethnic strife and civil war, created by the massive influx of refugees from the ethnic
cultures: one is my Sanga culture, another is my larger Central African culture where Swahili (Kiswahili) is now one of the primary regional languages, and the last is my imperial culture that was brought by the Belgians, who colonized the Congo in the late 1800s and brought the French language and Francophone culture to my people.6


a crossroads in the Congo as it moved to independence in 1960. I now live in a
postcolonial place between Africa and the West.\(^7\) I am, indeed, Musanga.

This has had religious implications for my life.\(^8\) My family clearly identified
with a number of aspects of the ancient Sanga religious tradition.\(^9\) They were also

\(^7\) It is crucial to define the “postcolonial condition and its subjects.” The term
postcolonial “describes the modern history of imperialism, beginning with the process
of colonialism, through the struggles for political independence, the attainment of
independence, and to the contemporary neocolonialist realities.” Musa W. Dube,
*Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St. Louis: Chalice Press), 16.
Postcolonial subjects, “on the other hand, describes both the former colonizers and
formerly colonized, what today falls under such broad categories as First World and
Two-Thirds World, developed and underdeveloped, Western and non-Western.” Ibid.
Dube here uses “Two-Thirds World” instead of Third World since “Two-Thirds
World” is actually the majority in the world. Ibid. For more on postcolonialism in the
Francophone context, see, e.g., Margaret A. Majumdar, *Postcoloniality: The French
Dimension* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007); Jean-Marc Moura, *Littératures
francophones et théorie postcoloniale. Écritures francophones* (Paris: Presses
universitaires de France, 1999), Marie-Ange Somdah, *Identités postcoloniales et

\(^8\) I acknowledge here that Africans must take care in using the word *religion*
because the word is foreign to most African languages. Religion is neither separated
from other aspect of life nor privatized. It is, rather, part of what it is to be human and
fully part of every aspect of life. The African way(s) of life is not compartmentalized
‘Religions’ and the State,” in *Proselytization and Communal Self Determination in
Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1999), 169, 172. Thus, scholars’ use of the word *religion*
does not fit the African context precisely. Nonetheless, when I am speaking
of African traditions, I shall use the word *religion* for the ease of my readers.

\(^9\) Almost nothing has been published on the Basanga people and our religious /
life traditions, and what little exists is now, for the most part, quite old. See Fernand
Kabengele, “Rites, pratiques et croyances relatifs à l’enfance chez les Basanga du
et croyances relatifs à l’enfance chez les Basanga du Shaba, Part II,” *Zaïre-Afrique* 80
(Proverbes sanga: une étude d’ethno-histoire)*, Collection Mangeurs de cuivre
(Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of the Congo: Lwanzo lwa Mikuba, 2004); Hadelin
devoted Roman Catholics, and these two traditions stood together and intermingled despite the protests of the church hierarchy and its representatives.  


10 The DRC is approximately 50% Roman Catholic, 20% Protestant, 10% Kimbanguist, 10% Muslim, and 10% other (includes syncretic sects and indigenous beliefs). Many Christian believers in the Congo also practice aspects of their traditional religions. This synthetic-syncretistic practice is a common phenomenon. See further n. 14, infra. The first Roman Catholic missionaries were Portuguese and arrived in the fifteenth century. Malcolm J. McVeigh, “Early Congo Mission,” Missiology 3, no. 4 (1975): 501–18. For more on the history of Roman Catholic missions in the Congo, see Ruben Mantels, Jo Tollebeek, and Freek L. Bakker.
of the many ways through which the Sanga people acquire knowledge and receive
divine guidance.\textsuperscript{11} Divination was simply a part of every day life for me, and this
began even before my birth. Divination was my prologue.

My mother, now deceased, was a Sanga village woman, the daughter-in-law of
a \textit{mulopwe}, “king.” Her first three children, all girls, died under the age of five. She
then bore a son, but lost the next daughter, who was again under the age of five. She

\textsuperscript{11} This is also true for many indigenous cultures in Africa. See, e.g., among
many others, Wande Abimbola, “Aspects of Yoruba Images of the Divine: Ifa
Aguwa, \textit{The Agwa Deity in Igbo Religion: A Study of the Patron Spirit Divination and
Medicine in African Society} (Enugu, Nigeria: Fourth Dimension, 1995); David M.
Anderson and Douglas H. Johnson, “Diviners, Seers and Prophets in Eastern Africa:
Towards and Historical Anthropology,” \textit{Africa} 63 (1991): 293–98; Robert A. Bascom,
\textit{Sixteen Cowries: Yoruba Divination from Africa to the New World} (Bloomington,
Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1980); W. Bascom, \textit{Ifa Divination, Communication
Between Gods and Men in West Africa} (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press,
1969); Erika Bourguignon, “Divination, Trance, et Possession en Afrique
Universitaires de France, 1968), 331–58; Renaat Devisch, “Perspectives on
Divination in Contemporary Sub-Saharan Africa,” in \textit{Theoretical Explorations in
African Religion}, ed. W. van Binsbergen and M. Schoffeleers (London: Kegan Paul,
1985), 50–83; David A. McLean and Ted J. Solomon, “Divination among the Bena
cried day and night for a chance to conceive and have another child. One night, she had a dream. In this dream, the spirit of her deceased father-in-law visited her and gave her good news: “I will be born through you. I will bring joy and wipe off your tears….” A month or so later, she conceived, and, in the due time, a baby girl was born—which was I. (Ultimately, my mother had many more children but only the males survived except for me). I carried the name of my departed grandfather, a man’s name, Kabamba. It means “leader” in Kisanga. My last name, Kiboko, means “one who traces the path to show the way or direction.” My parents had me baptized as a baby, and I received a “Christian” name, Marie Jeanne. All my life, my family referred to me as “father,” “father-in-law,” or “king” because I was thought to be the embodiment of the spirit of my departed grandfather. The people in my village also referred to me, and still do, as “Tata Kabamba,” meaning “Father Kabamba.” Since my grandfather was mulopwe, the people of my village also call me mulopwe, and the village land belongs to me.

I was, unfortunately, a sickly child, and my parents thought that they would lose me, as they had all the other girls who were born to them. Whenever I was ill, my mother would look straight into my eyes and say: “Father-in-law, I saw you in my dream; you promised me that you were going to be born through me, that you would

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12 Although our processes of arriving at this place are somewhat different, I noted with interest an article in the Washington Post about Peggielene Bartels, of Silver Spring, Maryland, entitled “Secretary by Day, Royalty by Night: Embassy Worker Remotely Rules a Ghanaiian Town.” Her tribe in Ghana chose Ms. Bartles, who is a secretary at the Ghanaian embassy in Washington, D.C., as king of her tribe in Otuaam, Ghana, through a divinatory process after her uncle, the king, had died. See further Paul Schwartzman, “Secretary by Day, Royalty by Night: Embassy Worker Remotely Rules a Ghanaiian Town,” http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/15/AR2009091503393.html, 16 September 2009; accessed 21 October 2009.
bring me joy and wipe off my tears. Please get well.” This type of speech is a kind of intercessory prayer and is referred to in Kisanga as a *lusanzo*. This always seemed to work, and I would then experience healing. 13 Although my parents were devoted Roman Catholics, they always turned to divination in times of actual or possible tragedy—and a few other times as well.14

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13 My brother, the one born immediately after me, also has a similar story. He was born with a goiter. My mother believed that the goiter was a message from the spirit in regards to the baby’s name, because my father’s maternal aunt had a goiter during her life (she was at this time already deceased). It was, according to my mother, a sign on the body. My father said that he would not have a baby like that and asked my mother to take the baby to the doctor to have the goiter removed. My mother did take my brother to the Belgian mission doctor. But on the way, she again used this intercessory prayer. She said to my brother, “Mother-in-law (because the sister of one’s mother-in-law in the Basanga culture is also a mother-in-law), we are going to the doctor, but don’t allow them to hurt you. Make a sign for the doctor. Make a sign that he should not operate on you.” When they arrived to see the doctor, he checked my brother, but he was not sure what to do. This man was very astute as to Bantu philosophy. As a result, he said to my mother, “You should decide. What do you think is really going on here?” My mother told him that this was a sign in regards to my brother’s name. Thus, the doctor sent them home. My father was not happy to see them back so soon. My mother, however, named my brother Kalembe, which was my father’s maternal aunt’s name, and the goiter cleared up two to three days later, never to return.


I would argue, however, for the need for an *inculturated* African theology and praxis, where African traditions meet the Church at a true *disanga*, rather than for a more deliberate syncretism or synthesis. See, e.g., Ruy O. Costa, ed. *One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculturation, Indigenization, and Contextualization*, The Boston
I remember one story in particular about my mother’s gift. I was quite young, and she and I were working out in the fields. The birds were chirping away. My mother looked up, and asked, “Did you hear that?” I replied, “What?” She then started to say over and over, “Mweni kintobyo, mweni kintobyo, mweni kintobyo…,” in rhythm with one bird in particular—this type of bird. She sounded just like it! My mother then said, “The bird is announcing that a guest is about to visit us. Let’s go home.” We went home and started cooking and preparing for these guests. Lo and behold, the guests arrived! The bird had announced their coming to my mother. My mother had the ear. I have never had it.

As a child, my family also lived for some time in a city where people of many ethnic groups co-exist together away from their respective villages. Each household practices still today its individual way of life. The neighbor on our right, a native of

the Kasai region, practiced blood sacrifice involving chickens, while the neighbor on our left, a native of North Katanga, practiced healing through communication with the spirits of her ancestors. Sandwiched between these two cultures, we had our own way. My grandmother learned through dreams.\footnote{For more on the importance of dreaming in African religion, see, e.g., S. G. Lee, “Social Influence of Zulu Dreaming,” \textit{Journal of Social Psychology} 47 (1958): 265–83; Isak A. Niehaus, “Dreams,” in \textit{African Folklore: An Encyclopedia}, ed. Philip M. Peek (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 99–101; Rosalind Shaw, “Dreaming as Accomplishment: Power, the Individual, and Temne Divination,” in \textit{Dreaming, Religion, and Society in Africa}, ed. M. C. Jedrej and Rosalind Shaw, \textit{Studies in Religion in Africa} 7 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992), 36–54.} She could heal through supernatural guidance provided to her in a dream. Our neighbors (including my parents) never condemned each other. Even though they were very different from each other with nothing in common, none of them thought themselves to be better than the other. There was neither exclusiveness nor absolutism.

In addition to these different practices observed in our neighborhood, we all attended faithfully Sacré Coeur Roman Catholic Church, which had its own way of life and condemned the native way of life. The African \textit{uzima}, the African “way (s) of life,” was misinterpreted, misunderstood, and misrepresented.\footnote{Mbiti, \textit{African Religions and Philosophy}, 13.} It was as John S. Mbiti contends: “African religions…have been mocked and dismissed as primitive and underdeveloped.”\footnote{Ibid.} Kwesi Dickson maintains in this regard:

\begin{quote}
[T]he modern missionary has often proceeded on the basis that the peoples being evangelized deserve to worship God as long as that worship is defined or formulated by the missionary. The only
\end{quote}
alternative to trusting in one’s own religious tradition is apparently to abandon them altogether and adopt the propagator’s.\textsuperscript{18}

It was a my-way-or-the-highway attitude as Dickson characterizes this. We lived this each day. Dickson defines this “exclusivism” as a “\textit{tabula rasa} doctrine” that holds that the culture of the evangelized cannot serve, at any cost, as a basis upon which to build a future.\textsuperscript{19} This doctrine is one that creates a marginalized “other” and exists for the sole purpose of forming and maintaining an ethnic distinctiveness that is different from the conquered.\textsuperscript{20} Nahashon W. Ndung’u puts this more forcefully:

\begin{quote}
Having neither regard nor sympathy for the African culture, the European missionaries mercilessly waged a total war to eradicate any trace of the African culture which they viewed as pagan and an enemy of the Gospel of Christ.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 12.
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\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{21} Nahashon W. Ndung’u, “Cultural Challenges and the Church in Africa,” \textit{African Ecclesial Review} 50, no. 1–2 (2008): 75. Moreover, according to Makau Mutua: “[T]he conscious, willful, and planned displacement of African religion goes beyond any legitimate bounds of religious advocacy and violates the religious human rights of Africans.” He continues: “This orchestrated process of the vilification and demonization of African religion represents more than an attack on the religious freedom of Africans; it is in fact a repudiation, on the one hand, of the humanity of African people themselves…. At the core of the attempts to subjugate Africans to the messianic traditions [i.e., Christianity and Islam] is a belief not only in the superiority of the missionary and his or her messianic dogma but also in the sub-humanity of the missionary’s subjects and their cosmology.” Mutua, “Returning to My Roots,” 170.
\end{flushright}

See also Robert J. Schreiter, “Introduction: Jesus Christ in Africa Today,” in \textit{Faces of Jesus in Africa}, ed. Robert J. Schreiter, \textit{Faith and Cultures Series} (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991), viii. Africans also, at times, anticipated this cultural genocide. For instance, Jeff Opland speaks of the attitude of the king of the Xhosa in South Africa as he first encountered missionaries: “Nqiqika preferred to pursue his own customs and traditions, which included dancing and chanting poetry in praise of cattle, rather than to follow the missionary’s way of life, which included listening to the Christians’ word. Nqiqika perceived the two cultural modes as antithetical: acceptance of the white man’s word necessarily entailed overturning the Xhosa
Yes, this is exactly how it felt to us!

Missionaries did not oppose the imperial project; in fact, they worked hand-in-hand with imperial-colonial forces. A striking example is David Livingston, a

22 Moreover, historical records read that in 1884, at the Berlin Conference, while the slave trade was going on, European imperial powers met and divided the map of the African continent among themselves and drew a constitution which read, “Christian missionaries, scientists, and explorers, with their followers, property and collections, shall likewise be objects of especial protection.” Musa W. Dube, Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible (St. Louis: Chalice, 2000), 4; citing Louis L. Snyder, ed., The Imperialism Reader: Documents and Readings on Modern Expansion (New York: Van Nostrand, 1962), 211; 2d ed.; Canongate Press, 1993), xv, in a secret letter addressed to an influential colonial figure. This protection implies that missionaries were supported by the imperial plan.


missionary, a doctor, botanist, explorer, ethnographer, and mapmaker, and supporter of colonial domination of sub-Saharan Africa. Livingston claimed that “civilization, Christianity and commerce should ever be inseparable…. I beg you to direct your attention to Africa…. I go back to try to make an open path for commerce and Christianity; do carry out the work which I have begun.” Both Mudimbe and Dube also discuss a certain missionary named Pringle (his first name is not given). His words show the interconnectedness of colonization and Christianity: “Let us enter upon a new and noble career of conquest. Let us subdue the African Savage by justice, by kindness, by the talisman of Christian truth. Let us thus go forth, in the name and under the blessing of God, gradually to extend the moral influence…the territorial boundary also of our colony, until it shall become an Empire.” Both imperialist representatives and missionaries shared the same culture, which included the Bible, and these persons exploited the Bible to create indigenous collaboration with the imperialist project. As Musa W. Duba states simply: “The West, the Bible,

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26 Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation*, 4. It was my experience that most of the missionaries were involved with the imperial-colonial project, but a few
and imperialism are interconnected.”

Hence, missionaries stood as an emblem of colonial activity. Musa W. Dube states in this regard: “colonial interpretations of the
Bible were often the result of exegetical methods or interpretations hewn from imperial contexts and serving the interests of these empires…. One can cite archaeological…and anthropological paradigms of reading that often bolstered the colonizers’ claims of racial superiority by claiming to understand the colonized people better than they understood themselves.”

Their biblical interpretation justified imperialism, promoted the slave trade and the exploitation of the Congo’s mineral wealth and other natural resources, and stripped the indigenous population of

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their human rights and sense of self-worth. It also served to colonize the minds of the people.29

Missionaries exerted and, I believe, continue to exert effort to suppress “the other ways” in order to establish a “remembered history” wherein “the past coincide[s] with and support[s] the self-identity of the group in its present situation.”30 In the eyes of the colonizers and missionaries, indigenous peoples were without history31 and needed both to convert and appropriate biblical history as their


31 Mudimbe translates history as “an intellectual effort of ordering human activities and social events chronologically,” and also as “a discourse of knowledge and a discourse of power.” V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis,*
own. I maintain that the Bible was used to create this “shared remembered history,”
that is actually not wholly that of African persons.32

32 I say “not wholly” here because Africa certainly did have a role in biblical
and church history. Part of the project of African biblical hermeneutics is to reclaim
that history. Cain Hope Felder has an excellent discussion of this point, saying first:
“Afrocentricity is the concept that Africa and persons of African descent must be
understood as making significant contributions to world civilization as proactive
subject within history, rather than being regarded as more passive objects in the
course of history. Afrocentrism requires reconceptualizing Africa as a center of value
and a source of pride, without in any way demeaning other peoples and their historic
contributions to human achievement. The term Afrocentricity, coined by M. K. Asante
(1987), refers to an approach that reappraises ancient biblical traditions, their
exegetical history in the West, and their allied hermeneutical implications.” Cain
Hope Felder, “Afrocentric Biblical Interpretation,” in Dictionary of Biblical
longer enough to limit the discussion to ‘black theology’ or even to ‘African
theology.’ Instead, Africa, its people, nations, and cultures must be acknowledged as
having made direct primary contributions to the development of many early biblical
traditions and as having played significant roles in biblical history. Rather than
viewing ancient Africa in a negative way or minimizing its presence in and
contributions to biblical narratives and thought, as has been all too often the case in
Western scholarly guilds, the continent obtains a more favorable appropriation by
those who wish more accurately to interpret the Bible and to appreciate the inherent
racial and ethnic diversity or multiculturalism of the salvation history the Bible

In regard to the African contribution to biblical history, see further, e.g., David
Tuesday Adamo, “The Images of Cush in the Old Testament: Reflections on African
Hermeneutics,” in Interpreting the Old Testament in Africa: Papers from the
International Symposium on Africa and the Old Testament in Nairobi, October 1999
Thomas Römer, “Mose in Ethiopien: Zur Herkunft Der Num 12,1 Zugrunde
Liegenden Tradition,” in Auf Dem Weg Zur Endgestalt Von Genesis Bis II Regum:
Festschrift Hans-Christoph Schmitt Zum 65. Geburtstag Am 11.11.2006, ed. Martin
Beck and Ulrike Schorn, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die Altttestamentliche
Wissenschaft (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 2006), 203–15; Rodney S. Sadler,
Kabasele Lumbala’s personal experience as a Congolese and formerly colonized subject informs his theoretical framework, which is also helpful here. Lumbala argues that colonialists and theologians shared the same agenda, that was, to shape methods of “ordering knowledge.” In his evaluation of Lumbala’s work, Mario I. Agular writes the following:

As a result, theology and colonialism developed related methodologies of ordering knowledge. During colonialism, a complex science of ordering territories and peoples was developed. Such ordering included Western education as a system of ordering minds, bodies, and souls according to the models used in Europe.”


François Kabasele Lumbala, Celebrating Jesus Christ in Africa: Liturgy and Inculturation, Faith and Culture Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998). Roy Bridges states that, even where imperialists were “unofficial” and “benign in intent,” “they did believe that it was their task to reorder African religion, politics society, and economy in ways that decided by them and for a good as defined by them.” Bridges, “Christian Vision,” 46.

The mission church, therefore, denounced particularly strongly the divinatory practices of the people, which is one means through which to acquire knowledge.\(^{35}\)

The church labeled divination a “heathen practice” *tout court*, evil, and attempted to attach great shame to it.\(^ {36}\) Converts to Christianity had to abandon their views of


\(^{36}\) Along with the Bible, the travelers’ accounts and the anthropologists’ interpretations constructed a type of knowledge about Africa, according to V. Y. Mudimbe, *Invention of Africa*, 44. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, asserts Mudimbe, the traveler became the colonizer. His scientific advisor, the anthropologist, accompanied him. The missionary developed a form of African spirituality and cultural transformation. Given the fact that the missionary operated from his European perspective, the results of his mission of converting Africa intersected with his ideological perspectives. These peculiar results have promoted, on the one hand, “African theories of otherness” and, on the other hand, “doubt concerning the relevance of Western discourses on African societies…. Thus, we have two magnificent actors: the missionary and his African successor both of them presenting their views on policies of conversion, basing them on what African culture is supposed to be, and utilizing anthropology as a means of dominating or liberating African people.” Ibid. The traveler / colonizer, the missionary and the soldier worked hand-in-hand from the fifteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century. The goal
divination in favor of practices supported by Christian colonial ideology. Religious authorities found divinatory practices abhorrent and brought hard punishment swiftly, especially upon female practitioners. The Church never explained the permitted divination found in the Hebrew Bible. It never faced the striking similarities between the culture of the Hebrew Bible and the Sanga culture in which I was immersed. Furthermore, the Church did not offer any healing power, visions, or dreams for the indigenous people. It did not meet many of our most significant spiritual needs.

37 Marvin D. Markowitz says of the negative attitude of Christian missionaries in the Congo toward indigenous ways: “Christian missionaries in the Congo, as elsewhere, often tended to display an ethnocentrism and narrowness of view which confused Christianity with the values and mores of Western civilization. Missionaries, both consciously and unconsciously, tended to see themselves as social engineers, coincidental with their role as evangelists. Many of the missionaries who came to the Congo tended to view themselves as builders of a new society, not as destroyers of traditional African culture. They saw in Africa the possibility of establishing the ‘Christian society,’ which they felt was no longer attainable in their native lands, ‘corrupted’ as they were by the spirits of secularism and nationalism. Thus, often blind to the disintegrative aspects of their influence, they could contend, as did one missionary that the destruction of tribal institutions was caused, not by the missions, but entirely by the government and the commercial enterprises. Others, while recognizing and attempting to ameliorate the disintegrative effects of their teaching, accepted it as a necessary concomitant of the realization of their major aim—the establishment of a Christian society.” Marvin D. Markowitz, “The Missions and Political Development in the Congo,” Africa: Journal of the International African Institute 40, no. 3 (1970): 236.

38 It is for this reason, I think, that Africans have a great love of the Hebrew Bible in spite of the missionary use of it. Cf. West, “Bible as Bola,” 49–50.

this respect, the mission church was meaningless and irrelevant.40 It was also, however, harmful in its rejection of who we were, and are. Moreover, people readily accused both men and women, but especially women, of witchcraft in the Congo, which the Church’s attitude did nothing to help.41 My own aunt was accused of such.

40 This is, I believe, why much of the African tradition continues to live on in Christian communities. As Nahashon W. Ndung’u discusses: “The persistence of African cultural practices which were condemned a century ago by the western Christian missionaries is a proof of the importance attached to them by the communities in which they are practiced. Among the practices that were condemned and which continue to be practiced, include polygamy, ancestral veneration, magic, traditional dances and ceremonies connected with the rites of passage. Whereas the emphasis in these practices varies from one African community to another, there is evidence of their prevalence among several communities.” Nahashon W. Ndung’u, “Cultural Challenges and the Church in Africa,” African Ecclesial Review 50, no. 1–2 (2008): 81. (He also discusses the prevalence of female genital mutilation in the contemporary African situation and offers other positive alternative initiation rites for girls [ibid., 82, 90–91]. I should mention here that such practice is non-existent among the Basanga; it is not a part of Basanga female initiation rites.) The meaninglessness and irrelevance of a Eurocentric church in Africa is very much why we need a theology and praxis of inculturation.

41 Witchcraft and accusations thereof are or have been an old and complicated phenomenon in many places, including America, Europe, and Africa. As George Clement Bond and Diana M. Ciekawy state: “Witchcraft may be seen as a metonym for a complex configuration of interrelated philosophical, cultural, and social domains. And, in its diverse and varied expressions, what has come to be labeled witchcraft is highly textured, multifaceted, and the center of contradictions.” George Clement Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy, “Introduction: Contested Domains in the Dialogues of ‘Witchcraft’,” in Witchcraft Dialogues: Anthropological and Philosophical Exchanges, ed. George Clement Bond and Diane M. Ciekawy (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2001), 4–5.

Witchcraft should be distinguished from what is considered positive uses of divination in Africa. Reading the will of God or spirits (and, therefore, present and future events) is understood, in the African context, quite differently from the casting of harmful spells on individuals. Adam Ashforth, “Muthi, Medicine and Witchcraft: Regulating ‘African Science’ in Post-Apartheid South Africa?,” Social Dynamics 31, no. 2 (2005): 211–12. Ashforth argues that the distinction between using the supernatural for healing rather than hurting is essentially moral. Ibid., 211–42. Nonetheless, the issue has been confused theologically and placed in a peripheral situation academically because of racist colonial presuppositions about the “mental and intellectual capacities of ‘native’ peoples and subaltern classes.” Bond and
I remember the day as if it were yesterday. She was publicly humiliated (may her soul rest in peace), and I was traumatized. I grew up in this complex and, at times, very difficult religious environment.

Apart from this multicultural spirituality challenge, I faced linguistic challenges. The Sanga understanding of gender transcends the binary opposition of male and female; Kisanga has no gender marking and no gender in personal pronouns. The French language, on the other hand, carries gender markers and binary oppositions in terms of gender relations. Moreover, its third-person plural pronouns allow for the absorption of the female into the male. It was at the École Maternelle of Saint Benoît in the town of Likasi that I experienced how one could become lost by moving from one language to another. While attending kindergarten, I first encountered the gender force embedded in the French language, a force that caused the feminine to disappear in the masculine. Coming from an environment where I was referred to as mulopwe, I was disturbed at a very early age when one day during recess, I realized that we girls were not referred to as elles, “they,” once just one boy

Ciekawy, “Contested Domains,” 6–7. This was particularly true in Africa. Ibid., 7. I will be developing the distinction later in this dissertation.

It is also true that witchcraft can be seen where none is found in Africa, as has also been true in Europe and America. Unfortunately, in Africa, such accusations are increasing in number and often result in the death of the accused. Even where this does not occur, such accusations are terribly harmful. For more on witchcraft in Africa and the problem of false accusations, see Elias Kifon Bongmba, African Witchcraft and Otherness: A Philosophical and Theological Critique of Intersubjective Relations (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001); David J. Bosch, “The Problem of Evil in Africa: A Survey of African Views on Witchcraft and of the Response of the Christian Church,” in Like a Roaring Lion: Essays on the Bible, Church, and Demonic Powers, ed. P. G. R. de Villiers (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1987), 38–62; the series of essays in Gerrie ter Haar, ed. Imagining Evil: Witchcraft Beliefs and Accusations in Contemporary Africa, Religion in Contemporary Africa Series (Trenton, N.J.: Africa World Press, 2007); S. T. Kgatla, “‘Moloi ga a na mmala’ (a witch has no colour): Witchcraft Accusations in South Africa,” Missionalia 32, no. 1 (2004): 84–101.
joined in to play with us. So long as girls were playing among themselves, one would say of them in French, *elles jouent*, meaning “they are playing.” If, however, one lone boy joined the girls, it no longer mattered how many girls there were; that boy’s presence was enough for the third-person feminine plural pronoun *elles* to change into a third-person masculine plural personal pronoun *ils*. The *elles* were lost, erased, in *ils* because of the presence (and power) of one *il*. As a child, I learned that, in French, the *genre feminin* is weaker than the *genre masculin*.

Consequently, I was, as a little girl, exposed to two distinct conceptual frameworks through language. In my Sanga gender-neutral language, I was a male-daughter, which was entirely natural.42 If I were to translate literally a third-person singular personal pronoun from *Kisanga* into English, it would read she-he / he-she; in French *elle-il / il-elle*. This *il-elle* in itself is an intersection where the male and daughter are one. The other conceptual framework was based in the French colonial language, and I was erased through grammatical construction. As a little girl, I, therefore, experienced being dismissed and lost through translation.

As a teenager, I was initiated into adulthood, called the rite of *kisungu*, within my Sanga tradition with a ceremony that lasted three days.43 I also transferred from my French Roman Catholic school to a Methodist boarding school, where I personally experienced the mystery of the divine. I encountered the holy during a

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43 I wrote of these experiences in my bachelor of divinity thesis work. See Kiboko, “L’initiation.” Moreover, I shared these experiences with David Nelson Persons, and they are very much a part of his research results. See further Persons, “Teach Them unto Your Children.”
prayer meeting and converted to Christ.\textsuperscript{44} I was no longer merely Christian in name, but was Christian in my whole being. Now, it truly meant something to me. My mother said continuously to me, “Father-in-law, always remember who you are. You

will not understand the Bible that you are reading if you forget who you are. Those who wrote this Bible belonged to a culture, and you who read it belong to yours, too.”

Eventually, I pursued seminary education and became the first female to be ordained in the Southern Congo Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church (SCAC). I have served as a pastor in rural, as well as in urban areas, within my Annual Conference. In both of these environments, the issue of divination was a reality among the people, but no one addressed it for fear of charges of witchcraft and/or rejection. Even a few of my uncles began to worry that I was bewitched because I was educated, successful, still unmarried, and without children at the age of 20. They suggested that I was bewitched and cursed because I was still in school. Some of these family members went to talk to my father about this, believing that he had a part in my situation. They said to him, “Tell us what you did to your daughter! What did you do to her—education, marriage, and children? Can you give us the potion or tell us what you put on your daughter?” He had to assure them that all was well; he also challenged them regarding their type of Christian faith, an understanding of faith that would not permit a woman to be educated and called by God to preach.

I pursued further education in the United States, eventually becoming immersed in various North American cultures. I have now served as a pastor in the Texas Annual Conference, as a mission interpreter for the SCAC, and as a translator at General Conference of the United Methodist Church (English-French-Swahili).45 During my education, I embraced biblical studies eager to learn particularly narratives

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45 The General Conference of the United Methodist Church is the denomination’s top policy-making body, which meets every four years. I have served as one of the official Conference translators in 1996, 2000, 2004 and 2008.
in the Hebrew Bible, and my love of the text became clear. The striking similarities between the cultures in the Hebrew Bible and the Sanga culture fascinated me.

Nevertheless, other things also became clear. The French La Sainte Bible, published by Louis Segond (LSG), and the Kisanga Bible (Kisanga), the Bibles we used


most (and many other translations used in the Congo to this day), reflect colonized culture.\textsuperscript{48} Dube says of her experience, which I also share:

\begin{quote}
For me to read the Bible as an African woman and from my experience, therefore, is to be inevitably involved with the historical events of imperialism. Indeed, to read the Bible as an African is to take a perilous journey, a sinister journey, that spins one back to connect with dangerous memories of slavery, colonialism, apartheid, and neo-colonialism. To read the Bible as an African is to relive the painful equation of Christianity with civilization, paganism with savagery [and Africa].\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

I recognized that the terms used in both the LSG and the \textit{Kisanga} to translate the vocabulary of divination served well in the colonial context, where part of the work of the colonizers was both to order and reorganize the “savage African.”\textsuperscript{50} In the case of

\textsuperscript{47} Biblia: Kufuma ku Kiheberu, Kiaramu ne Kigriki pa Kubulwa Mabuku a mu Kigriki a mu Bulunda bwa Kala, (Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo: Société Biblique du Zaire, 1992). The title might be translated, “The Bible Translated from the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek without the Greek Books of the Old Testament.” The \textit{Kisanga} was completed in 1992 by a group of pastors among whom were my friend and colleague the Rev. Jacques Kaweshi Buta-Bukomo: a \textit{Musanga} pastor, and the late Rev. Hammer Wolfgang, a German missionary and instructor of Greek, who spearheaded the project. The Joshua Project reports that Bible portions have been translated into Sanga from 1903 to 1985, the New Testament was in process from 1904 to 1988, and that the full Bible was in progress from 1928 to 1994. Joshua Project, “Sanga Facts and the People Groups That Speak Sanga: Bibles,” 24 March 2009, \url{http://www.joshuaproject.net/languages.php?rol3=sng}. I believe its data are inaccurate.

\textsuperscript{48} The newer \textit{Traduction Oecuménique de la Bible [TOB]}, (Paris: Cerf, 1975) is also commonly used today. I shall address the issue of African translations of the Bible in Chapter 1, \textit{infra}.


\textsuperscript{50} Aquilar, “Postcolonial African Theology,” 302–23; Cf. Fabian, \textit{Language and Colonial Power}, 78–84. During the same time that the LSG was translated, in the
the LSG and *Kisanga*, such translations have controlled the debate about divination, as well as the culture of the native people.\(^{51}\) While translation could be taken as an academic exercise, these translations of the Bible were presented in this context as the next best thing to the original texts.\(^{52}\) This was a *fait accompli*; the people were to live by “God’s Word” as related most especially by the LSG. Further, the biblical interpretation brought to the continent by westerners—colonizers and missionaries—read the text and used the text to condemn the indigenous way of life of the people in central Africa and to impose their reading of the text as the compass that determines the right and holy way of living.\(^{53}\)

As K. B. Roy puts it, biblical translators in the Katanga region, a Swahili translation was used in the service of colonization, as well. Ibid.; see also n. 6, *supra*.


\(^{52}\) Even the titles of the LSG and the *Kisanga* established them as accurate, absolute, and unquestionable versions. We might also note that Edouard Kitoko Nsiku mentions an instance where Father Gino’s translation of Gen 1:27 into the *Emakhuwa* language (of northern Mozambique) was contested by Rev. Samueke, former director of *Makhuwa-Emakhuwana* translation team (Edouard Kitoko Nsiku, “The Lack and Weakness of African Exegetes: Crisis in Biblical Translation,” paper presented at *Bible in Africa Conference*, School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu Natal, 19–23 September, 2005, [http://www.theologyinafrica.com.public_home/files/confpap11a1.pdf](http://www.theologyinafrica.com.public_home/files/confpap11a1.pdf); accessed 21 March 2009. The Italian priest convinced the people with two arguments: a) he alone knew Hebrew and Greek and b) he alone had studied *Makhuwa* grammar in school. His translation of the last half of Gen 1:27 read as follows: “in the Garden of Eden, they had many people; they were many men and many women” (ibid.). He was able to impose this translation on the people.

\(^{53}\) Musa W. Dube states: “Colonizers have, according to postcolonial literary theory, reading practices that support the imperial and colonial hegemonic agenda. They may impose their literary canon on indigenous peoples.” Musa W. Dube, “Post-
colonial period were “children of their own particular epochs;” they “believed that
colonial hegemony was beneficial to the indigenous people so ruled;” and they,
therefore, were “often too negatively critical of traditional African customs;” while
being “often naively uncritical of many aspects of European and western culture and
customs.”54 I suggest that during the rise of the Belgian colonialism, the mission
church in the DRC had a vested interest in undermining the religious practices of
native cultures, including divinatory practices, through its translation and interpretation of
the Bible.

John H. Hayes, 2 vols. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1999), 2:299. This was certainly true of
European colonizers on the African continent. “They also interpreted indigenous
places, people, and cultures through these foreign texts. Ibid. Finally, they denigrated
colonized peoples and usurped their lands and overturned their cultures using texts
that did, in fact, uplift the colonizer or were read in such a ways as to uplift the
colonizer. Ibid. In this process, the Bible was imported to colonized areas, stripped of
its cultural context, and presented to the colonized as a universal standard. The Bible
was and is still used to compare indigenous religious practices and beliefs with those
of the colonizers. The Bible was used to overturn ancient cultural standards, to rate
them below those of the colonizers, to denigrate the indigenous people, to make them
subservient and docile, to support the idea of colonial ethnic ‘choseness,’ and finally
to justify colonial aggression as ordained by God and good for the people. Ibid. Just
one example of this is the use of ‘the great commission’ [Matt 28:19–20] to spread
imperial, militaristic, and triumphalistic Christianity.” Ibid. One example of this
extremely negative use of the biblical text in the context of divination is La Roche, La
divination. I shall discuss his work further in Chapter 3, infra.

54 K. B. Roy, “Angels of God or Agents of Imperialism? An Assessment of the
Social Impact of Missionaries in South Africa in the Nineteenth and Twentieth
Tshehla, “Translation and the Vernacular Bible in the Debate between My
‘Traditional and Academic Worldview,” in Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in
Literatur, 2003), 189.
I have also learned, however, that African readers of the Bible have not been passive recipients of a European tradition. We all now live in a postcolonial space and read the text from that space. As Stephen D. Moore articulates: the “post” in


Achille Mbembe’s definition of the term “postcolony” is significant in understanding the term “postcolonial” from an African perspective. Achille Mbembe, *On The Postcolony*, (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2001). To define “postcolony,” Mbembe weaves the notions of *age* and *duree*. Postcolony, he maintains, is an age, which he understands in terms of interactions and a configuration of events. As an age, postcolony enfolds numerous *dureées* that are “made up of discontinuities, reversals, inertias, and swings that overlay one another, interpenetrate one another and envelope one another: entanglement.” Ibid., 14. Thus, postcolony, according to Mbembe, comprises many *dureées* or temporalities. All these temporalities are built within what he calls *longue durée*. Mbembe rejects the linear models of time and postcoloniality in favor of incorporating non-linear “phenomena” in research on Africa. Ibid., 17. These phenomena consist of what he calls “time of existence and experience of entanglement.” Ibid. Mbembe states the following: “It may be supposed that the present as *experience of a time* is precisely that moment when different forms of absences become mixed together: absence of those presences that are no longer so that one remembers (the past), and absence of those others that are yet to come and are anticipated (the future).” Ibid. Contra Sharon H. Ringe, who maintains that the term “postcolonial suggests implies the end of the old colonial project” and beginning of independence. Sharon H. Ringe, “Places at the Table: Feminist and Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation,” in *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, ed. Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry (Rochester: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 140–41.

Drawing on Mbembe’s analysis, the present study describes the adjective “postcolonial” as an experience lived within multiple *dureées*. In this way, postcolonial is understood as a space tangled with time which is to be understood as cyclical as opposed to segmented, since the African, and particularly the Basanga’s, experience of time is time as circle of life with neither beginning nor end. The circle of life, according to the Basanga, is a complex *mélange* of absent and present. The dead are both absent and present, dead and living. They died and yet continue to live through rebirth and others continue to be available as spirits to those who summon them for
postcolonial “is not a fencing post.”57 Rather, the “post” seeks to get rid of fences and to redraw borders; it also stands as prophetic sign.58 Its presence in front of the word “colonial” opens the door to “transformation for liberation”59 and invites everyone in. Postcolonial subjects are “a people whose perception of each other and of economic, political, and cultural relationships cannot be separated from the global impact and constructions of Western/modern imperialism, which still remain potent in form of neocolonialism, military arrogance, and globalization.”60 The postcolonial age is aware of the global impact of the Western or modern imperialism. Thus, he poses the question: “How should we read cultural texts that were instrumental to its establishment?”61 The Bible in the hands of Africans has often conflicted significantly with the colonial project, and we must keep on doing this work. Mercy Amba Oduyoye states the situation plainly: “We have to study the Bible ourselves with our own life experiences as the starting point.”62 Even though the African ways of life have been condemned as “superstitious, satanic, devilish, and hellish,” they have survived and continue to nurture that background of African peoples; therefore, “they

guidance. This experience is an interlocking of the living and the dead. I discuss this more fully in Chapter 3, infra.


58 Ibid.

59 Dube, “Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible,” 16.

60 Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 Oduyoye, Daughters of Anowa, 175–76.
must be reckoned with even in the middle of modern changes.”63 They must be reckoned with when we read the biblical text. Lumbala argues that Africans must “disorder” theologically and epistemologically the ordered knowledge of the colonial project.64 Thus, I suggest that, just as the biblical text has been used to order knowledge, we must engage in a disordering process that includes the text. One may, thus, conclude with confidence that a postcolonial literary critic’s task is threefold: to analyze, to resist and to reconstruct the so-called “canonical” literature, including the Bible.65 Through the process of such investigation, the critic examines the biblical text to identify imperial or colonial layers, resist them by subverting. Specific issues that a postcolonial critic addresses include those related to race, ethnicity, nation, empire, migration, diaspora, and contradictions.

My wise mother recognized the importance of the critical disordering process when she told me to remember who I am, father-in-law and king, when I read the Bible.

I am that male-daughter of my late parents;
I am that child of diviners;
I am that mulopwe among the Basanga, the people of the Disanga, the crossroads or a place of encounter, who are a people also living in a postcolonial place of intersection;
I am that postcolonial subject as a musanga woman, living at an intersection where the il-elle co-exists without tension;
I am that United Methodist clergywoman;
I am that simultaneous and consecutive translator, who knows how difficult it is to translate and transfer the untranslatable and un-transferable and who knows that some things are best left untranslated; and


64 Aquilar, “Postcolonial African Theology,” 304.

I am now a biblical interpreter and translator for postcolonial Africa. If I am to take her words seriously, then I am compelled to study the phenomenon of divination in 1 Sam 28:3–28 (hereinafter referred to as “1 Samuel 28,” for convenience), a passage in which I see a layer of conquest theology, a layer of resistance to domination, and an interdependence which transcends gender, ethnicity, nationality, and political power.

It is with my life experience, with divination as its prologue, that I approach 1 Samuel 28 and the woman of Endor. I know the woman of Endor, for she is my mother, my grandmother, my aunt, and so many others whom I have loved. For years, I have been hearing the woman of Endor’s voice as she responds to Saul’s request. I hear her call out, “You are Saul!” knowing the hatred that he has spewed on her kind. I know her fear and shame like I know the fear and shame of my aunt. I also know the woman of Endor’s courage in bringing forth Samuel for Saul and the kindness that she bestowed on Saul in preparing a meal for him before he went to his fate, like I know the courage and kindnesses of my own relatives. I know that she has been dismissed and erased by vocabulary and grammar, as I have been dismissed and erased by vocabulary and grammar.

1 Samuel 28 is an excellent example of a biblical passage that calls for a fresh reading, one that will address the complex situation which the Christian church faces in Central Africa.66 There is the need to translate biblical texts in such a way that they

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remain faithful to the original text and context and that also make sense to the worldview of its readers. A desperate need exists to read the text in a way that supports a Church that recognizes the significant contributions of Africa in its long history and uplifts the African *uzima*; this is an *inculturated-liberated* African Christian Church. 67 1 Samuel 28 calls for a paradigm shift in the way we read and translate it. I think that reading this narrative through an African feminist postcolonial lens will help us to understand both the negative and positive attitudes toward divination within and beyond the text and, possibly, reconcile the two sides. In stating such bold things, I must also acknowledge that my reading and translation of this passage is not the only reading and translation that is or could be—it is only one of many other possibilities—but, to be authentic to my people and to myself, I must read it and translate it in the way these pages will show.


67 For further on my view of an inculturated-liberation African church, see n. 14, *supra*. 
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION:
TRANSLATING DIVINATION AND CROSSING THE DISANGA
OF LIFE AND THE BEYOND

Dijina dyami i Jeanne Kabamba Kiboko.1 Jina langu ni Jeanne Kabamba Kiboko.2 Je m’appelle Jeanne Kabamba Kiboko. My name is Jeanne Kabamba Kiboko.

The simple assertion of my name demonstrates that I live in a multilingual world—and I could go on, as I must know many languages to function in the African, Western, and biblical worlds—and do.3 As a result, I am constantly moving ideas from one language to another. I live in a world of translation.4

1 This is Kisanga (Sanga). Please also note that I have chosen to use abbreviations sparingly. Those used herein follow the conventions of P. H. Alexander, et al., eds., The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999). Abbreviations will generally be noted when they first occur.

2 This is Swahili (Kiswahili).

3 My ancient languages are Hebrew, Greek, Aramaic, and Latin. My European languages are French, English, German, Spanish, and Portuguese. The African languages that I know well, that are recognized as having official status in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and that are more widely dispersed are Swahili (Kiswahili), Tshiluba, and Lingala. My knowledge of Kikongo is more limited. My primary local African languages are Kisanga, Kiluba, Tshibemba, Tshiluba, Uruund, Lingala, and Lunda, but I have many others. It is estimated by various sources that 240–250 languages exist within the Congo. Our languages have also been much disparaged by colonial forces. For an excellent example of the highly negative attitude of the colonizers toward our native languages, see
Furthermore, to be a postcolonial subject is to be a translated being. Salman Rushdie captures this experience of living postcolonially in a diaspora perfectly:

...and he exists in the West in a translation that is really a complete reworking of his verses, in many cases very different from the spirit (to say nothing of the content) of the original. I, too, am a translated man. I have been borne across. It is generally believed that something is always lost in translation; I cling to the notion...that something can also be gained.5

These two aspects of my own life—being constantly involved in translation and being, in fact, a translated person—have made it most natural for me to choose translation as a research subject. As I indicated in my Prologue, this dissertation is about translation, biblical translation, specifically the translation of the vocabulary of divination in 1 Sam 28:3–25 (1 Samuel 28).

Edward Said, another translated being, has remarked:


4 Although, Martha J. Cutter argues: “One of the indispensable ideas operational in translation theory is that we are all, always, on some level caught in the process of translation. Language is not a perfect medium, and it is not transparent. At some point in our lives everyone has to learn to translate.” Martha J. Cutter, Lost and Found in Translation: Contemporary Ethnic American Writing and the Politics of Language Diversity (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 11. She explains: “I say something to you. You do not understand. It must reword it, rework it—translate it, in a sense. Students in freshmen composition classes must routinely learn how to translate their thoughts into standardized, academic discourse. Many postmodern theorists argue that we are all, to some degree, exiles in language—that we can constitute ourselves as subjects only by separating ourselves from the mother and mother tongue. As translator Claude Lévesque phrases this in a comment to deconstructive critic Jacques Derrida, ‘I know that, for you, in order for any language to be a language, it can only be—structurally—a place of exile, a medium where absence, death, and repetition rule without exception.’” Ibid., 10–11.

Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of vision gives rise to an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is contrapunctual … There is a unique pleasure in this sort of appreciation, especially if the exile is conscious of other contrapunctual juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy.6

Both Rushdie and Said acknowledge, then, that there are both things lost and things gained in living as a postcolonial subject, as a translated being, as one borne across. I am always aware of four cultures: my Basanga culture, my greater African culture, my colonial/neo-colonial/post-colonial Belgian culture, and my American culture. This has its challenges. This also offers its unique pleasures, as Said notes. The contrapunctual juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment are both part of the challenge and the pleasure.

This dissertation is an exercise in the polyglotic and contrapunctual juxtapositions of which I become aware when I work with the biblical text: a text that I have read in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, as well as in Kisanga, Swahili, French, and English translation; a text that I use as a source of Christian devotion and instruction—as a believer, as a clergy woman, and as a scholar; a text that I read as a Congolese-Musanga, as an African, as a former Belgian subject, and as a new American citizen.7

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7 Africa is home to approximately one-third of all the world’s languages, some 2,000 of 6,900. Translation of the Bible into African languages first occurred in the seventeenth century. Charles Atangana Nama, “Historical, Theoretical and Terminological Perspectives of Translation in Africa.” Meta, 38, no. 3 (1993): 420. Ge, an African language spoken by the Ewes in the Republic of Benin was included in a
cross many boundaries, moving back and forth over this *disanga*, when I engage the biblical text, and this boundary-crossing reveals many things that produce both challenges and pleasures.\(^8\) This project seeks to share those insights with you, my readers.

I shall discuss, in this work, another much translated being—a character of the Hebrew Bible—the woman of Endor. She, too, crosses over a *disanga*, that is, the *disanga* between life and the beyond.\(^9\) That is what it is to be a diviner, especially one

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\(^9\) Joanne Scurlock defines magic, of which divination is part, for us: “In its broadest sense, ‘magic’ is a form of communication involving the supernatural world in which an attempt is made to affect the course of present and / or future events by means of ritual actions (especially ones which involve the symbolic imitation of what the practitioner wants to happen), and / or by means of formulaic recitations which describe the desired outcome and / or invoke gods, demons, or the sprites believed to be resident in natural substances.” Joanne A. Scurlock, “Magic (ANE),” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David N. Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 464. She distinguishes between those activities that are typically assigned to priests for maintenance of the cult and other “specialists in the supernatural.” Ibid., 465. A. Leo Oppenheim defines divination as follows: “[D]ivination represents a technique of communication with the supernatural forces that are supposed to shape the history of the individual as well as that of the group. It presupposes the belief that the powers are able and, at times, willing to communicate their intentions and that they are interested in the well being of the individual or the group—in other words, that if evil is predicted or threatened, it can be averted through appropriate means.” A. Leo Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead*
who can communicate with the departed. It is to move across the normal boundaries of life.

Exploring the Terrain of the Project

Although divination in the ancient Near East was very much considered a science, with training periods and written manuals of instruction or treatises, certain types of divinations seem to be much more of a gift and an art. Communicating with the departed, whatever training one might have had, it seems to me, is finally such a gift and art. In many societies, the practitioner—especially the female practitioner—often stands

Civilization, 2d ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 207. These definitions of magic and divination are fundamental for this study.

The term usually used for this practice, “necromancy,” has a highly negative connotative meaning, which it acquired over time. This pejorative meaning reached its peak in the Middle Ages, which I will discuss further in Chapter 3, infra. I will, therefore, use instead the term thaumaturgy, which does not have the same negative connotation because it is so rarely used. For the term necromancer, I will use the term thaumaturgist.

It is now well accepted that divination was a highly regarded science that was organized and taught in the scribal schools of the ancient Near East. These schools produced numerous omen lists and prognostication manuals. The ancient Near Eastern philosophy of science and its influence on the omen lists and prognostication manuals will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3, infra.

outside of institutional structures: the educational system, the religious system, and the patriarchal structure of society. Moreover, whether or not the practice is socially acceptable and supported in a given culture, the practitioner ultimately feels his or her way entirely alone across this boundary, this *disanga*, which most of us never cross.

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Divination is a powerful instrument. It allows humans to communicate with the deity, spirit beings, the departed, and, therefore, to know. In much traditional African religion and in the world of the greater ancient Near East, divination was and is a thing of great import. As this dissertation will show, it was and is the source, in both of these cultures, of knowledge, healing, power, authority. Because it is such a potent and

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15 This Latin-derived term “religion” misrepresents the African way of life, because it does not compartmentalize life into what belongs to the religious realm and what does not. In fact, the term “religion” does not exist in many of the African languages that I speak. By the phrase “traditional African religion,” I, therefore, mean the “traditional African way of life.” The use of the term “religion” accommodates the Western reader (who reads it through his/her western lenses) to the disadvantage of the indigenous African Sanga reader, whose way of life is lost through/in translation.


important activity, divination may be carefully and strictly controlled. In creating that which is permitted, one also creates that which is forbidden. Some forms of divination, therefore, may be highly regulated, others may stand beyond the traditional structures of society, and, at times, particular groups will seek to regulate some or all aspects of divination. Ann Jeffers has investigated the diverse divinatory practices mentioned in the Hebrew Bible and argues that, “necromancy was practiced all through the history of Israel in spite of vigorous effort to root it out.”¹⁸ She maintains that diviners held a significant status during the period before the exile, and, after the exile, divination became more discredited.¹⁹ Craig Vondergeist, who has studied at length Israelite divination and prophecy in the Deuteronomistic History, contents that, still later, during the post-exilic period, laws were established aiming to stamp out completely the practice of

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¹⁹ Ibid., 251–52, although I disagree with her in certain respects, as I discuss later in this dissertation, I do agree that certain factions in Israel wanted to discredit some divinatory practices, and these voices increased in the post-exilic period.
divination. Ancient Israel clearly had forces seeking to regulate divination as evidenced by the pentateuchal laws regarding divination (e.g., Lev 19:26, 31; Deut 18:10–11).

Due to the fact that most of us do not have this gift, just as I do not have my mother’s ear, we can easily fear those who do. Many of us are terrified by those who cross the disanga of the supernatural and the natural, the divine and the human, the past, the present, and the future, and the place beyond the human structures of society to an individual freedom, power, and authority. We, therefore, think it is impossible to have such a gift. We project our anxieties onto the ones with the gift, see them as other, and demonize them. We assume malevolent intent on their part. We call them sorcerers or witches and drag them from their homes and loved ones. We taunt them, humiliate them, and torture them. Finally, we murder them.

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20 Craig Vondergeest, “Prophecy and Divination in the Deuteronomistic History” (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2000), 9. Again, I disagree with some aspects of Vondergeest’s position, but there is no questions that divination was under discussion in Israel.


23 A recent article discussed how: “Five women were paraded naked, beaten, and forced to eat human excrement by villagers after being branded as witches in India’s Jharkhand state. Local police said the victims were Muslim widows who had been labeled witches by a local cleric.” Salman Ravi, “Village ‘Witches’ Beaten in India,” BBC News news, http://bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8315980.stm, 20 October, 2009. The article continues that hundreds of villagers watched at a playground, where the woman were stripped and further humiliated. This practice is not just about spiritual practices. The article continues: “there are occasion when people—especially women—are targeted for
The pericope of King Saul and the woman of Endor relates this fear within ancient Israelite culture because we learn in the text that Saul has רוח (v. 3) and רוח (v. 9) all those who use prohibited divinatory means. Nonetheless, the time comes when the approved means of divination—dreams and urim—and prophecy fail him; he cannot learn what is to become of him via official, institutionally-approved channels to the deity (v. 6). Consequently, he turns to the woman of Endor (vv. 7–8) and receives what he has been seeking: an answer about this future, although it is not the answer for which he had hoped (vv. 16–19). The woman of Endor represents our anxieties about liminal beings, those who reside in or cross over disangas. Her thanks in history for assisting Saul, giving him the knowledge that he seeks and offering him the hospitality and comfort he so much needs before his demise, is that most biblical readers, whether or not scholars, diminish her role or call her a witch.

She also represents the Hebrew Bible’s conflicted response to divination, what I will term the inner-biblical conflict. In some passages, divination is highly regarded (e.g., their land and property.” Ibid. Such accusations are used to disempower women who are in any way successful.

I will not discuss the historical reliability of biblical texts because it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. My reading is primarily narratological. See further Chapter 2, infra, on my methods.


This point is developed in the text at nn. 61–65, infra.
Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21). In these instances, the practice of divination stands as one of the legitimate and integral means of seeking divine guidance. In others, it is abhorrent (e.g., Deut 18:10–11). Its practice can bring terrible consequences upon the practitioner (e.g., Lev 20:6, 27). Some people may use it in certain ways. Other people may not use it at all. Even within the Deuteronomic History, we find incongruities.

27 Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean notes the following permitted types of magical processes, among others: apotropaic measures, belomancy, blessings and curses, clairvoyance, decisions by lots (kleromancy), dreams (oneiromancy), judicial ordeals, hydromancy, and use of magic staffs. Kuemmerline-McLean, “Magic (OT),” 4:468; Julius K. Muthengi discusses the various types of permitted divination in the ancient Near East, generally, and the Hebrew Bible, specifically. His discussion of the Hebrew Bible can be found at Julius K. Muthengi, “The Art of Divination,” African Journal of Evangelical Theology 12 (1993): 96–99. To name just a few of these numerous instances, Rebekah inquired of God, via divination, during the Patriarchal Age (Gen 25:22). In the time of the conquest, a legal decision was reached by means of lot-casting, another form of divination, which confirmed the guilt of Achan (Jos 7:14–18), and, through the same process, the land was apportioned (Jos 13–19:51). Deuteronomy reports divination by urim and thummim (Deut 33:8). According to the priestly view, the urim and thummim were held in the high priest’s “breastpiece of judgment” (Exod 28:30; Lev 8:8; Num 27:21). Israelite divination included the teraphim, which seem to be images of deified ancestors used in the house cult (Hos 3:4; Zech 10:2). See further Theodore J. Lewis, “Teraphim,” in Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, ed. K. van der Toorn and et al. (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1995), 1588–601. Furthermore, oracles from Yahweh are shown as accompanying David on his journey to kingship (1 Sam 22:13–15; 23:2–4; 9–12; 30:7–8; 2 Sam 2:1).

28 Contrast מַסְקֵ֣ם מְסַקֶּם listed among the forbidden divinatory practices (Deut 18:10–11) with the מְסַקֶּם reported to be on the lips of the king in Prov 16:10, where it carries a positive connotation.

29 Foreign practitioners of magic are especially problematic in the view of the writers of the Hebrew Bible (Deut 18:10–11), but compare, e.g., Dan 2:2–1, where foreign magicians are generally considered wise but in the particular instance unable to do as asked.

30 One of the questions that this study will address is whether 1 Samuel 28 is actually inconsistent with the Deuteronomist’s representation of intermediation or represents a view that stands side-by-side other views. It is commonly held that prophecy
This has produced a profound scholarly problem: How do we reconcile these seemingly contradictory texts? This question has never been adequately resolved, and, unfortunately, an abundance of suggestions tend to see divination as primitive and negative.\textsuperscript{31} Samuel is usually understood as the dividing line between the crude and the sophisticated: the \textit{disanga} of the seer and the prophet rests in him.\textsuperscript{32} The traditional view has the central role in obtaining divine guidance within the Deuteronomic History. Craig Vondergeest concludes, for instance, that the differences between prophecy and divination are very significant in the mind of the Deuteronomic historian and that prophecy reigns supreme. Vondergeest, “Prophecy and Divination” 307. See also, e.g., Terry L. Fenton, “Deuteronomistic Advocacy of the Nabi: 1 Samuel IX 9 and Questions of Israelite Prophecy,” \textit{Vetus Testamentum} 47 (1997): 23–97; Roy L. Heller, \textit{Power, Politics, and Prophecy: The Character of Samuel and the Deuteronomistic Evaluation of Prophecy} (New York: T&T Clark, 2006); J. R. Levinson, “Prophecy in Ancient Israel: The Case of the Ecstatic Elders,” \textit{Catholic Bible Quarterly} 65 (2003): 503–21. Yet, the Deuteronomist reports that “the word of Yahweh was rare in those days; visions were not widespread” (1 Sam 3:1). Samuel becomes known as “a man of God” אֱלֹהִי, and we are told, “whatever he says always comes true” (1 Sam 9:6). He is called a “seer” נָבִי (1 Sam 9:5–14, 18–21) and is referred to as a “prophet” נָבִי (1 Sam 3:20; 9:9). He also has mantic powers through which he solves mysteries, such as finding lost things, in exchange for some kind of payment (1 Sam 9:7–8). The characterization of Samuel as a prophet to the exclusion of being a diviner, therefore, is unhelpful, and the characterization that the Deuteronomist was completely negative toward divination may be inaccurate.


held by most Western biblical scholars is that, logically, the only way through which
Israel ought to have received divine guidance after Samuel was through the prophetic
word, not through divination, which they often present as having originated in foreign
influence. Although in recent years, some scholars have challenged that sharp
distinction between divination and prophecy, the bias against divination nevertheless
prevails. As a result, no scholarly resolution exists regarding this perplexité. This

Abingdon, 1968), 223–25; McCarter Jr., 1 Samuel, 18–23. Moreover, in the
Deuteronomist’s account of Israel’s history, Samuel emerges as a transitional figure
between the judges and the rise of the monarchy because he, as the last judge, appoints
Saul as king. See further, e.g., George W. Ramsey, “Samuel, Person of,” in The Anchor
Samuel and Saul, together, are the disanga of the period of the judges and the monarchy.

33 Joanne K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic (OT),” in The Anchor Bible

34 See most importantly Kitz, “Prophecy as Divination,” 22. See also the work of
Frederick H. Cryer, who challenges the view that the Hebrew Bible is exclusively
negative toward divination, contending instead that the prohibitions against divination
represented “an attempt at a late date to ensure that, ultimately, communication with the
divine remained a privilege of the religious leadership.” Frederick H. Cryer, Divination in
Ancient Israel and Its Near Eastern Environment: A Socio-Historical Investigation,
Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 142 (Sheffield: Sheffield
Academic, 1994), 329. H. L. Bosman observes that differences rather than similarities
between diviners and prophets have been emphasized. He asserts: “A greater awareness
of these similarities can contribute to the understanding of the ideological / theological
account in the Hebrew Bible on how communication was facilitated between God and
Israel. The choice for a specific way of determining the will of God or the gods in any
given historical situation is not only religiously motivated, but must also be seen in its
larger cultural and ideological context.” H. L Bosman, “Redefined Prophecy as
28. See also Victor Avigdor Hurowitz, “Eli’s Adjuration of Samuel (1 Samuel III 17–18)
in Light of a ‘Diviner’s Protocol’ from Mari (EM I/1, 1),” Vetus Testamentum 44, no. 4

35 See n. 30, supra.
conflict is so great and 1 Samuel 28 so confounding that some commentators have considered the narrative to be damaging to the very integrity of Scripture!\textsuperscript{36} This has led me to ask whether any principle, thesis, or method can quell the turmoil. Does the Hebrew Bible represent conflicting voices on the subject?

I argue in this dissertation that the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible is, indeed, conflicted and that the problem is not meant to be resolved. Divination is, to my mind, both heteroglossic and dialogic, using here the concepts developed by Mikhail M. Bakhtin.\textsuperscript{37} The words of divination in the biblical text have long histories of inner-biblical usage that reflect both repeatable and non-repeatable aspects.\textsuperscript{38} In the history and social usage of ancient Near Eastern, and particularly Israelite, divination and its vocabulary, the terms have acquired a range of designative, connotative, emotive,

\textsuperscript{36} W. A. M. Beuken observes: “Through the centuries the narrative of ‘the witch of Endor’ has brought theologians to despair, because it appeared to undermine the credibility of Scripture. Does it itself relate a true fact something which is impossible and about which one may not perpetrate deception, viz. calling the dead back to life? Or if it indeed was all a fraud, why did the narrator not dissociate himself from it?” W. A. M. Beuken, “1 Samuel 28: The Prophet As ‘Hammer of Witches’,” \textit{Journal for the Study of the Old Testament} 6 (1978): 3.

\textsuperscript{37} I shall be utilizing Bakhtin’s work in my word study in Chapter 2.

associative, and political-ideological meanings, all of which are reflected in the Hebrew Bible. One, therefore, must pay careful attention to the particular literary and social context of each instance of such vocabulary in order to understand these various meanings and usages within the pages of the Hebrew Bible.

Several scholars have studied the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible over the last century.39 Yet, few have paid particular attention to the meanings of divinatory terms beyond their designative meanings. I suggest, consequently, that a Hebrew word study of the language of divination, when performed with an eye focused beyond the mere designative level of meaning, to other more subtle layers of meaning within each literary context, will help us to understand the polyglotic nature of the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible. I intend to do that using the theories of Mikhail M. Bakhtin.40

Once we have this information, then we can examine precisely what is occurring in the pericope involving King Saul and the woman of Endor in 1 Samuel 28. I believe that we will then discover that 1 Samuel 28 best embodies this inner-biblical


40 Bakhtin’s work has become fertile methodological ground for biblical scholarship, and the studies are now far too numerous to name in their entirety. See further Chapter 2, n. 59, infra.
heteroglossic, dialogic conflict. I maintain that, in being heteroglossic and dialogic, 1 Samuel 28 opens up an “alternative space,” to use Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza’s phrase. The narrative does not negate the experience that is taking place at the disanga of multiple voices and views. Rather, the narrative, in its final form, holds these views together most intentionally. This project, then, challenges the “univocal reading or interpretation” of the language of divination in 1 Samuel 28, in favor of reading the “contrapunctual juxtapositions that diminish orthodox judgment and elevate appreciative sympathy,” in Said’s words. The woman of Endor is an outsider: a marginalized and subjugated person. Yet, she travels across fear, across the distance between monarch and exiled subject, across the boundary between life and death, all to open up this alternative space where contrapunctual juxtapositions can be held together for appreciative sympathy. She is no witch; she intends to deceive no one; she has no maleficent intent.

This inner-biblical conflict about divination does not, however, stand alone. It is joined by, what I term, an extra-biblical conflict, which has long, highly developed, and seemingly ineradicable roots. Issues similar to those that have driven the inner-biblical conflict have provoked a mixed response to divination external to the Hebrew Bible. This extra-biblical conflict has further contributed to our (mis)understanding of 1 Samuel 28


[43] See n. 6, supra.
and the woman of Endor, which are reflected in innumerable interpretations and translations of the language of divination, generally, and this passage, specifically. I suggest that such (mis)understanding stems from ideological forces that have been in ascendancy during such periods of interpretation and translation. Stanley Porter notes: “The history of Bible translation is charged with ideological issues.” As Judaism and Christianity developed, they both became more anti-divinatory (or at least more opposed to the communication with the departed); but Christianity, in its attempt to separate itself from its Jewish roots, became much more anti-Judaic and anti-divinatory. This

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45 This process began very early. For example, Pseudo-Philo refers to the woman as “Sedecla, daughter of the Midianite diviner who led Israel astray with sorceries” (Bib. Ant. 64:3). In his retelling of the narrative, he refuses to accept that Samuel could be subjected to the power of the woman. He reports the prophet saying, instead, “Therefore, do not glorify thyself, king, neither you, woman. For you have not raise me, but this instruction, in which God said to me, when I was alive, that I should come and announce you that you have sinned against God now a second time in a negligent way. Consequently, after having breathed my last, my bones were disturbed in order to tell you, I who am dead, what I heard, while I was alive.” Ibid., 7b–8. Cited in Klaus A. D. Smelik, “The Witch of Endor, 1 Samuel 28: Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 AD,” Vigiliae Christianae 33 (1979): 161–62. Smelik says of this: “For the general tendency among Christian writers of this period is to consider necromancy (like all pagan mantic) as a daemonic deceit…. Generally, in Christian thought, mantic is connected with the Devil’s works.” Ibid., 176–77.

46 Smelik argues that, in the early period (before 800 C.E.), there are many similarities in interpretation between the Rabbinic and Christian exegetes of 1 Samuel 28. Ibid., 178–79. What provokes this article is, however, Pionius’ martyrology (he uses the Latin version edited by Bollandists in Acta Sanctorum, February I, p. 45). Smelik’s description of the relevant part of the martyrology follows: “Pionius is supposed to have delivered these [speeches] to his adherents, whilst in prison. Inter alia he speaks about the Jews; he regards them to be dangerous for Christians, because they alleged (according to this martyr) that Jesus’ resurrection was due to necromancy, and consequently no proof
tendency, I argue, was enhanced in European Christianity during the medieval, Reformation, and Enlightenment periods, becoming virulently anti-Judaic and anti-divinatory. It was not only the new form of anti-Judaism that appeared in Europe in the 13th century that contributed to this development; changes in both religious and scientific worldviews also contributed. While the Hebrew text favors in several instances prophecy over divination, especially foreign forms of divination (e.g., Deut 18:9–19; Isa 8:19–20; 44:25–26), I contend that this effect was enhanced in later interpretations. This extra-biblical, anti-divinatory stance was laid atop of the inner-biblical conflict in

of his divinity. They refer to 1 Sam. 28, the story about the witch of Endor. There, the Scripture states that Samuel was recalled to life at Saul’s demand; according to them Jesus was resuscitated in the same manner. ‘Pionius’ tries to refute them by asserting that Samuel himself did not appear. Infernal daemons assumed his shape, and showed themselves to the woman and to Saul.” Ibid., 160. While I agree that the sample that Smelik uses does present similar (and, to my mind, very troublesome) interpretations, this initial discussion of “Pionius” clearly indicates that all was not well between Christians and Jews, and that 1 Samuel 28 was used by some Christians against Jews. Smelik’s survey of Rabbinic and Christian interpretations of 1 Samuel 28 until 800 C. E. additionally illustrates the challenge that biblical scholars face in stripping this text of the extra-biblical anti-divinatory materials.


interpreting and, finally, translating the biblical text into various languages. I contend that these ideological forces were attempting to exert a monolithic, monologic, authoritarian view of divination within the Hebrew Bible in order to serve their own Christian interests.

During the European colonial period, a new factor propelled anti-divinatory ideology, that is, missionary/imperial-colonial interests that rejected indigenous religious practices. This, too, affected interpretations and translations of divinatory language in the Hebrew Bible. The result is that much biblical translation into European languages and the indigenous languages of Africa disparaged divination beyond what is represented in the biblical text.  

In Carl Sundberg’s study of the language and word choices in mission in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, he states, quoting Margaret Thompson Drewal: “The central problem of ethnography is translation. Each language comes impregnated with its own past, loaded with its own ontology and epistemology.”

Translators steeped in such ontology, epistemology, and ideology, whether consciously or

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49 Although I believe this is a trend within African Bibles, I will only examine the *Kisanga*. An excellent example of such a trend is seen in the work of Rev. Dr. Marvin S. Wolford, who served as a missionary in the Congo beginning in 1957 and started translating the Bible into the Uruund language in 1966. The title of this Bible is *Mukand Wa Nzamb* “Book of God” (Kinshasa: L’Alliance Biblique de la République Démocratique du Congo, 2000). His translation echoes the Louis Segond, *La Sainte Bible: Traduite d’après les textes originaux hébreu et grec* (Miami, Fla.: Editions Internationales Vie, 1980 [1881]) (LSG). His book, *Rellement Libre de L’Esclavage de La Sorcellerie: Un Ministère Fondé sur Les Ecritures*, transl: Marie McEvoy (Zambia: Christian Literature, n .d.) also relies on the LSG.

50 Carl Sundberg, “Conversion and Contextual Conceptions of Christ: A Missiological Study among Young Converts in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo,” in *Studia Missionalia Svecana* 81 (Uppsala: Swedish Institute of Missionary Research, 2000), 31. He deplores the fact that in the Congo Brazzaville, the EEC Church still follows the language and procedures handed over by missionaries in the 1960s. Ibid.
unconsciously, mistranslated what is fundamentally a heteroglossic, polyvalent, dialogic
text that seeks to undermine any authoritarian monologic voices in regard to divination.
Ethnography and translation merge in this instance—and with politics, as well. The
ideology in these interpretive texts has had long-term religious and political
consequences.\textsuperscript{51} It is the misrepresentation of divination, generally, and the woman of
Endor, specifically, in interpretations and translations of 1 Samuel 28, and the religious
and political implications of that misrepresentation, that compel me to do the present
study. I hope, by this research, to unmask and challenge translations that undermine the
value of divinatory practices in the text. As a result, I shall pay close attention, in this
dissertation, to the politics of translation revealed through the strategic shifts in
vocabulary in the interpretive translations that I shall study.

\textsuperscript{51} Postcolonial hermeneutics and translation theory recognizes this because they
analyze the literary constructions, namely, the manner through which characters,
geography, gender, and race are constructed, and the way translations are created to
promote or to challenge subjugation of one by another. Thus, writing and translation
embed ideologies and have implications in regard to power relationships. See, e.g., J.
Jorge Klor de Alva, “Language, Politics, and Translation: Colonial Discourse and Classic
Nahuatl in New Spain,” in The Art of Translation. Voices from the Field, ed. Rosanna
Warren (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1989), 143–62; Fernando F. Segovia,
“Biblical Criticism and Postcolonial Studies: Toward a Postcolonial Optic,” in The
Postcolonial Bible, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah, The Bible and Postcolonialism 1 (Sheffield:
R. S. Sugirtharajah, The Bible and Postcolonialism 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic
Press, 1998), 91–116; Oumelbanine Zhiri, “Leo Africanus, Translated and Betrayed,” in
The Politics of Translation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, ed. Renate
Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Luise von Flotow, and Daniel Russel, Medieval and Renaissance
Texts and Studies 233 (Tempe, Ariz.: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance
Studies/Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2001), 161–174. See my brief discussion of
the methods of postcolonialism below at nn. 85-93, infra, and my full discussion of
method in Chapter 2, infra.
My thesis is that much of the vocabulary of divination in this passage and beyond has been mistranslated in authorized English translations—such as the line of English Bibles from the King James Version (KJV), to the Revised Standard (RSV) to the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)—in the LGS, in the Kisanga, and in many other authorized translations and scholarly writings, from ancient times to the present. All of the translations of the Hebrew of 1 Samuel 28 that I shall discuss herein reflect the influence of the negative extra-biblical views of magic in Christian European culture. The growing anti-divinatory ideological views of Europe resulted in exegetical and translation decisions that over-emphasize the negative views of divinatory practices found in the Hebrew Bible to the diminishment or exclusion of its positive views. In addition, through an African feminist postcolonial lens, this study will examine the language of divination in 1 Sam 28:3–25 as well as the resulting pattern revealed therein and then compare it with the pattern in the larger context. Such an analysis will address and challenge the assumption that the inner-biblical debate about divination actually negates and unequivocally repudiates the practice of divination. The view that Dtr negates divination is nurtured by idea that the book of Deuteronomy serves as the introduction of the Joshua through 2 Kings. This presumption was then applied to the reading and interpretation of divination in 1 Sam 28:3–25, especially of the sentence, “Saul has expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land.” The view that Deuteronomy is an introduction to the whole of DTR has adversely affected the way the woman of Endor’s action has been translated and interpreted because her practice has been understood in light of the
prohibited divinatory practices that are listed in Deut 18:10–11. Other ways to read the pericope involving Saul and the woman of Endor, however, exist.

Gender has also played a salient role in this misinterpretation and mistranslation of the woman of Endor. Women-practiced divination is especially problematic to religious and political authorities. As women tend to be excluded from the more institutional forms of religious practice, they often exercise less institutionalized forms of religion.52 Illegitimate uses of authorized forms of divination by women and any use of unauthorized forms of divination are two forms of women’s subversive religiosity.53 The association of the negatively connoted term sorcery with women is part of the effort to control women’s access to knowledge, power, and authority.54 One can discern this


within the biblical text itself. Joanne K. Kuemmerline-McLean notes the unevenness of treatment of male and female practitioners of magic both by the text and subsequent interpreters and translators:

There is general agreement regarding the meaning of the term kešep, usually translated “sorcery.” However, there has been a tendency on the part of some interpreters and translations to use the negative and antisocial term “sorcery” for references to female practitioners of kešep, while employing the more neutral term “magic” for references to male practitioners. The unequal distinction between female and male practitioners seems present in the OT itself. The commandment in Exod 22:18—Eng 22:17 requires the community to put the měkaššēpāh (female) to death. However, in texts referring to the měkaššēp (male) either no precise penalty is given (Deut 18:10) or the judgment and punishment are left to God (Jer 27:9; Mal 3:5).  

Although I do not agree that the term magic is, after the medieval period, entirely neutral, without any negative connotative, emotive, and associative meanings, I do affirm Kuemmerline-McLean’s principle insight. Women’s religious practice is significantly more regulated than is that of men. Moreover, the punishment for violation of prohibited religious practice is often much greater for women than for men. In fact, Raymond Westbrook suggests that, in the ancient Near East, professional thaumaturgist (my term,  


55 Kuemmerline-McLean, “Magic (OT),” 4:468; but see contra Lev 20:27, where both male and female practitioners are to be put to death.
not his) were always women, while both men and women might be amateurs. Professional practice was subject to stricter punishments and required more purification. The naming of men and women in most of provisions of the so-called law codes of the ancient Near East are mere merisms meant to demonstrate completeness. Although later in this study, I shall disagree with certain aspects of this position, his view does reveal much about the way men think about women’s access to the supernatural. The association of magic and sorcery—both of which refer to the use of channels of access to the supernatural in a more negative way—with women has, I believe, assisted in its illegitimacy.

Because divination was viewed in medieval Christian Europe as entirely outside of the purview of the church, women might practice it subversively as a means to express their spirituality, to gain knowledge, to access power, to achieve a measure of authority, or to heal friends and loved ones who were ill. Religious authorities found such practices


57 Ibid., 51–52.

58 Ibid., 50–51. A “merism” is a combination of two words that, together stand for a whole, totality, or completeness. Ernest Klein defines a “merism” as a: “synedoscohe in which a totality is expressed by two contrasting parts.” Ernest Klein, “Merism,” in A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the English Language. 1 vol. ed. (Amsterdam, London, and New York: Elsevier Publishing, 1971), 458. We can see this phenomenon in the following examples: ladies and gentlemen, the great and small, the rich and poor, high and low, and Israel from Dan to Beersheba.
abhorrent and brought hard punishment swiftly upon female practitioners. Various crazes of witchcraft accusations swept Europe and, later, America. The attitude of those contemporary western scholars who call the woman of Endor a witch may well reflect medieval, Renaissance, and still later understandings of female witchcraft. I contend that translators tend to use words with more negative than positive connotations in texts where women practice divination in the Hebrew Bible, retrojecting their cultural context into the ancient world. These cultural realities shaped European translations of divination and the woman of Endor. I am not claiming here that the Hebrew Bible is free of this intolerance. I am asserting, rather, that European Christian culture added yet another layer of patriarchal ideology to what already existed in the Hebrew Bible, thus, accentuating further the text’s gender bias. Patriarchy plays its own distinct part in disfavoring divinatory practices. Moreover, when this European ideology confronted the importance of female diviners in many African religious traditions, this became another area of colonial-indigenous conflict.


The woman of Endor has been one casualty of anti-divinatory, patriarchal ideology. She is minimized, dismissed, or labeled a witch. We can observe such diminishment, for instance, in the words of Antony F. Campbell, who maintains that this woman serves simply “to point to the significant role of Samuel as prophet (1 Sam 28).” Walter Brueggemann has stated: “The narrative has no real interest in the summoning of spirits or in the role or capacity of the woman.” But they are hardly alone. Campbell and the others in the established interpretive tradition of the West erase

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63 Other means to diminish her role are also possible. For example, much biblical scholarship views the stories found in 1 Samuel 16–31 as an earlier stand of text used by the Deuteronomic Historian. It has been named the History of David’s Rise (HDR). See Leonhard Ross, *The Succession of the Throne of David, Historical Texts and Interpreters in Biblical Scholarship* 1; Sheffield: Almond, 1982). The emphasis on the existence of a HDR ignores the role of this woman, along with her practice. As a result, she is moved into the margin. Those scholars who study the HDR and bring her back into view, study her only to demonstrate that her story serves in constructing a male’s story. In his recent study of 1 Samuel 28, for instance, Bill T. Arnold observes that the pericope is a part of the extended narrative (1 Sam 16:14 – 2 Sam 5:25) “devoted primarily to characterizations of Saul and David.” Bill T. Arnold, “Necromancy and Cleromancy in 1 and 2 Samuel,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 (2004): 200. Arnold follows here Mark K. George’s “YHWH’s Own Heart,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64 (2002): 442. See also Philip S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Apollos), 154. Arnold concludes that, “the Deuteronomic historian used the account of Saul’s necromantic inquiry at Endor rhetorically as a means of characterizing the ill-fated king (1 Sam 28:3–19),” Arnold, “Necromancy,” 199. He states that the raison d’être of the reference to the woman is to highlight the difference between the two male “theological identities.” Ibid. He maintains that the extended narrative “uses David’s growing reliance on cleromancy as an intentional and deliberate preparation for Saul’s reliance on necromancy in 1 Sam 28.” Christopher L. Nihan contends that 1 Samuel 28:3–25 is a later insertion “into the first draft of the ‘story of David’s rise’ (1
the significance of the woman of Endor, along with her practice, by viewing her simply as an auxiliary serving to highlight Samuel’s authority and eminence or David’s rise to power. Yet, the most common interpretations and translations of 1 Samuel 28 have done more than diminish her; rather, they have done her great violence for she is labeled a witch even though such vocabulary is not mentioned in 1 Samuel 28. The meanings oftentimes attributed to the vocabulary of divination in the translations of the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint do not adequately represent the Hebrew terms. In these and many other instances, the final product of translation, that is, the translated woman is no longer


I will take up this point in much more detail in Chapter 4, infra.

the הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ הָאִ֣תֶּרֶךְ of the Hebrew text; she is simply lost via translations and her practice reduced to negativity. The interpretive tradition in the West has distorted the woman of Endor. This practice, in turn, continues to affect the exegesis of 1 Samuel 28 in a never-ending circularity.

These negative views were then passed on to African culture through the colonial period. Deeply held European Christian anti-divinatory ideology was clearly odds with the pro-divinatory stance of much indigenous African religion. The tabula rasa doctrine, that inclination toward marginalization of the other for the purpose of forming and maintaining an ethnic distinctiveness different from the conquered, raised its ugly head to participate in the rejection of African divination. 66 European anti-divinatory translations were used to this purpose; the mission church created new translations in African languages, carrying the same adverse ideology. The words used in the receptor’s languages provide the basis for viewing local religious practices and ways of knowing as demonic. As a result, 1 Samuel 28 became an instrument in the labeling of Africans as primitive, heathen, savage, Satanic, and so on. 67 I view these ideologically-driven translations as an act of control over the inner-biblical debate about divination on the part of Bible interpreters in Europe and in Africa. In my context, the vocabulary of divination as translated in the LSG and Kisanga infuse indigenous persons with a profoundly dissimilar and negative understanding of divination, an understanding that does not only misrepresent the Hebrew version, the source text, but also aims to construct the native’

66 See my Prologue, nn. 19–20, supra.

67 See Chapter 3, infra.
way of life according to the translators’ agenda. Translators control the inner-biblical debate by deciding to demonize the woman of Endor’s divinatory practice through the choice of terms used in their receptor languages. In so doing, they also demonize Africa.

My use within this dissertation of African contextual / cultural criticism will challenge this view. In discussing cultural, or cross-cultural biblical hermeneutics, R. S. Sugirtharajah has said:

The Christian Bible is, among other things, a cultural text. Its textual features document theological and doctrinal elements and embody the spiritual and political aspirations of a people whose way of life, customs, and manners are very different from those of contemporary readers. Thus reading these texts can be a difficult endeavor. Cross-cultural biblical interpretation seeks to overcome the remoteness and strangeness of the texts by employing the reader’s cultural resources and social experiences to make links across the cultural divides, thus illuminating the biblical narratives. This approach to interpretation invites readers to use their own indigenous texts and concepts to make hermeneutical sense of biblical texts and concepts imported across time and space.

This last point is critically important for the translation project, where the target / receptor text must make sense to the reader. Sugirtharajah continues:

In opening up biblical narratives, cross-cultural hermeneutics, to use R. Schreiter’s categories..., draws on the three-dimensional aspects of a culture: ideational (worldviews, values, and rules), performantial (rituals and roles), and material (language, symbols, food, clothing, etc.). In other words, using indigenous beliefs and experiences, cross-cultural hermeneutics attempts to provide important analogies with ancient texts that readers from other cultures may not notice or be aware of. What, in

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68 This is a point that many postcolonial translation theorists make.

effect, such readings have done is to make culture an important locus for hermeneutics.”

I shall use most importantly the performantial aspects of African culture to explain the divinatory process in 1 Samuel 28 in my own translations of this passage.

My thesis then, put another way, is that the woman of Endor is not simply a translated being, she is, additionally, a mistranslated being. She is a woman lost in linguistics, lost in alarm, lost in land-grabbing colonial interests. The main scholarly problem this dissertation is addressing is that of her misrepresentation through translation and the effects thereof in Africa. I contend that 1 Samuel 28 does not, in fact, stand for the proposition that the woman of Endor practices witchcraft; nor is it even negative toward divination. The interpretive tradition has done terrible violence to the woman of Endor. This dissertation argues that the foundation for this violence is mainly cultural, based on three related factors: 1) Christian bias against divination, which Christians historically believe to be a primitive and pagan practice; 2) the bias of western imperialism against what is racially or ethnically different or foreign, and 3) gender bias. These cultural biases have contributed far more to the various negative translations and readings of 1 Sam 28 than has any misunderstanding of the basic vocabulary of the pericope. Over the long history of biblical interpretation, Hebrew Bible translators and

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71 Even Kuemmerlin-McLean views this chapter as adverse to divination. Kuemmerlin-McLean, “Magic (OT),” 4:469.
interpreters have frequently projected more antagonism onto divinatory practice and the woman of Endor than actually exists within the text. In point of fact, Saul’s underlings can easily and quickly name and locate the woman of Endor when Saul inquires as to where he can find a thaumaturgist (v. 7); making her existence at least an “open secret.” The text reports that the woman of Endor successfully summons the spirit of Samuel for Saul; she is no con artist (vv. 11–14). Additionally, the text does not report that God, Saul, Samuel, or other members of the Israelite community who were present hindered or objected to the woman’s bringing forth of Samuel. The narrator never cast aspersions on this practice. Nor do we learn of any negative consequences that flow to the woman of Endor for the assistance she gave to Saul. Saul does, of course, suffer negative consequences, namely, defeat and death in 1 Sam 31:3–4. Yet, that was apparently his fate before the woman called Samuel forth (v. 16; contra 1 Chr 10:13–14). As a result, I maintain that the hostility biblical translators have cast onto this text has been fueled by their own ideological agendas that involve imperialism, racism, patriarchy, and a fear of the seemingly primal, especially in the area of religion.

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72 On my use of this term, see n. 10, supra.

73 Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg says of this: “There ability to name some straight away shows how these matters, though forbidden, were an open secret that reached right into court circles.” Hertzberg, *I & II Samuel: A Commentary*, 218 n. e.

For these reasons, we have accused the woman of Endor of witchcraft, tormented her, humiliated her, tortured her, and murdered her art, heart, and soul by refusing to see the inner-biblical conflict and dialogic process within this pericope. We have accused her, tormented her, humiliated her, tortured her, and murdered her art, heart, and soul by embedding negative ideologies in this passage through the creative interpretive act of translation. In the process, we have accused, tormented, humiliated, tortured, and attempted to murder the art, heart, and soul of both women, who stand outside of institutional religious structures, and the indigenous religious traditions of Africa, who practice divinatory arts, in order to claim self-esteem, spirituality, healing, knowledge, power, and authority. Moreover, women and Africa are not alone in suffering this violence. This negative view of divination has been carried around the globe via missionary-colonial translations of the Bible, which has, in turn, resulted in the discounting or elimination what I think to be a valuable alternative means for obtaining divine guidance for all peoples.

In consequence, my primary goals in this dissertation are threefold. First, I seek to understand the source Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 28. Second, I wish to analyze several authorized translations and scholarly interpretations / translations of the Hebrew of 1 Samuel 28 for embedded anti-divinatory, xenophobic, imperial-colonial, and sexist ideology. Third, I hope to produce three new translations of 1 Samuel 28, English, French, and Kisanga, that are both faithful to the original text, more fitting for the African
pro-divinatory Christian context, and more appropriate to an inculturated African Christian hermeneutic, theology, and praxis.\textsuperscript{75}

\textit{The Textual Streams of the Project}

The basis of my work is the Masoretic Text (MT) of 1 Sam 28: 3–25. Although we know that the 1–2 Samuel MT is much corrupted,\textsuperscript{76} 1 Samuel 28 is relatively free of


\textsuperscript{76} The Masoretic Text (MT) of the books of Samuel is very problematic; it is short due to lengthy haplographies and scribal errors. The Septuagint (LXX), on the other hand, is longer, differs in part from the MT, and in a few places seems to paraphrase the MT. Earlier scholars suggested that the LXX could be used to reconstruct the original text of Samuel. These scholars include Otto Thenius (his commentary in the Kurzgefasstes exegetische Handbuch zum alten Testament [KeH] series, published in 1842); Julius Wellhausen (\textit{Der Text der Bücher Samuelis untersucht}, published in 1871), and S. R. Driver (\textit{Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel}, published in 1890. In the 20th century, however, views of the LXX were less enthusiastic. P. A. H. de Boer's careful textual studies of 1938 and 1949 were quite negative attitude toward use of the LXX in reconstructing the MT. P. A. H. de Boer, \textit{Research into the Text of 1 Samuel I-XVI: A
textual difficulties. In this case, much agreement exists among the MT, the Septuagint (LXX), and other ancient versions. Consequently, for ease of access, I shall use the MT except where otherwise noted.


77 Compared to other sections of the books of Samuel, this chapter has relatively few problems, which are of a minor nature. For example, this chapter is not mentioned in either P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible, Guides to Biblical Scholarship Old Testament Series (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986); or Emanuel Tov, Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press; Assen: Van Gorum, 1992). The best discussions of the textual critical issues in 1 Samuel 28 are André Caquot and Philippe de Robert, Les Livres de Samuel, Commentaire de L’Ancien Testament 6 (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994); P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., 1 Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary, Anchor Bible 8 (New York: Doubleday, 1980), although all the works mentioned in the note immediately above might be consulted fruitfully.

78 I discuss the minor differences in the ancient versions in the footnotes of my literary reading of Chapter 5, infra, where they are relevant. I have also provided an English translation of the LXX in Appendix C of this dissertation.
In terms of my sample’s authorized translations, I shall use the line of authorized English translations from the King James Version, to the Revised Standard Version and the New Revised Standard Version. The English texts are important, even though I am from a francophone country, because English is becoming—if it has not already achieved the status of being—the *lingua franca* of the modern world.\(^79\) Among English translations, these are probably the most widely distributed and are in much use in Anglophone Africa.\(^80\) I shall also examine the LGS and the *Kisanga*.\(^81\) The LSG and the *Kisanga* are the Bibles in greatest use among my people. The LSG is also the Bible with which I was formed religiously (and colonially), making it, naturally, valuable in any study that I might do.\(^82\) I appreciate that few individuals outside of the Congo can

\(^{79}\) Although that, too, has its problems from a postcolonial perspective.


\(^{81}\) I have included for my readers, in Appendix B, an English translation of the LSG and both English and French translations of the *Kisanga*.

\(^{82}\) It is also important to deal with the translations used in Africa for postcolonial purposes. Maarman Sam Tshehla, a Basotho of South Africa, an academic, and a biblical translator, observes: “I am like and unlike [Godfrey] Lienhardt. He observes members of some remote tribe (implying that he and those implicit in ‘our own’ do not belong to such an unrefined state of existence) and afterwards reports his observations in terms of his own finer worldview and jargon. I am like him in belonging to an elite guild of observers who must make assertions about remote tribes. But I am unlike him in belonging to and being happy to make claims about my own ‘remote tribe.’ I must translate experiences from my remote world in a manner that the guild will approve of, although the guild hardly encourages me to squeeze academic assumptions into the discourse of my mother-tongue world in my vernacular. The process is unidirectional, and in cases where I have to choose between my remote tribe’s ways and academic practices, the former usually goes under. Am I hopelessly wrong in thus considering the possibility that the academy has colonized me? If I am not utterly misguided, then I cannot assume that colonialism is some past monster. I must qualify what colonialism the present essay seeks to engage—
evaluate my work with the *Kisanga*; nevertheless, it is critical for me to address the situation of my people in this project. It is they who will, ultimately, evaluate this aspect of my work.

Scholars, from the early church fathers to the contemporary period, have also studied, interpreted, and translated 1 Samuel 28. Their work will be helpful to me in this study, as well. I believe it is of utmost importance to understand that this double negation of divination and the woman of Endor is an ancient phenomenon—founded on Christian anti-divinatory, anti-Judaic, anti-female prejudices—that has continued to gain momentum over the centuries as it entered the medieval period, Renaissance, and the Enlightenment, and then took on new energy in the colonial period. Furthermore, modern scholars have not shaken off these ancient biases. They remain in much contemporary scholarship. Thus, the problem is long established and enduring. We must comprehend fully the extent of the difficulty in order to address it. To this purpose, I shall engage much scholarship, both ancient and modern.

*The Methodological Transports of the Project*

I seek in this study to cross this *disanga* of life and the beyond with the woman of Endor as companion rather than combatant. How shall I do so? I have briefly alluded to

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my primary methods above, and I shall discuss them all in far greater length in my next chapter. Thus, I shall only say a few more words about my methods here.

Most important to convey immediately is that my methodological transports will be many, reflecting yet again my own hybridism and many disanga-crossings. To say this more plainly, I will be utilizing multiple methods—some of which are hybrid methods—in my analyses and translations. My study involves several steps because all translation projects must be sensitive to both the source and receptor (target) languages, texts, and cultures. In the end, I shall harness a number of methods to transport cross the disanga of life and death with the woman of Endor and the disanga between the ancient Hebrew world and the African polyglotic, multicultural, pro-woman world in which much of the African peoples now live, whether in Africa itself or in the African diaspora.

Because this research is lodged in biblical translation and will result in three new translations, I will first explicate the traditional principles of biblical translations, examining the theories behind both literal and functional (or dynamic) equivalent biblical translations.83 In exploring these principles, I believe that we will find that such theories are inadequate to the task of rendering translations that are truly sensitive to women and the indigenous cultures of Africa. As a result, my translation principles will be founded in the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin and feminist, postcolonial, and contextual / cultural / cross-cultural translation theories.84

83 I will develop this in Chapter 2, infra.

84 It should be noted at the outset that these translation theories have much in common with the feminist, postcolonial, and contextual / cultural / cross-culture hermeneutics from which they sprang.
A growing number of post-structuralist philosophies are appearing and, with them, literary and translation theories based on them. Most popular among translation theories are those deriving from the French school, especially the work of Jacques Derrida. In particular, much feminist and postcolonial translation theory derives from the thinking of these individuals, as well as cultural translation theory. Derrida in an article entitled “Des Tours de Babel,” argued that one is never able to translate a text in

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such a way as it will be a text equivalent to the original.\textsuperscript{87} Translation always involves interpretation. In addition, translation requires moving the source text, which Derrida presupposes is a culturally and historically bound text, into a new target text, that must also be culturally and historically bound. Thus, the divergence in culture and historical moment create significant differences. The result is that the new text must diverge from the original text and be a new creation. The cultural, historical, and even psychological situations of the author and the translator allow both to inject ideology into the text. That ideology may diverge because of the differences between the two individuals.

Consequently, both writing and translating are ideological-political acts for Derrida.

Translation theorists who are interested in uncovering patriarchal ideology (feminist translation theorists) or racial-ethnic, imperial-colonial ideology (postcolonial translation theorists) have, therefore, made excellent use of Derrida to explore the buried ideology in various translations. For example, J. Jorge Klor de Alva, a postcolonial translation theorist, stresses that translation of any literature is a creative interpretive act “subject to power plays and responds to tactical moves that serve the personal and collective interests of the original author, the translator….”\textsuperscript{88} He affirms: “Language encodes power relations.”\textsuperscript{89} Translation reflects the cultural milieu of the translators,

\textsuperscript{87} Derrida, “Tours de Babel,” 165–207.


\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
“i.e., their socio-historical, political, religious, ethnic, and geographic locations.” This is true of those working with the biblical text, as well. Thus, this method will be very helpful in unmasking the patriarchal, racial-ethnic, imperial-colonial ideology in prior translations of 1 Samuel 28.

Much theoretical discussion of both feminist and postcolonial hermeneutics and translation theory exists both external to and internal to the biblical academy, and all such works will be helpful. My primary theorist will be, however, Musa W. Dube, who has led the field in African feminist postcolonial biblical interpretation and translation. I shall apply her biblical hermeneutic and translation principles to 1 Samuel 28 to disclose its ideology. My view is that the African feminist eye is able to see the woman of Endor in a positive light, as opposed to many Western feminists who continue to refer to her as

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91 This is recognized in the essays in Randall C. Bailey and Tina Pippin, eds. Race, Class, and the Politics of Biblical Translation, Semeia 76 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).


a witch.\textsuperscript{94} After applying this theory and, hence, identifying patriarchal and imperialist elements, I shall name the patterns that reveal the strategies of subjugation as well as those of resistance in the text.

Yet, biblical translation theory as a sub-discipline of both translation theory and biblical interpretation has additional demands. One must remain, to the greatest extent possible, faithful to the source biblical text in one’s own translation. The French school of post-structuralism does not have, to my mind, an adequate theoretic or practical framework for dealing with the history and social usage of utterances that have histories that are over two thousand years old and derive, in part, from oral traditions. Hence, I do not believe that feminist - / or postcolonial translation theories are the best tools for this task. Instead, I wish to use the theories of the Russian Formalist school, particularly those of Mikhail M. Bakhtin.\textsuperscript{95} Although only one scholar has applied Bakhtin’s work to translation theory and, there, to dictionary projects rather than to a Bible translation, I believe that Bakhtin’s understanding of the nature of the utterance and its implications for textual meaning will be a significantly more refined tool for examining the designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings of the language of divination in the

\textsuperscript{94} Even Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who challenged injustice against women in her \textit{The Women’s Bible}, called the woman of Endor a witch. Elizabeth Cady Stanton \textit{The Women’s Bible} (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1999), 49. Elizabeth Cady Stanton criticized the misuse of the Bible by both the church and the state in 1887, but could not see her way clear to rejecting the infamous label attached to the woman of Endor. See Schottroff, Schroer, Wacker, \textit{Feminist Interpretation}, 4–5.

\textsuperscript{95} See nn. 35, 40, \textit{supra}. 
Hebrew Bible. Bakhtin will also be helpful because I am interested in how ideology gets embedded in an utterance, whether a word, a phrase, or a biblical pericope, over its history and social usage. Furthermore, as I shall explain thoroughly in the chapter on method, Bakhtin understands something about contrapunctual voices in juxtaposition. That is the very foundation of his conception of both heteroglossia and dialogism. As a result, I seek to do a Bakhtinian-driven Hebrew word study in this dissertation. This effort will help me to understand far better the target Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 28, with its long history and social uses of its various words and many different voices.

I will, in my word study, research a number of key terms in the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible. Not all of these are used within 1 Samuel 28, but they are important in comprehending the inner-textual conflict and how that is made manifest in 1 Samuel 28. In the first part of my word study, I shall research relevant words of divination such as the ritual: והתר תלה, the types of diviners: ממשה מפרר וברא, and the thaumaturgic procedures: וּרְדָה רַדְמָה and (all from Deut 18:10–11). In the second part of my word study, I shall research the vocabulary of divination found in 1 Sam 28:3-25. They include the following intermediaries: ולך, and This will also require a study of the following verbs of intermediation: ראה, and This should disclose a great deal about the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible. Equipped with

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this information, I will then be able to use feminist-postcolonial biblical hermeneutics and translation theories to compare the Hebrew text with prior translations to disclose the patriarchal, racial-ethnic, and imperial-colonial ideology in the various source texts that I shall study.

We are not yet through, however, and need additional tools. Word-meaning, whether designative, connotative, emotive, or associative, is always determined by both literary and social context. Bakhtin, of course, recognizes this. Consequently, narratological criticism will also be standing behind the Bakhtinian work. Furthermore, after I understand the language of divination in 1 Samuel 28, I still do not understand all of 1 Samuel 28. In order to translate it, I must use narratological criticism to exegete the entire pericope. Only after this work is done will I have a grasp on the message that the

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97 I will read the text synchronically, without claims regarding the development of the text or the story’s historical accuracy. In spite of this, I cannot help but to note the import of these questions. Some of the source critical discussions affected 1 Samuel 28. Thus, I cannot ignore it entirely. Many difficulties exist regarding the composition history of the books of Samuel. Readers have observed that 1 Samuel contains “[n]umerous internal thematic tensions, duplications, and contractions” that cause doubt regarding its unity. McCarter, I Samuel, 12. A great many scholars have investigated this puzzle beginning with Otto Thenius (who was the first to notice the disunity of the text and work on both its textual and source critical problems) and J. G. Eichhorn, both of whom argued in favor of the existence of distinct strands of material. Ibid., 13. These many scholars have suggested various theories. I take the view, to put it succinctly, that 1 Samuel came together in three stages: 1) an early prophetic editor complied materials, after the fall of the North but before the time of Josiah, that had uplifted the role of prophecy; 2) Dtr1 made a first round of Deuteronimic editions in or closely after the time of Josiah, that was optimistic and uplifted the monarchy, especially that of Josiah and his reforms; 3) Dtr2 made a second round of editorial changes during the time of the exile that was more pessimistic in outlook. This position stands substantially in the Cross-McCarter-Nelson line of thinking. See further Frank Moore Cross, Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 274-89; McCarter, I Samuel, 12-30; Richard D. Nelson, The Double Redaction of the Deuteronimistic History, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 18 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1981); idem,
biblical text might be attempting to communicate to me. My primary theorists on the narratological aspects will be David M. Gunn and Danna Nowell Fewell.98

Once I have a grasp on the source text and various mistranslations of it, I shall move on to creating my three new target / receptor texts. Here, I must be sensitive to the cultural historical situation of the translations’ potential readers. To accomplish this latter goal, I must understand the culture and language of the people to whom I would like to offer this translation. For this work, I will, therefore, rely on African contextual / cultural

“The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History: The Case Is Still Compelling,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 29, no. 4 (2005): 319-37. Such an editorial process leaves us with a document that is clearly hetoreglossic and dialogic. In regard to 1 Samuel 28, the key questions are whether (1) 1 Samuel 28 has been relocated at some point in the editing process, and (2) v. 3b is a later addition. I generally prefer not to shift sections of the text, finding that form and source criticism in the past was, at times, done overzealously. Additionally, I believe that the source critical work on 1-2 Samuel has at times served to minimize the import of the woman of Endor and this is inadequate. See n. 63 supra. In spite of these concerns, I do believe that 1 Samuel 28 has been moved from its original location between chapters 30 and 31. I, therefore, would finesse the positions of Cross, McCarter, and Nelson in regard to 1 Samuel 28. My view is that Dtr1 dislocated this pericope during or immediately following in the reign of Josiah in order to weaken its import to the narrative of 1 Samuel 28 and to reinforce Josianic ideology. This position is consistent with the view that v. 3b may also be a secondary addition by the same hand. The history of source criticism on 1 Samuel, the reasons for my views of its compositional history, and my specific understanding of the source critical issues of 1 Samuel 28 consume more space than a footnote allows. Thus, I explicate further the specifics of my views in my Appendix E, *infra*.

cross-cultural biblical criticism and translation theory. This method allows me to utilize my personal, cultural and historical experiences as an African-musanga woman in my comprehension of my audience, their views of divination, and how they might receive the biblical text in regard to its language of divination. Coming from an African context, where divination is often highly regarded, I view the Hebrew passages related to divination quite differently from many Europeans and Euro-Americans. I shall contribute these experiences and ideologies to assist me in understanding and explaining this pericope. (I do not claim to be ideologically pure either!) While I shall explore a selection of African divinatory practices, I must acknowledge that such practices are not in any way uniform across Africa and will focus upon what I know best, the Basanga religious tradition. I am also translating for that audience; thus, my basis for my cross-cultural translation will be primarily Basanga divinatory practices. In this manner, I hope to produce new translations that decolonize the text, that are more sensitive to women and to those cultures that have a positive approach to divination, that better serve a Basangan

inculturated-liberated (and feminist) African church\textsuperscript{100} and, that ultimately, promote interdependence\textsuperscript{101} and mutual respect.

Together, a Bakhtinian Hebrew word study, narratological biblical criticism, postcolonial and feminist biblical ideological criticism and translation theories, and contextual / cultural/ cross-cultural biblical hermeneutics and translation theories, will make this project possible. Together, they will allow me to understand my source text, its original meaning, and ideology, to the degree possible, and, then, to move this text into my three receptor texts, English, French, and Kisanga, in such a way that the meaning and ideology are conveyed in a manner that pro-divinatory, feminist, African Christians can use well. In sum, this study examines the ideology in the vocabulary of divination at two levels: the intra-lingual level (the Hebrew vocabulary), using a Bakhtinian Hebrew word study; and at the extra-lingual level in various European and African translations, using African feminist postcolonial hermeneutics and translation theory. I hope to demonstrate that the choice of words used in translating the vocabulary of divination in numerous authorized translations and the use of derogatory terms, such as the “witch” of Endor, by western scholars, may well be due to two factors: a) the assumption that the inner-biblical debate about divination actually negates and unequivocally repudiates the practice of divination; and b) the outside influence conditioned by the culture of the translators or interpreters. These embedded ideological presuppositions have adversely affected the African way of life. In so proving, I hope to undermine the monolithic, 

\textsuperscript{100} See n. 75, \textit{supra}.

\textsuperscript{101} Dube, \textit{Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation}, 43.
monologic, authoritarian voice of the imperial mission church in Africa. This will allow me then to use contextual / cultural / cross-cultural biblical hermeneutics and translation theories to produce three new translations that decolonize the text. With a village full of biblical interpreters and boatloads of methods, I hope to traverse the textual streams of 1 Samuel 28 and the distance between the ancient Israelite world and the contemporary African world and join the woman of Endor in her journey across the disanga of life and the beyond.

The Riches to Be Gained from the Project

This study should break new scholarly ground in a number of ways. First, although a few scholars support more positive views of divination in the Hebrew Bible, no one to date has undertaken either an African postcolonial or feminist ideological study of divination in the Hebrew Bible, where these methods could be particularly useful. Second, two articles have addressed the question of divination and the Bible in the African context using cross-cultural biblical hermeneutics. This research will add to that foundation by expanding it considerably. Third, although many biblical commentators have used the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to interpret biblical texts, none has applied his work to biblical translation theory. Fourth, this study will contribute generally to the ongoing scholarly discourse on the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament in Africa

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which emphasizes “doing both historical studies of the text and studies of the encounter between the text and the contemporary context” in Africa. Finally, I hope to produce three usable translations of 1 Samuel 28 that are more sensitive to cultures that have a positive approach to divination, especially African cultures. My aim is to render translations that may be used in an inculturated-feminist African church. I believe that when we are able to understand the various contexts in which divination is used in the Hebrew Bible, we will be able to make these texts more accessible to cultures that both understand themselves through divination systems and make practical and reverent use of the Bible as part of their contemporary way of life. When this purpose is reached, the implications of this study will be far reaching, allowing a more effective use of the Hebrew Bible in the ministerial context within those cultures.

**Charting the Course of the Project**

This dissertation will proceed as follows. In the next chapter, I shall set out in more detail my various methods, my rational for their use, and more precisely how I shall use them in the course of this study. In Chapter 3, I shall discuss divination in Africa, particularly among the Basanga, and in Europe. I have two goals for this chapter. First, I shall relate the African attitudes toward and praxis of divination. This will provide a contrast for the colonial understanding of divination. It will also be excellent background for the coming contextual / cultural / cross-cultural work of the dissertation. Second, I shall attempt to demonstrate how different the attitudes toward misogynist medieval European views of magic and colonial views of Africa have combined to contribute to the

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104 Ibid.
extra-biblical conflict surrounding divination and the problems with translating 1 Samuel 28. In Chapter 4, I shall perform my Bakhtinian Hebrew word study of the language of divination to reveal the inner-biblical conflict regarding divination generally and precisely how the language divination in 1 Samuel 28 is heteroglossic and dialogic. I shall also use what I have learned from Chapters 3 and the word study, as well as the frameworks of feminist and post-colonial ideological criticism, to investigate here prior translations of 1 Samuel 28 in order to uncover the ideology, politics, and fear behind the these translations. In Chapter 5, we bring the Hebrew word study of Chapter 4, narratological criticism, and an African(-Musanga) contextual / cultural / cross-cultural hermeneutic to bear in doing a new reading of the 1 Samuel 28 in order that I might produce the best translations possible. In Chapter 6, I use the knowledge gained in Chapters 3–5, in addition to cross-cultural translation theory, to offer three new translations of 1 Samuel 28, an English, a French, and a Kisanga translation. Chapter 7 will discuss the conclusions of the project and its implications. Finally, I shall offer an Epilogue that addresses what I have learned from this dissertation process. Four appendices, to which I shall refer in the course of my study, are also included at the end of the work. We now turn to further development of the methodological transports of this project.
CHAPTER 2

CROSS DRESSING METHOD:
TRANSLATION AT THE DISANGA OF THEORY

The question before us is whether the language of divination of 1 Samuel 28 has been translated adequately in a number of works that are used in the African context. These include the most significant line of English Bibles (the KJV, RSV, and NRSV), the French LSG, the Kisanga Bible, and numerous scholarly translations. If not, I shall then offer what I believe to be more helpful translations into English, French, and Kisanga. In order to cross with the much translated character, the woman of Endor, both the disanga of life and the beyond and the disanga of the ancient Hebrew world and the African polyglotic, multicultural, pro-woman world of the African peoples, I shall need several methodological transports. This results from the fact that all translation projects must be sensitive to both the source and receptor (target) languages, texts, and cultures. I, therefore, will employ a variety of methods, some of which are themselves hybrid methods, to transport us. These include: 1) a Hebrew Bible word study that is shaped by the thinking of Mikhail Bakhtin; 2) an African postcolonial feminist hermeneutic and translation theory; 3) narrative criticism; and 4) African contextual / cultural / cross-cultural biblical criticism and translation theory. Each method will serve a specific purpose toward the goals of understanding the meaning of the Hebrew language of
divination that appears in the Hebrew Bible, its specific literary contextual use in 1 Samuel 28, and whether various Bibles and biblical scholars have translated these words appropriately into English when examined from an African, feminist post-colonial perspective. We can, therefore, now see that even my method, itself, must cross a disanga, this one of reading and translation theories. In the final analysis, what results is a liminal, crossing (or better said, a cross-dressed) methodology.

This chapter will delineate in more detail my method. I shall concentrate, however, on the Bakhtinian word study because it is the only method that I am using that is not already: 1) explicated clearly by others in the biblical academy and beyond, and 2) largely understood and accepted within the biblical academy. I begin with a brief introduction to biblical translation and, then, move on to the Bakhtin materials. I shall conclude with a short discussion of my other methods.

A Brief Introduction to Biblical Translation Theory, Methods, and Goals

Translation is difficult;¹ some say impossible.² The goal of translation is to render the text in the source language as closely as possible, with as little distortion of meaning


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and reception as possible, into the target language. In explicating this principle, Robert G. Bratcher states that the task of the translator is threefold. It is to: “(a) Determine the form of the original text; (b) ascertain the meaning of the original texts; and (c) transfer the meaning to the target language in such a way that the readers of the translation understand it as did the readers of the original.” Of course, all of this is easier said than done.

What these tasks mean or involve may, however, be diverse for different biblical translators, which results in a variety of types of renderings. From ancient times to the modern, biblical translators have disputed how literal a translation should be versus how free it should be. The Septuagint reflects, for instance, both styles. In the 19th century, according to Eugene A. Nida, free translation fell out of favor and literal translation became the vogue.6 My discussion of the changing field of translation, generally, and biblical translation, specifically, picks up at this point. Some Bible translations take what

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

is known as a “literal approach” to the text and attempt to render the original text in a
more mechanistic, word-for-word or sense-for-sense manner. Rather, these translations
seek to imitate, to the extent possible, the form and stylistic features of the source text,
while, at the same time, attempting to create a translation that flows syntactically and
grammatically in the target language.

As the result of the impressive work of Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber,
linguistic translation theories began to hold sway over the biblical academy. The
sciences of linguistics and philology became critical tools in translation. A close
examination of linguistic features of the words, as well as the formal structures of the
text, now helped to determine the best one-to-one correspondence between the words of
the source text and the words of the receptor. Here, biblical translators tend to
emphasize the original text of the biblical authors.

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7 Although, I do not mean here, an interlinear Bible, which is of more interest to
philologists and scholars. Saint Jerome is attributed with saying the biblical translation
should be sense-for-sense, but this is not an early form of dynamic equivalents. See
further Robert L. Thomas, “Dynamic Equivalence: A Method of Translation or a System
of Hermeneutics?,” The Master’s Seminary Journal 1, no. 2 (1990): 161 n. 52.

8 See, e.g., Revised Version [RV] (1881); American Standard Version [ASV]
(1901); Concordant Version (1926); American Standard Bible [ASB] (1960); all of which
are quite strict in their literality. The RSV (1953), which is based on the KJV, is only
slightly less so.

9 Eugene A Nida, “Implications of Contemporary Linguistics for Biblical
Scholarship,” Journal of Biblical Literature 91 (1972): 73–89; idem, Toward a Science of
Translating. With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Biblical
Translation; idem and Charles R. Tabor, The Theory and Practice of Translation, Helps

10 Jiří Levý is considered by many to be the most important linguistic theorist of
the last century. Jiří Levý, České Theorie Překladu [Czech Theories of Translation],
As literary theory has grown in popularity in the biblical academy generally, however, literary translation theory has also risen in prominence and currently plays a significant role. With this understanding of translation, the literary context of the individual words and phrases of the source text help additionally to shape their meaning. Literary analysis becomes a crucial instrument in translation. Taber’s more recent work in biblical translation recognizes this principle and demonstrates that translation itself always contains some level of interpretation. Finally, greater numbers of translators are paying closer attention to the cultural context of the source text, as well, in attempting to


render the text in the target language in a manner that conveys its meaning in the source text to its original audience.

Other biblical translations seek to find “dynamic equivalents” (also known as “functional equivalents”) in a given language and culture. Here, the emphasis is on finding the closest, common and natural equivalence in the target language, taking into account the target’s language and culture. While the original text remains highly significant in such translations, more emphasis is placed on the response of the receptor to the translated message than in a literal translation. This method of biblical translation is still under dispute. Many biblical translation scholars find this type of rendering too free to be true to the biblical text. Others cannot see how one can translate any other way.


15 See, e.g., Thomas, “Dynamic Equivalence,” 149–75. This article articulates best the chief arguments against dynamic equivalency and just how much is at stake for such position-holders.

Still other translations are much more adapted or paraphrastic in nature. They often have a specific agenda in mind that will control the adaptation and are very free in altering the text. Finally, we have culturally reinterpreted translations that are meant to be received and understood within a particular cultural-linguistic community. These latter two translations are much more interested in conveying only the essence of the biblical text to particular receiving communities. The target, rather than the source community, is emphasized in such translations. In fact, many would not consider these translations at all.

The difficulty with a literal translation is that much gets lost along the way. Unfortunately, the realities of different languages, geographies, cultures, and historical moments can make a literal translation—which might be better characterized as “literal” translation—quite obtuse in places. Wordplays typically vanish in translation because of vocabulary changes. Some languages specify matters that others do not, such as the

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17 See, e.g., the Amplified Bible; the Good News Bible [GNB], the Living Bible [LB], and the Message Bible.


19 For different perspectives on whether these are translations and, if so, what kind, cf. Daniel E. Ritchie, “Three Recent Bible Translations: A Literary and Stylistic Perspective,” Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 46, no. 3 (2003): 3; and Thomas, “Dynamic Equivalence,” 163, who unfairly, I think, calls these an “across-the-board dynamic equivalence.”

differences in the French and Kisanga third-person pronouns. Some languages have honorifics while others do not. Connotative difference must also be considered. The dragon, for instance, is negatively connoted in western cultures, but positively connoted in the Chinese culture as a symbol of a positive new year and a frequenter of children’s stories. Moreover, figures of speech and metaphors tend not to move well across cultures or time. Because of these difficulties, contemporary approaches tend to focus more upon on the reception of the text. The importance of keeping the translation’s primary audience in mind and its language usage is now essential. This has compelled the production of more translations that stress dynamic equivalents and concern themselves with the level of language, style, format, and so forth. This, however, makes the task of translation still more complicated.


23 Ibid., 2:590.

24 Ibid.

Biblical translation can be more difficult than doing translations of other types of works because of several added factors. The first of these involves questions of textual criticism, that is, which Hebrew text should be translated.\(^{26}\) Next, we encounter the problem of the broad syntactical range of each Hebrew word, which can do a great deal of duty compared to languages that have far more words, such as English. The choice of which word to select from the target language among the range of possible words may be a complex decision. Theology within a believing community may also influence how one understands the biblical text and, therefore, shape its final form.\(^{27}\) I am not suggesting here that meaning resides solely in the reader or that the only control on reading is the community in which reading happens.\(^{28}\) Rather, with Phyllis Trible, I would suggest that the text exerts some key control on meaning, and, therefore, meaning resides between the text and the reader.\(^{29}\) Both the text in its original context and the text as it is moving into its new context must be considered in making a translation. Thus, one must deliberate

\(^{26}\) Nida, “Theories of Translation,” 6:514. As noted in Chapter 1, I shall use primarily the Masoretic text (MT), except where otherwise noted. I have, however, provided a translation of the LXX in Appendix C.


\(^{28}\) These are the positions of the reader response criticism. The first reflects the early work of Stanley Fish, *Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971); the second is well represented by his later work, idem, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980).

over a number of factors before one begins an analysis of a prior translation or seeks to create a new one.

In this work, I shall also seek to use dynamic or functional equivalents that are built out of my African experience and the wide range of English, French, and Kisanga vocabulary, respectively, while paying close attention to the connotative, emotive, and associative meanings of words in both cultures. My goal is to produce a translation that is sensitive to the source document, while maintaining a positive Afrocentric approach in the target document. Thus, this will not be a culturally reinterpreted rendering but, instead, a dynamic equivalent rendering.

*Understanding the Hebrew Text through a Bakhtinian Word Study*

The first task in determining the accuracy and helpfulness of the translations of 1 Samuel 28 is determining the syntactical range of the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible. In other words, I seek to understand the Hebrew text as its original audience understood it. Thus, I must understand the Hebrew in its literary and social-cultural setting. This demands a Hebrew word study of such language. Typically, in such a word study, one simply examines the relevant vocabulary in its literary context across the Hebrew Bible in order to determine the range of meaning that a specific word might have. I would emphasize the literary context, here, because a large number of words in biblical Hebrew do heavy syntactical duty, and, consequently, focusing on the literary context of these terms is of utmost importance. To achieve this, I shall execute a Hebrew Bible word study to understand the vocabulary of divination in 1 Samuel 28 in the context of the Hebrew Bible.
Traditional Hebrew Bible word study, however, assumes that syntactical meaning is highly stable in the Hebrew Bible. A word may do a lot of semantic duty, but it is only that semantic duty that it does. Nida observes, however, that translators are becoming increasingly aware that the meanings of words and sentences cannot be defined merely by what is to be found in dictionaries and grammars. In addition to designative meanings, syntax, and lexical units are filled with all kinds of associative meanings, which in many respects are more important in acceptability of the message than the designative meanings. Words and idioms have far more meaning than most dictionaries suggest. There are hosts of associative meanings clinging to lexical units—those resonances of usage which are hard to define but clearly evident in people’s subjective reactions to any text. Semantic contamination or infiltration, whether positive or negative, is a constant concern of any sensitive translator.30

This comment, the work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin, and the inner-biblical conflict surrounding the vocabulary of divination, all bring me to doubt whether the semantic, designative meaning of the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible is, indeed, stable. I, therefore, hypothesize that it is, insufficient to understand solely the plain, or surface, meanings of the terms of divination. We must also understand something about the connotation of, and the ideology behind, the relevant words. It is my view that the language of divination in the Hebrew Bible is heavy with ideology. Humans have held, for millennia, strong views concerning the supernatural and supra-rational. The divine, the magical, and the mystical are perplexing, awe-inspiring, and frightening aspects of human reality, which give rise to both positive and negative ideologies surrounding the area of divination. As these ideologies have been made manifest; they have also attached themselves to the meaning of words. Another way to say this is: the meaning of a term

30 Nida, Theories of Translation,” 6:514–515.
does not arise in a vacuum; rather, each has a history and a social context. Moreover, such meanings can evolve over time, and authors may use them in uncommon ways to achieve certain literary effects. Hence, a particular word’s meaning can be highly complex and fused with connotations, ideologies, histories, and socio-literary usage.

Because my study seeks to ask questions about the meaning transfer from the source Hebrew text to several receptor texts, the social-cultural connotation and ideology embedded in words are salient issues to which I wish to be sensitive. When I ask the question, Is the woman of Endor a witch?, which is a label that is much used in translating and discussing this passage and which has a great deal of negative “baggage” connected with it in the English-speaking Christian and African milieus, I am actually attempting to understand the designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings of the word “witch” in the English language and ask whether an equivalent word with all those related meanings is, in reality, contained in the relevant Hebrew Bible passages. Consequently, I must go deeper than the surface layer, i.e., the designative meanings, of these words, to determine how the signifiers of divination relate to their signified concepts in this particular literary and social-cultural context in light of the history of their usage. The work of Mikhail M. Bakhtin gives us some most helpful tools in this area.  

In particular, his conceptions of the social history of utterances and the heteroglossia and dialogism of literary texts will be most advantageously used.  

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Biblical scholars are increasingly using Bakhtin’s theory for the interpretation of biblical texts.\(^3\) Bakhtin maintains that the *utterance* is the basic unit of communication.


\(^3\) In my general discussion of Bakhtin, I use primarily the work of Dr. Valeta, *Lions and Ovens and Visions: A Satirical Reading of Daniel 1–6* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), especially chapter 2. With his kind permission, I have not put every idea or beautifully expressed phrase that I have borrowed from him in quotes with attribution for there are far too many. The reader should be aware that the key ideas and choice of language regarding the work of Bakhtin, where otherwise not attributed to another scholar, are often those of Dr. Valeta. To him, should go the credit, although, of course, none of the blame for any failure on my part to understand or apply his ideas correctly. The work of applying Bakhtin to translation, especially, in the African context, is entirely my own.

and social discourse.\textsuperscript{34} To Bakhtin’s mind, an utterance is any unit of language, the boundaries of which are typically marked by a change of speakers.\textsuperscript{35} Thus, an utterance may be a single word; it might also be an entire text.\textsuperscript{36}

According to Bakhtin, an utterance has two aspects, one that is repeatable and one that is not. The basic factor in an utterance is that which is repeatable. The repeatable aspects of an utterance derive from its history of usage and meaning. Hence, Bakhtin contends that words always bear the marks of their history. Signifiers attach to a signified, and people continue to use it. It develops a unique set of values because of this historical and social life. For Bakhtin, words are the “common property of society,”\textsuperscript{37} always “half someone else’s.”\textsuperscript{38} I argue that this is the process through which connotative, emotive, and associative values attach to given words. Thus, understanding the history of word usage in a language is particularly important in making translation decisions.


\textsuperscript{35} As Bahkin says: “a change of speaking subjects” (“Problem of Speech Genres,” 81).


\textsuperscript{37} Vines, \textit{Markan Genre}, 50.

The second aspect of language is that which is unrepeatable. This is the author’s unique plan or created purpose. In other words, an author appropriates the repeatable aspects of a language in a planned and systematic manner in order to express his or her exclusive communication, which cannot be replicated perfectly.\(^{39}\) In this way, a new usage is born and adds to the social and historical life of an utterance and may become part of its repeatable aspect. Consequently, language is not a stagnant phenomenon but is, rather, dynamic. Bakhtin employs the term \textit{heteroglossia} to describe the deeply complex historical and social nature of the repeatable aspects of language, which may have developed over centuries.\(^{40}\) Authors choose particular words and forms in creating their work, knowing full well that such words and forms have a unique historical and social life. I insist that this history and social life have marked each signifier with its designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings. Bakhtin suggests that the words and forms that an author chooses from among the many possible options, and then placed in the author’s particular content and structure, make his or her work unique and unrepeatable.

In applying these ideas to a word study in the context of analyzing prior translations and in making new ones, I would contend that one must pay significant and quite conscious attention to the long history of word usage and its attendant historical and social life.


social designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings. I shall, therefore, attempt to do this in my word study of the Hebrew divinatory terms of 1 Samuel 28. I wish, through this word study, to understand something of a term’s history and social context in ancient times. Then, in critiquing particular English terms used to construct translations of 1 Samuel 28, I again want to try to understand something of their history and social designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings. Finally, in choosing the terms to use in my translation, I also must understand something of their history and social designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings in my African context.

Returning to Bakhtin, heteroglossia goes beyond the historical and social context of individual words and particular linguistic and grammatical forms. Heteroglossia encompasses further a social concept, that is, social heteroglossia. He recognizes, via this notion, the full scope of humanity’s use of language within social interactions. In defining this idea, he asserts that languages must embrace specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings, and values…. As such, these languages live a real life, they struggle and evolve in an environment of social heteroglossia.41

Heteroglossia, therefore, includes the concept of multiple social languages within a given language. Bakhtin maintains that heteroglossia

\[\text{41} \text{Mikhail M. Bakhtin, “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” in Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays, ed. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, University of Texas Press Slavic Series (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 1990), 193.}\]
represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between the differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles, and so forth, all given a bodily form.42

Social heteroglossia describes, for Bakhtin, “the complex stratification of language into genre, register, sociolect, dialect, and the mutual interanimation of these forms.”43 Here, Bakhtin represents the diverse types of speech that one can find in a given language, such as that of the academy, the church, a certain profession, a particular geographic region, a given social class, street slang, a literary creation, and so on. Such differentiation, demarcation, and stratification of speech within an individual language demonstrate that language is both a matrix of complexity and that antagonistic social forces clash within the culture.44 According to David M. Valeta, “Bakhtin’s ultimate perception of language is that it is ideologically saturated and stratified. The deep social richness of, and conflict within, a given language gives rise to another manifestation of [social] heteroglossia.”45

Social heteroglossia is also present whenever two or more languages are used within a culture or literary document, which is, of course, true of the African colonial and


43 Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 289. Sue Vice explains further: “This description of heteroglossia takes up terms from contemporary sociolinguistics, such as ‘sociolect’ (discourse determined by different social groups according to ‘age, gender, economic position, kinship’ and so on) and ‘register’ (discourse belonging to ‘the lawyer, the doctor, the businessman, the politician’)…which were unavailable to Bakhtin.” Sue Vice, Introducing Bakhtin (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1997), 18.


45 Valeta, Lions, 42.
post-colonial situation.\textsuperscript{46} The Bible itself contains Hebrew, Aramaic, Aramaisms, and Greek.\textsuperscript{47} The utilization of different languages expresses, per Bakhtin, a matrix of intentions and social conflicts. Sue Vice explicates this in the confines of the novel:

Once it enters the novel, [social] heteroglossia does not simply consist of a neutral series of different languages; these languages are bound to conflict at the very least with the “author’s” language, with each other, and with any surrounding languages which do not necessarily appear in a text. If they appear in a character’s mouth, they become “another’s speech in another’s language”…, expressing the author’s intentions but in a refracted way. Heteroglossia is thus a double-voiced discourse, as it “serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author.”\textsuperscript{48}

Thus, heteroglossia reflects the sociological trajectory of single words, different levels of a given language, and dynamics across languages within a given culture. This same idea is reflected additionally in Bakhtin’s concept of \textit{dialogism}, which he defines as follows:

\textquote{Dialogism is the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia. Everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential of conditioning others…. This dialogic imperative, mandated by the pre-existence of the language world relative to any of its current inhabitants, insures that there can be no actual monologue.}\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{49} Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 426.
This latter idea actually contains many important concepts that require further unpacking. L. Chernets maintains that Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogism operates on three levels, of which the first two are imperative for our purposes. First, dialogism has to do with intertextuality: “The text simultaneously responds to and anticipates other texts.”50 This also applies to the words within a text. Thus, dialogism represents for Bakhtin the idea that no word, meaning or thought exists in isolation. Rather each word, meaning, or thought enters into an interactive relationship with its past, present, and, even, possible future meaning, and with the other words, meanings and thoughts contained in an utterance.51 Vice observes of this phenomenon:

[A]s we live among the many languages of social heteroglossia, dialogism is necessarily the way in which we construct meaning. The language we use in personal or textual discourse is itself composed of many languages, which have all been used before. At any moment, our discourse will be synchronically informed by the contemporary languages we live among, and diachronically informed by their historical roles and the future roles we anticipate for them. Each utterance, whether it takes the form of a conversation in the street or a novel, consists of the unique orchestration of well-worn words. As in an everyday dialogue, all these languages will interact with each other, jockey for position, compromise, effect a temporary stabilization before moving on to the next construction of meaning.52


52 Vice, Introducing Bakhtin, 46.
According to Karine Zbinden, “This implies that words have a memory of their previous uses and contexts.” Naturally, in a polyglotic environment, this phenomenon is enhanced. Some languages, prestige languages, will typically represent the languages of power, while others represent the language of subjection and subordination. For instance, French was, in the colonial environment of the Belgian Congo, the language of power, influence, learning, culture—and God! Swahili was a secondary language, not quite a prestige language, but one with a higher status than indigenous languages. Sanga (along with other native languages) was the strange tongue of the savage or ignorant African. This is additionally evidenced by the fact that translations into the African languages have been very slow in coming. The Kisanga, for instance, was published only in 1992!

Within this same intertextual aspect of dialogism, we find the phenomenon of double voicing. When an author constructs an utterance or a larger creative piece, more than one intention and voice may well come into being. This results from the fact that the

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54 See the materials at my Prologue, n. 6, supra.
55 Maarman Sam Tshehla speaks of prestige languages in the context of South Africa, where English ranks highest, then Afrikaans, and then lowest on the hierarchy are the indigenous languages. Maarman Sam Tshehla, “Translation and the Vernacular Bible in the Debate between My ‘Traditional’ and Academic Worldviews,” in Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in South Africa, ed. Jonathan A. Draper (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 179–80. See further the materials at Chapter 1, n. 51, supra.
56 See Chapter 1, n. 8, supra.
57 See my Prologue, n. 46, supra.
The author’s voice cannot exist alone within a piece because, as I stated above, the words are not his or hers alone; they are, rather, only half his or hers. Bakhtin suggests that a text is able to mean more than its author consciously intended because it may contain intuited meaning. Many texts live a long and productive socio-ideological life. Because great literary works draw on the rich heteroglot potential of language, they possess semantic potential of which the author may be only partially aware. This potential surfaces in later generations when the text encounters new socio-ideological perspectives. Dialogic exposure to positions of genuine alterity often reveals previously unrecognized meaning in great literary works.60

To Bakhtin, this particular aspect of the dialogic nature of the utterance contests any authorial claim to absolute control over the meaning of an utterance. The authorial intention that shapes at text and an author’s control over a text are never complete. Hence, Bakhtin, in speaking of authorial intention, does not speak of the original author’s intentions. Instead, he means the intentions of the implied author as it is known in reader response criticism, that is, the author in the text.61

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59 See nn. 37–38, supra.

60 Vines, Markan Genre, 52–53.

This is very much related to yet another idea in Bakhtin’s first conception of
dialogism as intertextuality. This aspect recognizes additionally that an author’s unique,
unrepeatable expression is let loose into a pre-existing stream of utterances that is both
historic and social. An utterance always responds to what came before it and anticipates
that which will come after it.\footnote{Vines expresses this concept well: “Unlike the sentence [that is an isolated unit
of speech and only capable of abstract meaning], the utterance assumes a definite position
with respect to content; it evaluates its subject, deems it adequate or condemns it as
inadequate, declares it beautiful or base, pure or defiled. The utterance orients the
potential meaning of the sentence to a specific time and place and set it within the scope
of a discrete set of social values. The preformed sentence or utterance can only generate a
response within this metalinguistic context. Only here can the reader or hearer judge the
appropriateness of the utterance, deeming it right or wrong, fair or unfair, good or bad.
Bakhtin emphasizes that the utterance’s ability to generate a response is a necessary
condition for human communication. Without a response, there can be no dialogue and
therefore no human discourse. Consequently, every utterance is always oriented toward
other utterances. It is simultaneously a response to previous utterances and the basis of
subsequent utterance. These metalinguistic aspects of the utterance constitute its active
social life. Bakhtin claimed that since the social dimension of the utterance was beyond
the scope of the sentence as a linguistic unit, its meaning was completely beyond the
range of the science of linguistics.” Vines, \textit{Markan Genre}, 57.}

All communication is, therefore, a historical and socially
conditioned dynamic process and, fundamentally, intertextual. In fact, any author’s work
is inherently intertextual and shaped by social and ideological forces.\footnote{Bakhtin, “Discourse in the Novel,” 276.}
The uniqueness of an author’s utterance is, consequently, more apparent than real.

Finally, authors must use words and grammar that are heteroglossic in nature to
construct their content and structure in order to communicate meaning. Thus, the very
building blocks of an author’s seemingly unique, unrepeatable utterance are always
heteroglossic. The complex interaction between the chosen words, the content, and the structure is also a dialogical process.

Second, according to Chernet, Bakhtin’s understanding of dialogism comprises the idea of “addressivity.” This means that every utterance is shown to contain the alien word and the anticipation of the reader’s response. Utterances are complex responses to other utterances. As a result, any interpretation of a text must take account of that text’s socially determined ideological context, which dictated its creation. Dialogism exists because the intentions of both authors and readers blend in any reading. Vines observes: “We cannot confine meaning of a work to its author’s original intent in a narrow sense, nor, on the other hand, can the text mean anything someone wants it to mean. The meaning of a text exists in the dialogic space between these two extreme positions.” Hence, in Bakhtin’s view, “the reader fully participates in the genesis of ideas.” In sum, an utterance does not mean whatever the reader desires it to mean because its words, content, structure, and their cultural history and milieu place limits on its meaning. Yet, the rich social arena in which an utterance is shaped encourages the reader to be aware of, and open to, the multiple meanings possible in any given text. The reader, then, will

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64 Zbinden, “Traducing Bakhtin,” 48–49.

65 Vines, Markan Genre, 52–53.

66 Zbinden, “Traducing Bakhtin,” 49. Third, a dialogism exists between the author and his or her hero or protagonist, per Chernet. The protagonist and the author are not one. Zbinden suggests that this means that “the metaphorical meaning of ‘author’ and hero’ encompasses a philosophical theory of the constitution of consciousness through a dynamic relationship with other consciousnesses and/or object.” Zbinden, “Traducing Bakhtin,” 49. See further Bakhtin, “Author and Hero,” 4–256.
apply his or her own personal and social contexts to intuit the meaning of a text. The meaning of a text, therefore, exists in the dialogic space between the two extremes of authorial intention and a reader’s construction of meaning. Thus, dialogism rests between two extremes in communication: 1) authoritarian objectivism, which is rigidly and abstractly dogmatic; and 2) individualist subjectivism, which is radically relativistic.67

Bakhtin’s views of textual dialogism have important social implications. Authoritarian objectivism produces only a monolog, and a monolog always seeks to deny the dialogic nature of existence and attempts to be the only word and the final word. To Bakhtin’s mind, monologic forms are either a primitive form of utterance or an abuse of the utterance because sophisticated discourse is inherently dialogic. According to Bakhtin, certain early types of literature, such as “the epic, the tragedy, the history, classical rhetoric,” convey information in a monologic fashion.68 They do not contain the multiplicity of voice allowed by dialogism, although here I would take issue with him regarding the “primitive” nature of such literature and its monologic character. More importantly for our purposes, empires and authoritarian regimes attempt to control speech and thought through the use of the monolog. Consequently, all instances of dialogism in literature serve to undermine controlling authorities and voices. Additionally, a diversity of speech within a classed society may track actual inequality, whether that diversity is the different registers, sociolects, dialects, etc. of a single language or is the use of

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multiple languages in a culture. Allon White argues that “because languages are socially unequal, heteroglossia implies dialogic interaction in which the prestige languages try to extend their control and subordinated languages try to avoid, negotiate, or subvert that control.”69 I argue, consequently, that the subaltern can and do speak in spite of imperial, colonial efforts to silence them.70 The maintenance of bilingualism or multilingualism in postcolonial cultures is part of this resistance. The dialogic use of socially unequal languages in a text, therefore, may well be used to subvert authoritative discourses.71

Although Bakhtin’s ideas are now often used to read biblical texts, it is quite apparent that these ideas have critical implications for the translator of biblical texts, which has not been recognized to any substantial degree.72 That language has a history and is ideologically saturated and stratified is salient in the analysis of given translations and the production of new ones. In settings where more than one language is operating, the imperative to pay attention to such factors rises substantially. Thus, I argue that Bakhtin’s ideas are helpful in the translation project.

69 Quoted by Vice, Introducing Bakhtin, 19, without reference.


71 Vice, Introducing Bakhtin, 27.

Each biblical text, with its long history of translation and interpretation, has been part of a long process of dialogism—so much so that we have no longer have any consensus on the process of formation of the text, how many textual traditions might exist, which modern texts are closest to the earliest texts, and what any of it means. Furthermore, each and every word of the biblical text in any given passage also is dialogic. Each Hebrew word, with its many translated forms, has a long history of meaning, has many present meanings, and might have many future meanings. Further the biblical text, often interpreting older parts of the biblical collection and referring to documents now lost, is intertextual. It also contains Hebrew, Aramaic and Aramaisms, and Greek. The dialogism of the history of interpretation is nowhere, I think, made so completely plain as in the Talmud, where we can see the discussions of the ancient rabbis surrounding the text. Bernard Zelechow, not depending on Bakhtin, nonetheless observes that biblical “translation is a mode of linking eternity and temporality.” He states:

The argument that modern theories of knowledge and translation have a false notion of “objectivity” is not to belittle the desire for accuracy and correspondence. It is the grounds of which a translation can be made. The adherence to the plain meaning of words is the beginning of reading, translating and interpreting. But it is only the beginning of the project.

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73 See Chapter 1, n. 39, supra.

74 See the materials at nn. 53-56, supra.

75 See further Zelechow, “Myth,” 134.

76 Ibid., 133, relying on Martin Buber without citation.

77 Ibid., 135.
He continues to say that we must recognize “that every act of translation and interpretation is relational.”\textsuperscript{78} Consequently, whenever a translator attempts to render a biblical word from the Hebrew source language into a particular target language, the dialogism of both the source and target languages are at issue. In the case where the target language is part of a polyglotic world, as in Africa, this phenomenon again multiplies.

Thus, when Bratcher (or any other translation theorist—as I do not mean to single him out) states that the task of the translator is threefold and is to: “(a) Determine the form of the original text; (b) ascertain the meaning of the original texts; and (c) transfer the meaning to the target language in such a way that the readers of the translation understand it as did the readers of the original,”\textsuperscript{79} we find ourselves with an extremely difficult task at hand. We cannot begin to find the intention of any original author, even if one might have existed, nor can we understand much about earlier or later editors. Even the audience is unknown. I, therefore, am forced to ask: Which original text? Which original audience? What editors? They no longer exist. I only have before me, as a translator, a text with a long textual, translational, and interpretive history, a text that has been in the heteroglossic-dialogic process for millennia.

Moreover, different interpreters may take varying textual elements quite differently, which affects biblical translation. Antony F. Campbell and Mark A. O’Brien state rightly that textual elements that may be “significant signals for some will be

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} Bratcher, “Translation,” 2:588, first referenced herein at n. 5, supra.
overlooked or ignored by others. When we choose to dismiss certain signals, at best we hope to be aware of our choice.”80 Thus, they note the importance of the social location and ideology of different interpreters in making meaning and translating the text. Kathleen Davis states that “intralangual translation” allows one to examine terms in the same language. She says that debates on such translation projects demonstrate that the decisions we make when maneuvering within one language is a political act.81 When translating between two languages, this cannot be less so. In this latter case, our translation choices can be examined, and, when so examined, they reveal our ideology. As a result, when one is unconscious about the fact that the Bible has been in this long heteroglossic-dialogic process and ideology is easily embedded in translations, one can easily insert a hegemonic ideology into the text, through the choices of words with which one is comfortable, and claim that one’s meaning is divinely ordained. At best, such an unconscious translator, will unwittingly attempt to assert power over both the text and the people reading it, as has certainly been done in the African context. Whether this is a conscious or unconscious process, an intentional or unintentional one, the biblical translator’s monolog becomes God’s monolog, which is just what I experienced in my African religious context.

As I stated in Chapter 1, I shall research a number of key terms of the significant vocabulary of divination in the Hebrew Bible in my Bakhtinian word study. These


include the following words and phrases: לְאֵשֶׁת בּוֹדֶלֶת אָוֶּבֶת and דְּרַשׁ אַל-הָמָה מַה (Deut 18:10–11).

Again, not all of these are used within 1 Samuel 28, but they are essential to understand the inner-textual conflict surrounding divination and how that is made manifest in 1 Samuel 28. My entry into this process is with the words and phrases לְאֵשֶׁת בּוֹדֶלֶת אָוֶּבֶת, אָוֶּב, and מְשֵׁה. The primary questions are: What is an אָוֶּב? What does it mean to call the woman of Endor a לְאֵשֶׁת בּוֹדֶלֶת אָוֶּב? What is it to מְשֵׁה? What do ancient Near Eastern cognates reveal to us? Where and when are these terms used within the Hebrew Bible with positive, negative, or neutral connotative, emotive, and associative meanings? If we should find a variation in such meanings for the same term, would it reflect an inner-biblical heteroglossic and dialogic phenomenon in regard to these key divinatory terms?

What are the connotative, emotive, and associative meanings in 1 Samuel 28? In other words, does this text authorize or condemn the לְאֵשֶׁת בּוֹדֶלֶת אָוֶּב and her doing מְשֵׁה? Does the text view לְאֵשֶׁת בּוֹדֶלֶת אָוֶּב and her doing מְשֵׁה as foreign or alien? This same process will then occur with the other key terms.

My hope is to reveal, not only the range of repeatable designated meanings of each of these words, but also to demonstrate that each of them also have connotative, emotive, and associative meanings that are not consistently negative. This will demonstrate the inner-biblical conflict around the acts and language of divination in the Hebrew Bible. It will also demonstrate that 1 Samuel 28 does not characterize the woman
of Endor or her gift as negative. This material can then be used as a basis upon which to examine the ideology in the receptor texts in this study.

**Unmasking Ideology in Translation through Ideological Criticism**

In the West, postmodern perspectives have acknowledged the veiled ideological messages that literature contains. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza asserts that “all discourses represent political interests.”

82 Danna Nolan Fewell eloquently states that

> [t]he purely objective reader is, of course, an illusion….We come to the text as people with particular histories, social structures, political ideologies, and theological perceptions. These things affect not only what we see in a text, but also why we read a particular text in the first place. We read texts to find meaning, not just any meaning, but also meaning we can appropriate in our own engagement with our world—the world of our historical situations, our social structures, our political ideologies, our theological perceptions.  

83 Thus, as Jennifer A. Glancy notes: “Interpretation is political. This is true of all interpretation, regardless of its location: classroom, conference, journal.”


structuralism has convinced a number of translation scholars that translation, too, contains overt and covert ideology. Such translation theorists have now demonstrated persuasively that the act of translation is not an exact science because it is influenced by the context of the text and the translator.\(^85\) Even Nida has said, “as in any realm of human activity, complete objectivity in translation is impossible, for we ourselves are a part of the very cultural context in which and for which we are translating.”\(^86\)

When a translator moves a text from its source language into a receptor language, he or she cannot resist interpreting the text through the process of translation. Such interpretation is shaped by the translator’s cultural context and certain individual factors. It, therefore, typically reflects an ideology. While Bakhtin and Derrida disagree on the precise process through which ideology becomes embedded in literature and its translation, they do both affirm that texts (both “original” and “re-created”) reflect the culture, ideology, and historical moment from which they come.

Unfortunately, Nida recognizes additionally that one of the key problems in analyzing any translations is that

most translations are not accompanied by any explicit statement of the theory or principles involved in the production of the text. As a result, only by analyzing the text can one ascertain the implicit principles…. Even when a text does include a statement concerning translation principles, a study of the text often reveals that quite different considerations must have significantly influenced the work of the translators.\(^87\)

\(^85\) For additional relevant bibliography, see Chapter 1, nn. 49, 82–83, 85.


\(^87\) Nida, “Theories of Translation,” 6:512.
Much is hidden in the translation process. If Nida should be correct that translators are quite unconscious about most of their broader translation decisions (as I think he is), then they are most likely to be completely unaware of their ideological bent and that it is entering their translation product. In other words, when a translator is oblivious to whether he or she is using a particular system of linguistics, a literal or free translation, and/or a certain theological position in their translation process, one can only imagine what this must mean in terms of such translators understanding of how he or she is embedding a particular ideology by their translation choices.

Translation is, then, ideological, political, and often obliviously so. It, therefore, is up to others to unmask such ideology. Consequently, African, post-colonial, and feminist critiques of such ideology in biblical interpretation and translation are multiplying. The first and second are used to critique racial, ethnic, and imperial-colonial ideology in translation and to create new textual translations in ways that are sensitive to issues of race, ethnicity, and the postcolonial situation, especially in the African situation when

done by African interpreters.\textsuperscript{89} The third is used to critique patriarchal ideology in translation and to create new textual translations in ways that are sensitive to issues of gender.\textsuperscript{90} We also now see a growing recognition that issues of racism, ethnicity, imperialism / colonialism, and gender may combine in a matrix of ideology. More theoreticians are arguing that these issues rarely stand alone or apart. In fact, in many

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cases, they accentuate each other.\textsuperscript{91} As a result, ever more scholars are using hybrid
methods to examine as a unity the complex matrix of ideology of texts in the African
context. These include African, post-colonial, and feminist perspectives.

I hypothesize that both overt and covert Christian, patriarchal, imperialist-colonial
ideologies have merged historically in discussions concerning divination. These fused
ideological factors entered into English, French, and African language translations of 1
Samuel 28. Further, such combination was and remains particularly destructive when
used in the pro-divinatory African context. I argue that the biblical interpretations of the
language of divination in the Hebrew Bible that led to the choice of particular vocabulary
during the translation process was deeply engrained with such a matrix of ideologies,
which has had religious, psychological, and political ramifications on the African
continent for both men and women. To analyze these prior translations in light of their
complicated ideology, I must draw from sources in a fused, hybrid, contrapunctual
fashion to confront issues of racism, religious prejudice, imperialism / colonialism, and
gender in Christian European missionary endeavors in Africa. Hence, the best
methodological tool to disclose the Christian, gender, and colonial-imperial biases in the
translations of 1 Samuel 28 will be the African, feminist-postcolonial biblical
hermeneutics and translation theory of Musa W. Dube because she has set out a
methodological construct that is keenly aware of the multiple and interlocking issues

\textsuperscript{91} Ashish Nandy, \textit{The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under
Colonialism} (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983).
related to race, gender, religion, and the postcolonial situation on the African continent.\textsuperscript{92} Thus, I shall read prior translations of 1 Samuel 28 into English, French, and Kisanga, with the hermeneutics of both suspicion and resistance to unmask their imperialistic, colonial, and sexist ideologies using the ideas that she has set out primarily in her Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible.\textsuperscript{93} I hope, thereby, to challenge translations that undermine the value of divinatory practices in the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 28.

Dube’s postcolonial interpretation starts with her own experience as an African woman who belongs to a continent that was colonized. She brings this reality to biblical hermeneutics and notes that postcolonial biblical hermeneutics should take seriously the problem of gender.\textsuperscript{94} She observes that women in colonized settings are doubly or triply

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{93} See the n. immediately above.
\item \textsuperscript{94} Ali Mazrui mentions only three “g’s” when he states that “God, gold and glory” were established as foundational reasons to justify imperialism. Ali Mazrui, Cultural Forces in World Politics (London: James Curry, 1990), 29.
\end{itemize}
oppressed. Reading the Bible through her own reality, Dube calls for interdependence among scholars to address imperialism and patriarchy embedded in biblical texts and declares that “the West, the Bible, and imperialism are interconnected.” As a result, Dube proposes that it is imperative for feminist biblical readers to become

Decolonizing readers: those who demonstrate awareness of imperialism’s pervasive exploitative forces and its literary strategies of domination, who demonstrate a genuine search for liberating ways of interdependence between nations, races, ethnicities, classes, genders, and sexual and religious orientations.

She provides four leading questions to use in examining ancient texts, which I shall use in my examination of the receptor texts in this research:

1. Does this text have a clear stance against the political imperialism of its time?
2. Does this text encourage travel to distant and inhabited lands and how does it justify itself?
3. How does this text construct difference: Is there dialogue and liberating interdependence, or condemnation of all that is foreign?
4. Does this text employ gender and divine representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination?

In Dube’s own reading, she does not see the biblical texts as offering significant avenues to overcome oppression, unlike liberation theologians who do find sections of the text liberating. For example, the book of Exodus, she asserts, authorizes colonizing

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96 Ibid., 42.

97 Ibid., 42–43.

98 Ibid., 57, 129, 201. She concludes her book with a list of eleven procedures proposed as possible different starting point in analyzing an ancient text from a postcolonial feminist perspective. Ibid., 199–201. These four questions, however, are sufficient for my translation project.
foreign lands (i.e., the conquest of Canaan, the so-called “Promised Land”). This theme of conquering Canaan continues in the book of Joshua, she observes. Dube states that the divinely sanctioned mandate to conquer Canaan results in promoting the “act [of conquest] as a ‘duty to the natives.’” For Dube, reading this narrative is much like reading the story of her own country Botswana, which was conquered by the British in 1885. The people of Botswana had to abandon their rituals and customs and embrace the British “civilized” mode of life and religion.

Furthermore, conquerors and the conquered are referred to as two antagonistic groups of people: “Godly and ungodly, civilized and barbaric, manly and womanly, adult and childish, developed and underdeveloped, Christian and un-Christian, white and colored, and so on…” The Israelites must not turn to other gods and idols, but keep God’s covenant (Exod 20:2–6, 23; 23:13). The people of Canaan are idolaters (34:15) whose gods are inferior to the Israelites’ one true universal God. As a result, God commands God’s people to “tear down their altars, break their pillars, and cut down their

99 Ibid., 62. I think the most important work on the Exodus and Conquest stories as colonizing narratives is that of Robert Allen Warrior, “Canaanites, Cowboys, and Indians: Deliverance, Conquest and Liberation Theology Today,” Christianity and Crisis 49 (1989), 261–65, which has now been reprinted many times because of its importance and influence.

100 Ibid., 65.


102 Dube, Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation, 65.
sacred poles” (34:13). The striking duality of this thinking is highly problematic for Dube. It is also the stuff of cultural and physical genocide.

In much postcolonial biblical hermeneutics, scholars have focused on identifying imperial layers in the biblical texts as Dube does above. They have not, however, given much attention to the language aspects of the texts. The translator’s power is reflected in his or her choice of word. According to Davis, it is appropriate to study the language or various terms used in the process of erecting the architectural structure of meaning during the translation process. In Dube’s work, “Consuming a Colonial Cultural Bomb: Translating Badimo into ‘Demons’ in the Setswana Bible,” Dube applies her African feminist postcolonial hermeneutical skills to the problem of biblical translation, just as Davis recommends. She observes with Fantz Fanon that “colonizers tend to install their languages among the colonized, thus displacing the local ones.” This causes the colonized, who speak, read and write in the colonizer’s language to adopt the culture of their subjugators. They begin to perceive their world from the perspective of their subjugators. In this way, the colonizer takes possession of the geographical spaces and the minds of the colonized.

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103 Emphasis in the original. Ibid.

104 Kathleen Davis, Deconstruction and Translation, 21.


When one takes away someone’s language and name, they lose whom they fundamentally are. It causes them to lose faith in all their prior achievements.\textsuperscript{108}

What is most interesting, however, for Dube, is that this same process can occur when missionaries harness indigenous languages against native speakers. Dube demonstrates how this occurs in biblical translations and dictionaries in the native language of Setswana, the language of Botswana. She asserts that the missionaries of Botswana “reconstructed for imperial ends” the language of the people.\textsuperscript{109} She states forcefully:

Missionary literary works of translation have been shown to be heavily engaged in the colonization of the minds of natives and for advancing European imperial spaces. The death and burial of Setswana culture here was primarily championed through the colonization of their language such that it no longer served the interests of the original speakers. Instead the written form of language had equated their cultural beliefs with evil spirits, demons, and wizardry. This colonization of Setswana was in itself the planting of a colonial cultural bomb, meant to clear the ground for the implantation of the worldwide Christian commonwealth and European consciousness. It was a minefield that marked Setswana cultural spaces as dangerous death zones, to be avoided by every intelligent Motswana reader or hearer of the translated text.\textsuperscript{110}

I maintain that, in the English, French, and Kisanga Bibles of this project, the same occurred in regard to the language of divination. As Israel sought to expunge itself of foreign influences, an inner-biblical debate about the value of divination emerged, creating an intra-lingual level of conflict in the designative, connotative, emotive, and

\textsuperscript{108} Dube, “Consuming a Bomb,” 34.

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 57–58.
associative meaning of the Hebrew vocabulary of divination. Further, when Christian missionaries used the text in the confines of Africa, it attempted to rob the woman of Endor of her language and herself. It sought to create a monologic voice in regard to divination at the extra-lingual level through translation. Whether in the colonizers’ tongues or my own, the missionary biblical translators of the Congo took our religious practices from us and, with them, our culture and very souls, through biblical translation. By examining the various terms within the Hebrew language and comparing them against the translated language, the study will demonstrate that the boundaries between them “emerge with [a] conventional system” since “translation exists within institutionalized relations of power.” Thus, I intend to use Dube’s work to unmask this aspect of cultural genocide as seen in the various translations 1 Samuel 28. The phenomenon of imperialism has been and is at work in 1 Sam 28:3 –25; it attempts to authorize the subjugation of others. There is, nonetheless, resistance within the story, which calls for a way of interdependence in a multi-cultural world.

Making an African Feminist Translation through African Contextual / Cultural Hermeneutics and Cross-Cultural Translation Theory

I wish to let the woman of Endor have a voice again, and, in that, to have my own. Reclaiming the woman of Endor’s voice, doing this work, is, per Dube, a critical aspect of reclaiming the African self. It is also, according to Bakhtin, a primary means by which

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111 Davis observes “the boundaries between categories, whether between groups, genders, or ‘natural’ languages, do not precede but emerge with conventional systems.” Davis, Deconstruction and Translation, 23.

112 Dube, “Consuming a Bomb,” 44.
to disrupt the monolog of empire. The woman of Endor is a woman who bears souls across the *disanga* between life and the beyond; she is also a woman who has also been borne across a cultural divide in a way that obliterated her—that is, through translation. I seek to bear her back across this *disanga* to Africa. As a result, I shall offer new English, French, and Kisanga translations that I believe are more sensitive to the broader possible meaning of the language of divination in 1 Samuel 28.

Two other methodological tools will be employed most advantageously in this work. First, I shall use the narratological work of David M. Gunn and Danna Nolan Fewell to read the vocabulary within its current Hebrew Bible literary context. Second, I shall use African contextual / cultural criticism and cross-cultural translation theory to move the language of 1 Samuel 28 from the Hebrew source text into the three target

languages in such a way as they may be comprehended more positively in the African context.

In order to produce a more suitable translation for the synthetic-synchronistic African Christian situation, African contextual / cultural hermeneutics and cross-cultural translation theory are critical tools. These methods recognize the importance of my personal and cultural experience in understanding and interpreting the biblical texts and rendering them into the target language. With this method, I hope to translate 1 Samuel 28 in a way that strips it of its common imperialist and patriarchal ideologies and, instead, translate the text in a way that, I believe, is more in keeping with its original Israelite/ancient Near Eastern context and is much more constructive in its view of peoples in Africa who continue to practice divination.

As I explained in Chapter 1, R. S. Sugirtharajah relates that cross-cultural biblical interpretation uses the cultural resources and experiences of the reader to shed light on the biblical text. One can see that this method would be most helpful in reading for translation and rendering the text in language that will bear it across the cultural disanga in a more comprehensible manner. This is critical for translation. Using R. Schreiter’s categories of ideational, performantial, and material aspects of culture, we can cross the cultural differences between the ancient Israelite culture and the culture in which I as an

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114 See Chapter 1, n. 69, supra.

Thus, I argue that using African ideation, performantial and material aspects of divination would bring 1 Samuel 28 alive for readers in the African context because divination is still practiced in a form that appears to be quite similar to that of the ancient Israel. In surveying the field Sugirtharajah maintains that three modes of cross-cultural readings exist. He identifies the first as conceptual correspondence. Here, the goal is to seek textual or conceptual parallels between biblical texts and the traditions of one’s own cultures,” using the texts of ones culture. The second is what he calls narratival enrichments, whereby one places ”some of the popular folktales …legends, riddles, plays, proverbs, and poems that are part of the common heritage of a people alongside biblical materials, thus drawing out the hermeneutical implications.” The third is performantial parallels. This mode “utilize[s] ritual and behavioral practices

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117 See further Chapter 3, infra.


119 Ibid. See further, e.g., Azaria J. C. Mbatha, In the Heart of the Tiger: Art of South Africa (Wuppertal, South Africa: Peter Hammer, 1986); and Gerald O. West, Contextual Bible Study (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 1993).


that are commonly available in a culture."\textsuperscript{122} It is this third mode that I shall use in this dissertation. I shall read the ancient text of 1 Samuel 28 in light of narrative and cross-cultural hermeneutics to move it across the cultural \textit{disanga} between western Asia and Africa.\textsuperscript{123}

The divinatory / prophetic materials of the Hebrew Bible have been the subject of such studies before. I am not alone in seeing the connection or using cross-cultural hermeneutics to bridge this \textit{disanga}. J. J. Burden, Julius K. Muthengi, and Gene Rice are three.\textsuperscript{124} Their work was, however, only a beginning. First, their pieces are all article length works. Second, because they were fairly early African interpreters, they had to spend far more of their words explaining and justifying the method itself than I do. Third, they did not bring a female perspective to the task. Thus, much work remains to be done here. But I stand on the shoulders of giants and will begin my task using their important writings.


My understanding of what it will take to move the biblical text across this cultural disanga is consistent with Bernard Zelechow’s understanding of the biblical translation project. He maintains that, in order to create positive biblical translations, we must move beyond even the consciousness of choice that I discussed in the Bakhtin and African feminist postcolonial sections of this chapter. He relates:

The problem of translation, interpretation and the negotiations of existence is not a choice between either and or. Rather, the problematic of translation embodies the encompassing either and or, self and other, subject and object, reader and reading, paradoxically. The incorporation of the paradox of existence into the acts of knowing requires an epistemological reorientation back to a relational interpretative biblical model grounded in the covenant.

My task then is to bring both ancient Israel and Africa to the new text. Zelechow argues that to do such well with integrity, one must both

abandon himself/herself absolutely to the text. Simultaneously the reader/translator must retain autonomy that allows for a repetition of the text and its authentic re-authoring. Reading, interpreting and translating are creative repetitions in which the results are simultaneously the same as the “original” and also new and different. Hence reading/translating is a relational activity that is infinite and always open to further re-authoring. Objectivity as correspondence [in translation] yields to the objectivity of relation and embodied truth replaces hypothetical certitude.

Oh, how true and so very Bakhtinian, although Zelechow never mentions him! To move the Bible into a new language and culture one must immerse oneself in the language, texts, and cultures of both the source and target language. One must be in relationship with both the self and the other. One must also be prepared to cross the disanga of time to

\[126\] Ibid., 136.
move the text forward from its past and present into its future. This process is certainly about conscious intellectual choices, but it is also about emotive choices, it is also about relationship, it is also about the covenant.

Thus, the French post-structuralist school with its de-centering separation of *langue* and *parole* is not enough. As Zelechow relates: “Rooted in a specific historical conditionality, the translator must make a leap into a horizon that embodies the reality of transhistorical and transcultural communication.” He says encouragingly, and I think rightly, “The act of translating unites technical skills (knowledge) and an act of faith in the same way that every other human activity requires.” It is faith in the text, faith in oneself, and faith in God that finally bears us across the *disanga* of time and culture to create a new translation, while remaining grounded in the divine covenant with us. The works of Bakhtin and Zelechow support each other in recognizing the relational, the intertextual, the dialogic in reading, writing, and translating. Biblical translation must acknowledge the specific cultural settings of the source and receptor texts, while embracing the dialogic character of all things biblical.

My translation project will, as a result, also be highly relational and dialogic, in both examining the dialogic nature of the terms of divination in the biblical texts, and acknowledging in the act of translating 1 Samuel 28 for Africa the dialogic,

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128 Zelechow, “Myth,” 130.
contrapunctual, translated nature of postcolonial African culture itself. In this way “translation as evangelism,” translation “as a tool of colonization,” translation as “a violent act,”129 and translations “as bludgeon or blunderbuss, that is, as a cultural weapon,”130 may cease. In this manner, I “exercise agency by seizing translation to employ a language that is redemptive and empowering” as argued for by Dolores Yilibuw,131 without disempowering the other.

Together, a Bakhtinian Hebrew word study, Dube’s African postcolonial feminist biblical ideological criticism and translation theories, narratological biblical criticism, and African contextual / cultural/ cross-cultural biblical hermeneutics and translation theories, will make this project possible. Together, they will allow me to understand my source text, its current dialogic multiple meanings, its ideology—to the degree possible—and, then, to move this text into my three receptor texts, English, French, and Kisanga, in such a way that the meaning and ideology are conveyed in a manner that pro-divinatory, feminist, African Christians can use well. In foregrounding Bakhtin’s theory in my study, I seek not just to deconstruct what was, but also to tread a path across the disanga of Saul and the woman of Endor, the small and the great, the colonizer and the colonized, the


African traditional way of life and the European Christian way of life, the indigenous and the now postcolonial, the female and the male, the past, present, and future, and God’s word and the people.

Now that I have assembled all my tools and placed them on my head, I begin to walk the path.
CHAPTER 3
LOCATING A PATH THROUGH THE JUNGLE OF DIVINATION:
DIVINATION, WITCHCRAFT, AND IDEOLOGY
IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST, EUROPE, AND AFRICA

In this chapter, we will examine the practices of divination, witchcraft, and attitudes towards them in three major cultural areas and periods. First, we will examine divination, witchcraft, and attitudes towards them in the ancient Near East generally during the second and first millennia BCE, which is helpful background for understanding divination and witchcraft in the Hebrew Bible.¹ In other words, this will assist us to understand the general worldview in which Israel participated. This knowledge is especially important, however, because Israel formed its divinatory dialogue in relation to this backdrop. What is most trying in this regard is attempting to grasp these concepts without the cultural biases ingrained in all modern colonial / postcolonial subjects of Europe. Even though some would suggest this is impossible,² I

¹ Although I acknowledge that Israel was very much part of the ancient Near East and shared much with its neighbors, I will not address Israelite divination substantially in this chapter, because Chapters 4–6 comprise that material.
believe it is important to make the best effort possible. Second, we will examine
divination, witchcraft, and attitudes towards them in medieval to modern Christian
Europe. This will aid us in comprehending the ideology that Europeans and their subjects
brought to the text and was embedded in various translations of the Bible into the
vernaculars of Europe and Africa. Third, we will examine divination, witchcraft and
attitudes towards them in Africa in the modern period, from immediately before
European colonization to the present day. Within the Africa context, I will focus on the
Basanga people, whom I know best. Because so little has been written on the Basanga
way of life generally, I will discuss our way of life more fully and set divination in this
context. This will assist us in understanding the language and attitudes towards divination
and witchcraft in the culture of the target text. It may give us additionally some insight
into the source text.

Divination and Witchcraft in the Ancient Near East

The belief that those in the divine realm can and do communicate to humans
through omens and other divinatory practices was a near universal idea in the ancient
Near East. In this section of my study, I examine the practice of, and attitudes toward,

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3 Ivan Starr, “Omens in the Ancient near East,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary,
Greeks, Etruscans, and Romans also practiced divination, but their practice is beyond the
scope of this study. For more on their practice, see, e.g., Robert M. Berchman, Mediators
of the Divine: Horizons of Prophecy, Divination, Dreams and Theurgy in Mediterranean
Antiquity, South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 163 (Atlanta: Scholars Press,
1998); John Ferguson, “Divination and Oracles: Rome,” in Civilization of the Ancient
Mediterranean (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1988), 951–58; Flint, Valerie I. J.,
Richard Gordon, Georg Luck, and Daniel Ogden, Witchcraft and Magic in Europe:
Ancient Greece and Rome, Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe 2
(London: Athlone Press, 1999); Richard Gordon, “Reporting the Marvellous: Private
Divination in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in Envisioning Magic: A Princeton Seminar
divination and the use of the supernatural in the ancient Near East. Special attention will be given to the particularly concepts and terms of divination that are relevant to our study.

Religion was not a narrowly defined area of life. It was part of life’s every aspect, and those primarily responsible for maintaining the formal cultic aspects of life tended to be well educated and had broad functions, from maintaining the temple and the gods and managing and recording temple administration, to issuing warnings about planned

activities, foretelling the future, and healing the sick.⁵ There were lay practitioners in some communities who used the supernatural as well.⁶ There was no distinction between religion and magic at this time.⁷ According to Walter Faber, in order to understand these concepts in the ancient world, we

have to go well beyond the scope of magical texts and artifacts. Instead, … [we] have to see them as just one aspect of a multifaceted philosophy of life based not on rational but on mythological experience.⁸

It is clear that, often, our vocabulary and concepts concerning divinatory practices reflect modern European sensibilities.⁹ In using the terms divination and magic, I, therefore, will mean those aspects of religious life that seek to influence an individual’s or community’s well-being, success, health, and/or wealth via means that are not scientific or rational from a post-Enlightenment point of view.¹⁰ In spite of modern post-Enlightenment views of rationality, these divinatory practices were considered quite rational procedures in the ancient world, which we should keep in mind.

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⁸ Ibid., 3:1896.

⁹ Ibid., 3:1895.

To explicate this idea further, divination was regarded as a logical science in the ancient Near East. The scribal schools produced various omen lists and prognostication manuals for exorcists, diviners, and healers. The omen lists look much like the so-called law-codes of the ancient Near East. Both types of records are in the nature of


scholarly treatises based on the common ancient Near Eastern philosophy of science.\textsuperscript{14} These treatises use as their foundations lived experience, but then extrapolate to the extreme or border cases. They are exhaustive lists and contain, as a result, some seemingly impossible conditions from our modern perspective.\textsuperscript{15} They are usually structured in condition-result (if-then or protasis-apodosis) clauses.\textsuperscript{16} A number of the omen texts include repeated words and word plays in the protasis-apodosis, demonstrating the power of word association in the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{17} Sheldon W. Greaves offers a number of examples of these, including the following:\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{14} See n. immediately above. \\
\textsuperscript{16} Nils P. Heeßel, \textit{Divinatorische Texte 1: Terrestrische, Teratologische, Physiognamische und Oneiromanistische Omina}, Keilschrifttexte Aus Assur Literarischen Inhalts 1; Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007), 1. \\
\textsuperscript{17} Greaves, “Ominous Homophony,” 106. We also can see this in the Bible, where we find puns on the names of both Esau and Jacob that both relate to their physical characteristics at birth and predict the course of their futures (Gen 25:21–23), also discussed ibid.,” 103–4. See also Walter Farber, “Associative Magic: Some Rituals, Word Plays, and Philology,” \textit{Journal of the American Society of Oriental Studies} 106, no. 3 (1988): 447–49. \\
\textsuperscript{18} Greaves, “Ominous Homophony,” 110–12, all Greave’s translations.
\end{flushleft}
If the cystic duct of the gall bladder is bent (kennuš), a foreign king will bow down (ikannuš) to the king [equal words].

If the gall bladders are five (hamiš), usurper (hammê) kings will appear on the scene [similar sounds].

If the anomaly’s teeth are protruding (wasâ), the king’s days are over; on his throne another will sit [associative meanings].

Greaves explains that the word used for “protruding” (wasâ) means literally “to go out.” Thus, as the teeth of the anomalous newborn “go out,” so will the reigning king “go out.” Some omen text harnessed pre-existing literature that was found to be helpful on a more rational basis. One example of such is the group of incantations meant to soothe crying babies, which apparently found its origins in more ancient lullabies and nursery rhymes. Thus, divination was a rational scientific practice, based on lived experience, in the worldview of the ancient Near East, even though it may not seem so to those of us who hold a post-enlightenment scientific worldview or philosophy of science.

Two general types of divination existed in the ancient Near East: oblativa (that is, unsolicited, intuitive, or natural divination, where one waited for a divinely-initiated sign from natural phenomenon); and impetrita (that is, solicited, inductive, or artificial

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21 YOS 10, 56 i 34–35.


23 Ibid.

divination where humans initiated the process through questions posed to the divine realm and the answer was often given in a yes or no form).\textsuperscript{25} *Impetrita* divination was the more common type of divine-human communication.\textsuperscript{26}

During *oblativa* divination, the diviner read omens received from the gods, typically through some movement of, or deviation in, the ordinary course of nature.\textsuperscript{27}

This might include reading the celestial bodies (astrology and astronomy); \textsuperscript{28} geologic


\textsuperscript{27} Starr, “Omens,” 5:15.

events and weather; animal behavior; unusual births among animals or humans, such as multiple births, conjoined twins, or various malformations (teratomancy);


See, e.g., Šumma izbu, edited by Leichty, The Omen Series Šumma Izbu. See further Heeßel, Divinatorische Texte, 8–9; Erle Leichty, “Teratological Omens,” in La Divination en Mésopotamie ancienne et dans les régions voisines: 14 Rencontre
characteristics of bodies, both human and animal (physiognomy); \textsuperscript{32} and dreams; \textsuperscript{33}
among many other vehicles.\textsuperscript{34}

The gods might also communicate spontaneously to humans through oracles / prophecy (here meant as an unsolicited communication from the gods through a human intercessor to another human), another form of \textit{oblativa} divination.\textsuperscript{35} Prophecy was, until


\textsuperscript{34} E.g., Frank Miosi relates that, in Egypt, such messages were received without speech, “as during processions of the god in his sacred boat, when he communicated his will by forcing the boat carriers to move in one direction or the other or by interpreting the movement of sacred animals.” Miosi, “Oracles: Ancient Egypt,” 5:29; citing J. D. Ray, \textit{The Archive of Hor}, Texts from Excavations 2d Memoir (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976), 131.

\textsuperscript{35} Oracles are used ambiguously by some scholars to mean both \textit{oblativa} and \textit{impetrita} divination. I use it here only in the sense of \textit{oblativa} divination where a message is communicated from a god through a human intercessor. On the understanding
recently considered “a uniquely Israelite institution,” separate from divination.\(^{36}\) Now, however, scholars have realized that prophecy existed elsewhere in the ancient Near East, such as Anatolia,\(^{37}\) Aram,\(^{38}\) Assyria and Babylonia,\(^{39}\) Ishchali,\(^{40}\) Egypt,\(^{41}\) and, most


\(^{36}\) Starr, “Omens,” 5:16. This was an idea that died hard. After the Mari prophetic documents were found, Abraham Malamat said: “Alongside the academic and supposedly ‘rational system’ of predicting the future, we are confronted at Mari, and chronologically for the first time ever, with an atypical phenomenon for Mesopotamia: the remarkable manifestation of intuitive divination or, rather, prophecy, acquiring the word of the god through informal channels. This type of prophesying should properly be seen as a link in the chain of social and religious practices exclusive to Mari and in part similar to what is found in the Bible. These include the covenant-making ceremony, the ban as penalty for transgression, and the more controversial procedure of census-taking accompanied by ritual expiation [citing himself and a few others]. This assemblage of procedures, which could be described as a system of interrelationships, is undoubtedly an expression of the other component of the Mari experience—the West Semitic tribal heritage.” Abraham Malamat, “Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy: The Mari Documents,” in Ancient Israelite Religion: Essays in Honor of Frank Moore Cross, ed. Patrick D. Miller, Jr., Paul D. Hanson, and S. Dean McBride (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987; reprint, Essential Papers on Israel and the Ancient Near East, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn, Essential Papers in Jewish Studies. New York and London: NYU Press, 1991), reprint 154.

\(^{37}\) I again refer the reader to the volumes addressing prophecy broadly in the ancient Near East (see n. 35, supra) for all ancient Near Eastern prophecy. For additional materials related to the Hittite cultures, see, e.g., Gabriella Frantz-Szabó and Gary Beckman, “Hittite Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination,” 3:2007–19; Harry A. Hoffner, Jr.,
extensively, Mari. In some of these areas, for instance Babylonia and Mari, prophecy existed long before the known Israelite prophetic corpus. In some divinatory systems,


certain types of oracles or prophecies had to be confirmed through *impetrita* divinatory means. For example, the legitimacy of a dream oracle usually had to be verified by extispicy to determine that it was, indeed, a divine message.\(^{44}\) It, therefore, seems that prophecy was a subset of *oblativa* divination, where some forms might have to be confirmed by other divinatory means.

In *oblativa* divination, the omen, oracle, or prophecy might apply to either an individual or be broadly effective to a larger community of persons.\(^{45}\) Such a message did not necessarily seal the fate of the concerned individuals or community; we need not automatically link omens, oracles, or prophecy to predestination. As Frank T. Miosi states of Egypt:

> An Egyptian’s future was not considered fixed and predestined. It was, instead, seen as the result of a dynamic interaction between the individual—with his own desires, motivations, and actions, and his own

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\(^{43}\) For example, the Mari documents are dated to the Old Babylonian period, precisely the first half of the 18\(^{th}\) century B.C.E. This means that they are 500 years older than the oldest parts of the biblical texts, if we should date them to the 12\(^{th}\) through 11\(^{th}\) centuries B.C.E. Abraham Malamat, *Mari and the Bible*, Studies in the History and Culture of the Ancient Near East 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 4.

\(^{44}\) Such a legitimate dream was seen (*natālu*), as opposed to the common term *amāru*. Contrast *amāru*, *CAD* A/2, 5 with *natālu*, *CAD* N/2, 124, s.v. 2g.

physical and temporal environment—and the gods. The divine was imminent and was always reacting to man [sic], principally through the process of reward and punishment. When the future was revealed to a person through an oracle, he may simply have been finding out what god wanted him to do or what particular response or reaction god had in store for him based on his position at any given moment within the process of the law of reward and punishment. Divine revelation of some event in a totally static and predestined future is quite different from god’s revealing to someone what his future responses will be within a dynamically interactive system.46

The problematic behavior could be avoided. Furthermore, apotropaic rituals and prayers might favorably change the forewarned outcome.47 Usually, where some larger calamity


47 We have discovered many such incantations and rituals for specific situations. They were typically called namburbû rituals; the “undoing” of X evil. CAD, N/2, 224–25. They usually consisted of an incantation with accompanying rituals that served to transfer the evil to a disposable object. See further Richard Caplice, The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: An Introduction, Sources from the Ancient Near East 1/1 (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1974); idem, “Participants in the Namburbi Rituals,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 29, no. 3 (1967): 346–52. For example, the Šu-ila prayers (Prayers of the Lifting of the Hand) were incantation prayers that might be said. F. Rachel Magdalene observes the legal nature of many of these texts: “The language of litigation is also employed in namburbi rituals meant to forestall negative omens. In these situations, a diviner would bring a message of judgment and impending doom to an individual who had not yet suffered any calamity. In order to avoid such harm befalling the individual, he or she would bring the diviner before the divine court and plead innocence in the case. This was, in effect, a rehearing of an issue that was decided on summary judgment in light of the testimony of the now present defendant.” F. Rachel Magdalene, On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial Law and the Book of Job, Brown Judaic Studies 348 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic Studies, 2007), 22; citing for support S. M. Maul, “How the Babylonians Protected Themselves against Calamities Announced by Omens,” in Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretive Perspectives, ed. I. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn (Groningen: Styx, 1999), 123–29.
was to be expected that would adversely affect the entire community, a special public
ceremony in the palace or temple might be held to ward off the evil.\footnote{Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1899.}

One of the primary experts who participated in oblativa divination was the āšipu (“omen
reader,” “incantation priest,” “medical expert,” “diagnostician,” or “exorcist”).\footnote{Ibid., 3:1902; \textit{CAD} A/2, 431–45. See also the related “exorcist” “\textit{mašmāššu}” \textit{CAD} M/1, 381, s.v. a.} It
appears that the āšipu performed all public acts of ritual magic.\footnote{Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1903.} Such persons were
typically from important families, highly educated, and affiliated with a specific
temple.\footnote{Ibid., 3:1903.} Thus, an āšipu could use, and cooperate with, other temple personnel.\footnote{Ibid., 3:1904.} Their
education began as “scribes” or “apprentice magicians.” Then they became an āšipu. If
they were extremely connected or talented, they were promoted to “chief exorcist” (\textit{rab āšipī}).\footnote{\textit{CAD} A/2, 435, “overseer of the exorcists.” This entry relates the context
wherein he was in charge of preventing the evil effects of an eclipse.} They also seem to function as scholarly advisors to the kings, at least in the Neo-Assyrian period.\footnote{Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1903.} Omen-readers might also be prebend-holders, especially in Uruk.\footnote{Michael Jursa, \textit{Neo-Babylonian Legal and Administrative Documents. Typology, Contents and Archives}, Guides to the Mesopotamian Textual Record 1 (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2005), 32. For further information on prebends, see ibid., 31–35; G. van Driel, \textit{Elusive Silver. In Search of a Role for a Market in an Agrarian Environment. Aspects of Mesopotamia’s Society}, Uitgaven Van Het Nederlands
Consistent with that, their office seems to be handed down from one generation to the next.\textsuperscript{56} The lore or craft of the diviner was considered a secret, kept by the gods.\textsuperscript{57} Significantly, the only known attestation of a female human exorcist (\textit{āšiptu}) in Mesopotamia is in the anti-witchcraft series \textit{Maqlû} (III 43).\textsuperscript{58} Thus, this role was entirely forbidden for women, and, when usurped by a female, was apparently sufficient grounds to suspect her of “witchcraft.” This is not entirely unexpected because, although women could inherit rights in the financial lucrative temple prebends, they could not perform the required services and had to find a male substitute to fulfill the duties of the prebend.\textsuperscript{59} The king, not only used the \textit{āšipu} for various divinatory and scholarly functions, he also typically employed special astronomers-astrologers (\textit{tupšar enûma Anu Enlil}),\textsuperscript{60} who

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\textsuperscript{56} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1903.


\textsuperscript{58} \textit{CAD}, A/2, 431, “female exorcist.” This is only attenst in \textit{Maqlû}, the anti-sorcery ritual. See further my material at nn. 197–231, \textit{infra}.

\textsuperscript{59} Jursa, \textit{NB Legal and Administrative Documents}, 32; \textit{CAD Š}, 152, s.v., a)2'.

were connected directly with the palace or situated in one of the main temples of the land, to deal with celestial and significant geological phenomenon. They, too, might be prebend holders. It was those among the āšipu, however, who would preside over the lengthy rituals necessary to deal with the omens that the astronomer-astrologers read.

Mahhu / muḫḫu is the usual Akkadian term for male prophet, and mahhuṭu / muḫḫutu for a female prophet. These terms derive from the verb mahhu meaning “to be frenzied” or “to go into a trance.” The term nabu in a personal name means “one ‘called’ by a deity,” but was also used to refer to a prophet, apparently for the first time.

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61 Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1906–8. The main compendium of these omens is called En,ma Anu Enlil. The āšipu and astronomers were both part of a class of “scholars” (ummaš) who might be under the king’s employ. They include also the diviner, physician, and lament priest (kalu; CAD K 91–94, s.v. A). It appears in the Neo-Assyrian period, employment by the palace was at a zenith, but this suggestion may be skewed by the fact that archaeologists have found the Neo-Assyrian royal archives. I thank Roberto Sciandra of the University of Pisa, Italy, for his insights here. See Erle Leichty, “Divination, Magic, and Astrology in the Assyrian Royal Court,” in Assyria 1995 (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 161–64. Cf. Ossendrijver, “Babylonian Astronomers in Context: A Network Approach,” 2.

62 Again, I thank Roberto Sciandra.

63 Farber, “Witchcraft,” 1908.

64 See for mahhuṭum / muḫḫum, CAD, M/1, 90; for mahhuṭum / muḫḫum, CAD M/1, 91; CAD, M/2, 176–77 “woman ecstatic.”

65 See CAD, M/1, 115–16.

66 Jeremy Black, Andrew George, and Nicholas Postgate, eds. A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian, Sangtag 5 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1999), 228, s.v. nabu I [hereinafter A Concise Dictionary of Akkadian will be referred to as CDAtkk]. Cf. CAD, N/1, 35–36, s.v. A 3a.
in Mari, although there, the term designated a Hanean (Amorite) prophet. Additional terms were available in Mari. For instance, āpīlu(m) is a common term used to signify a male prophet and āpīlum a female prophet, deriving from verb apālu(m) “to answer” and, therefore, meaning literally “answerer” or “respondent.” A prophet or diviner named Abiya was referred to as an āpīlum and apparently functioned as a prophet-diviner in Mari. Nonetheless, the terms mahhūm or muḥhūm, and mahhūtum or muḥhūtum were also used in Mari. When the āpīlum had a prophetic message, it had to be authenticated by extispicy; however, when uttered by a muḥhū, no verification was necessary. We,

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67 H. B. Huffmon, “Prophecy (ANE),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary, ed. David Noel Freedman, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992) 5:479. Huffman notes this information, but believes that this may actually be a diviner rather than a prophet. Ibid. Either meaning is recorded by CDAkk or CAD. See the note immediately above.


70 Malamat, Mari and the Bible, 17–18.

71 In ARMT 10 100, a woman filled with divine inspiration writes to King Zimri-Lim in the name of Dagan regarding her daughter [or a friend] who had been kidnapped by two traveling men. Dagan appeared in a dream and declared that Zimri-Lim has the ability to make this possible. See Malamat, Mari and the Early Israelite Experience, 83.

72 Durand, Archives Épistolaire de Mari 1/1, 388–90.

thus, see once again the need for confirmation of prophetic utterances in certain situations. Still others in Mari might prophesy or give oracles. For example, a qam(m)ātum was either a priestess or a category of priestesses, whose role in the temple is not clearly defined, but such an individual could utter an oracle or prophecy. A case in point is that of an ecstatic woman through whom a divine spirit spoke in the temple of the goddess Annunītum in Mari. She seemed to “channel” the goddess directly through her because the woman speaks in the first person: “Zimri-Lim, you will pass through trial by way of a rebellion. Protect yourself!…Do not go there by yourself…And the people who seek to put you through trial, I will deliver them into your hand.” Still another title used in the Middle-Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian, and Neo-Babylonian periods is raggimu (male) and raggimtu (female), meaning a “proclaimer.”

During impetrita divination, on the other hand, the diviner would take the initiative for communication with the divine by inquiring of the gods concerning a particular matter and using divination to read the divine response, which the relevant god would inscribe in the divinatory sign. This was usually done at the behest of some

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74 Durand, Archives Épistolaire de Mari 1/1, 396.

75 Ibid., 442. Other cases where a divine spirit speaks to a king through a woman in the first person include a prophecy of victory addressed to Zimri-Lim, king of Mari and another oracle concerning Hammurabi, king of Babylon. Ibid., 440, 442.

76 Ibid., 442.

77 Huffmon, “Prophecy (ANE),” 5:480; raggimtu CAD, R, 67 “prophetess”; raggimu, CAD, R, 67 “prophet”; ragāmu CAD, R, 62 (definition 1 “to call, to call out”; definition 2 “to prophesy”).

78 In Akkadian literature for instance, it is the deity Šamaš who inscribes the signs on the liver of a goat. Ivan Starr, The Ritual of the Diviner (Malibu: Undena, 1983), 107.
individual. Many divinatory instruments could be used. They include *inter alia*:

belomancy (the shaking or tossing of arrows); 79 extispicy (reading of sacrificed animals’ entrails generally, including the lungs and gall bladder); 80 hepatoscopy (the reading of sacrificed animals’ livers, particularly); 81 incubation (where one spends the night in the


temple sanctuary or another holy place in order to invoke a divine communication through a dream) and oneiromancy (reading of dreams), lecanomancy (reading oil poured on water), libanomancy (reading of smoke from a censer), cleromancy (lot casting), thaumaturgy (again, used here in the sense of consultation with departed spirits), and still more. Usually commentators suggest that a simple “yes” or “no”
answer would be given. If the answer were not clear when a given *impetrita* divinatory practice was used, the process could be repeated until a clear sign was given; or, where numerous signs existed that were both positive and negative, as in the case of a liver reading, that mathematical majority won the day.\(^87\) There were times, however, when the reports were framed more in terms of “very favorable”, “favorable,” unfavorable,” or “very unfavorable.”\(^88\) Hepatoscopic extispicy was by far the most common form of *impetrita* divination and is attested from the first half of the second millennium and reached its peak under the Neo-Assyrian kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal in the 7\(^{th}\) c. BCE.\(^89\)

The geographic and chronological scope of *impetrita* divination is vast. Not every type of *impetrita* divination was practiced in every region, or, where practiced,

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necessarily practiced over the entire course of its history, or by the same individuals.\textsuperscript{90} Nonetheless, the literature makes clear that this type of divination was practiced in various forms across the ancient Near East and had a substantial role in the lives in people, from slaves to royalty. As certain divinatory practices could be expensive, such as where a sheep had to be purified and sacrificed in order to have its liver read, not all forms were available to the lower stratums of society. Moreover, when the military was on the move, it was probably limited to certain more mobile and inexpensive practices, such as lecanomancy. Nevertheless, matters great and small could be understood or decided in this way, including the outcome of war, whether one was innocent or guilty of a crime in the human or divine realm, whether one should open a business, or whether a baby would be successfully delivered.

When humans initiated the communication and a negative message was received, this did not necessarily mean that the future was set and unavoidable, just as in \textit{oblativa} divination. The message might just be a warning about some specific type of danger that should be abandoned.\textsuperscript{91} Again, aporopaic rituals and prayers were available. When evil was the cause of trouble, exorcism of an evil spirit, propitiation of an evil spirit, or transfer of an evil to an animate (typically a goat, but also pigs and mice, on rare

\textsuperscript{90} For example, \textit{CAD} maintains “After the OB period, there is no evidence for the \textit{bārū}’s performing libanomancy or lecanomancy, although the latter activity is still mentioned in the “handbook” for the \textit{bārū.” \textit{CAD}, B, 125 s.v. a) 3' e'; citing H. Zimmern, \textit{Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion}, no. 24. On the \textit{bārū}, see the material at n. 93, \textit{infra}.

\textsuperscript{91} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1899.
occasions a person) or inanimate object (such as a figurine) might also be utilized, according to Jo Ann A. Scurlock.92

The specialists who primarily performed such divinatory readings were the regular diviners, the bārû (“haruspex,” “examiners,” “observers,” or “seers”), and they were not necessarily members of the priesthood or connected to a temple.93 Most of these individuals worked for the king as a palace scholar, served a unit of local government, or were attached to the military in Mesopotamia.94 We also find such persons attested in Elam, Mari, and Alalakh.95 The šāʾilu, another diviner, was an “asker” or a “dream interpreter” and might function in the context of thaumaturgy.96 Hittite practices were similar, although we see even a less clear separation of omen-readers / exorcists from diviners.97 Additionally, many “old women” stood among the legitimate practitioners of magic in Anatolia.98

93 From the verb “barû,” CAD, B, 115–16, 117 s.v. A2. See additionally “diviner” in “bārû” CAD B, 121–25 and “divination” or “answer received through divination” “bārû” CAD, B, 264–65, s.v. A. According to CAD, “there is no meaningful difference between barû ‘diviner’ and mār bārî ‘member of the guild of diviners.’” CAD, B, 125 s.v. a) 3’e’.
95 “Bārû,” CAD, B, 115–16, 117, s.v. 2. An Egyptian diviner in the Neo-Assyrian period was called a ḫartibi. CDAkk, 108.
96 CAD, Š/1, 110–12, s.v. 1.
98 See note immediately above.
those authors stand exorcists, diviners, doctors, priests, but also “old women” and ladies of the court.\footnote{V. Haas, \textit{RLA}, 7: 238.} Women are also positively attested as \textit{bārītu} and \textit{šāʾiltu} in Mesopotamia.\footnote{For \textit{bārītu}, see, e.g., the Old Assyrian letter, TCL 4 5, line 5, in connection with a departed spirit. See further CAD, B, 112. For \textit{šāʾiltu} “woman diviner” see CAD, S/1, 109–10, s.v. 1.} In Egypt, however, a priest had to be present in all types of divination.\footnote{Miosi, “Oracles: Ancient Egypt,” 5:30.} Nonetheless, women clearly participated in the divinatory sciences in the ancient Near East.

Jean-Marie Durand has published 550 letters written by or for diviners about divinatory practices in Mari.\footnote{See Jean-Marie Durand and Dominique Charpin, \textit{Archives Épistolaires de Mari 1/1–2}, Archives Royales de Mari 26 (Paris: Éditions recherche sur les civilisations, 1988).} These letters testify to the existence of the \textit{bārūm}, “seer” or “observer.” Durand cautions, however, that \textit{bārūm} should not be equated with the Hebrew term \textit{roʾēh}, also usually translated as “seer.”\footnote{Durand, \textit{Archives Épistolaire de Mari 1/1}, 378.} In the Mari documents, diviners are also found in the imperial court and the army, and the materials do not distinguish political from the religious functions. The best known of the Mari diviners is a certain Asqudum, whose mansion has been discovered east of the Mari palace.\footnote{Malamat, “Forerunner of Biblical Prophecy,” reprint 154.} He functioned as military adviser to the king\footnote{Durand, \textit{Archives Épistolaire de Mari 1/1}, 159–80.} and also as a diviner with the ability to interpret signs.\footnote{158}
He is reported to have visited four towns (Saggara-tum, Terqa, Šuprum, and Mari) to perform extispicy in each of these areas for the welfare of the people. According to Durand, a “quartet” may signal an established administrative unit or region at Mari. Hence, Abraham Malamat notes: “the mention of just four cities in the circuits of each one of the diviners may not be coincidental.” One cannot help but to notice a striking resemblance to 1 Sam 7:16–17, where it is reported that Samuel went on an annual circuit to four major towns: Bethel, Gilgal, Mispah, and Ramah. “Then, he would come back to Ramah, for his home was there; he administered justice there to Israel, and built there an altar to the LORD” (7:17). Another ancient tale from Mari reports that a certain diviner, Asqudum, spoke to King Zimri-Lim regarding some lost asses. The king, it seems, had a newly acquired ass and also some others, all of which had been lost, “a fact confirmed by an inquiry of Asqudum.” These asses were, according to Asqudum, to be found in Qattunan in the northern part of Mari. Again, we can see similarities with the biblical text of 1 Samuel. The character Samuel, like Asqudum, knows of the lost asses for which Saul, who will later become king, is searching (1 Sam 9:3–20). These Mari documents,

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106 Ibid. 222–28.


112 Ibid., 103.
therefore, illustrate the significance of divination in the ancient world out of which the Bible grew and help the reader situate the Israelites in an environment where divinatory practice was common.

Other magico-religious incantations, prayers, and rites were employed in various situations. An individual might simply ask for divine protection, guidance, or assistance in a difficult situation. Incantations, prayers, and rituals could be used to solve estrangements in love or to ask for sexual potency, to request divine intercession for positive outcomes in undertaken endeavors (such as beginning a business), to protect oneself from various potential dangers (such as fire, illness, toothache, nightmares, and slander), to guide one through an arduous task (such as war or childbirth), or even to quiet a fussy baby. Calming an angry god and reconcile oneself with him or her could also be handled in such a manner. These incantations could be used prophylactically, as well. Magic could also be used to attach a further disincentive to break an oath or to give

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extra force to a curse,\textsuperscript{117} which was particularly important in the legal realm.\textsuperscript{118} The king, palace, and temple areas, because of their import had a special set of rituals available to initiate their use and to maintain their purity and integrity.\textsuperscript{119} The initiation of priests and priestesses also involved magic.\textsuperscript{120} The āšipu was essential to all such functions.

Suffering, both individual and corporate, was a most significant problem in the ancient Near East and, therefore, one of the most common impetuses to use divination. The sources of suffering were many; the gods, demons, angry departed spirits, maleficent humans, and natural phenomenon could all could affect one adversely.\textsuperscript{121} As a result, no clear dividing lines existed between rational and magico-religious medicine. Both were studied and available. We have a great deal of such material from Mesopotamia, often found catalogued in a sophisticated manner, much like we might organize it in the modern world.\textsuperscript{122} In Egypt, it seems that one of the main uses of magic was for medical purposes.\textsuperscript{123} The records indicate that there were two primary healthcare providers in

\begin{thebibliography}{9}


\bibitem{119} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 1902–3.

\bibitem{120} Scurlock, “Magic (ANE),” 4:465.


\bibitem{122} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1903?


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much of the ancient Near East, one the āšipu\textsuperscript{124} and the other the asû ("physician," "medical healer," or "scholar"),\textsuperscript{125} the former used more magio-religious means and the latter more of a hands-on medical approach, but their areas of expertise seemed to overlap in the healing arts.\textsuperscript{126} It is to be remembered, however, that exorcists (āšipu) performed all public acts of ritual magic and was a role forbidden to women.\textsuperscript{127} We have, on the other hand, several positive attestations for female physicians (asâtu).\textsuperscript{128} Thus, this role was open to women and did not create suspicion of "witchcraft," that is the unauthorized and negative use of divinatory science, \textit{per se}.

The gods could bring suffering, as well as blessings and joy. According to F. Rachel Magdalene, conviction for wrongdoing pursuant to a divine legal proceeding was one of the significant reasons that the gods brought misfortune upon one.\textsuperscript{129} The

\textsuperscript{124} Farber, "Witchcraft," 3:1902.

\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 3:1902. See also \textit{CAD} A/2, 344–47.

\textsuperscript{126} Biggs, "Medicine,” 3:1911, 1914.

\textsuperscript{127} See the material at my n. 58, \textit{supra}.

\textsuperscript{128} In Mesopotamia, see, e.g., TCL 10 107, lines 2, 27. In Anatolia, see, e.g., KUB 33: 47 i 8. See further \textit{CAD} A/2, 344–47.

\textsuperscript{129} According to Magdalene, this might have been the wrongdoing of oneself or the wrongdoing of a relative. Furthermore, the crime might have been done intentionally or unintentionally. Finally, one could be convicted for just a guilty intention alone, without any criminal or sinful acts having been committed. F. Rachel Magdalene, \textit{On the Scales}, 13–25. See also Hector Avalos, \textit{Illness and Health Care in the Ancient near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel}, Harvard Semitic Monographs 54 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995); Nils P. Heeßel, "Diagnosis, Divination and Disease: Towards an Understanding of the Rationale Behind The Babylonian Diagnostic Handbook," in \textit{Magic and Rationality in Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman Medicine}, ed. H. F. J. Hortmanshoff and M. Stol, Studies in Ancient Medicine 27 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 97–116, esp. 99; Michael Brennan Dick, "The Legal Metaphor in
suffering, whether it was illness or some other calamity, was the penalty one endured. If one knew what one’s crime was, it was fairly easy to correct the situation through ritual and prayer: one named the crime, confessed it, and asked pardon of the gods. Where, however, one did not know one’s crime, the suffering party could, through a priest, use certain incantations to inquire as to the nature of the problem so that one could then make confession and seek pardon. For example, in the important Šurpu incantation texts, the priest would list 95 possible offenses and ask the gods to identify the specific crime and pardon the petitioner.

Demons, too, could create difficulties for humans. We do not know a great many details about most of these demons, especially those taken over by the Akkadians from the Sumerians. We do, however, know a significant amount about Lamaštu, who

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created the most difficulties for pregnant women, young mothers, and babies; 133 Pazuzu, who worked against Lamaštu but caused other trouble for humans; 134 and a class of demons, the *ardat-lili*, who would seduce unmarried young persons and bring them death. 135 Divination revealed their workings, and various incantations, rituals, and amulets could be used against them. 136

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The spirits of those who had departed this world (etemmi or m̱tu) lived on in another realm, pursuant to the worldview of the ancient Near East, and these spirits would remain, in some instances, in contact with the living and even appear in apparitions.137 An etemmi is commonly called a “ghost”—a negatively-connoted term—by translators and commentators, but the term refers to all departed spirits whether non-active, active in positive ways, or active in negative ways.138 An etemmi is, however, somewhat different from a m̱tu—often translated “dead person”—although there are instances when they are interchanged.139 Scurlock relates: “A m̱tu was apparently fully human in appearance (if somewhat skeletal), whereas the etemmi was not.”140 The apparition of Samuel in Endor, with his cloak and all, was in the nature of a m̱tu, not an etemmi.

There is no doubt that spirits of the departed could pose a danger, and much ancient literature deals with this problem.141 A spirit could haunt the living and cause difficulty, especially if they had not been given a proper burial or had not received an


139 See “m̱tu,” CAD, M/2, 140–43.


appropriate funerary offering.\textsuperscript{142} Scurlock says simply: “In ancient Mesopotamia, the happiness of the dead in the netherworld was directly proportional to the quality and quantity of funerary offerings made to them by relatives whom they left behind in the upper world.”\textsuperscript{143} If one heard a spirit crying in one’s house, death would come according to the \textit{Şumma Alu} omen series. Rituals, often involving the \textit{kispu} offering—which was the name of the regular offerings for care of those who had passed beyond—could arrest their adverse behavior toward the responsible humans.\textsuperscript{144} Other rituals were also available.\textsuperscript{145}

Not all spirits were maleficent. Some served in protective functions and were regarded most positively in the ancient Near East.\textsuperscript{146} There even existed times of the year when the departed “were allowed to leave their home in the netherworld and to come back for short visits.”\textsuperscript{147} Such “friendly ghosts” could aid their human relatives.\textsuperscript{148}

\textsuperscript{142} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1897.


\textsuperscript{144} Farber, “Witchcraft,” 3:1898.


\textsuperscript{147} Scurlock, “Death,” 3:1889.

\textsuperscript{148} Eadem, “Magical Uses,” 93–107, quote on 107.

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Porter argues that an ancient Near Eastern ritual feast between the living and the spirits of the departed exists, which:

symbolizes and enacts the notion of social unity, or corporation and community…. [R]epresentations of the deceased, and the nature of interaction between the living and the dead, provide archetypes of the social world that may be idea or actual, or ideal and actual at one and the same time.\textsuperscript{149}

The departed played a significant role in the very social structure of ancient Near Eastern societies.

Nicholas T. Tromp acknowledges that a biblical tradition exists wherein the dead are \textit{elohim} and possessing of a special knowledge that is normally hidden from humanity.\textsuperscript{150} Ugaritic texts UT 62, 121–124, 128 help us to understand the spirits of the departed in the Levant, generally, and Israel, specifically. Tromp observes that both the \textit{rpum} are dead and can be connected to the nether world through UT 62, lines 16–18:

“\textit{tbkyn. tbqrnh. tštnn. bh} \textit{rt.ilm.ars} ‘You will weep for him, bury him, and put him in a cave of the gods of the earth.’”\textsuperscript{151} He also uses UT 128 iii, lines 13–15: “\textit{mid.rm}


\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., 176.
(krt).btk.rpi.ars.bphr.qbs.dnt: ‘Be most exalted of Krt, in the midst of the rpum of the earth, in the gathering of the assembly of Datan.’”\textsuperscript{152} Finally, he returns to UT 62, lines 44–48:

\begin{verbatim}
šps rpim. thtk
šps. thtk. ilnym
‘dk. ilm hn.mtm
dk\textsuperscript{153}
\end{verbatim}

As Tromp rightly observes, rpim and ilnym stand in chiastic parallel. He sees in this structure the possibility that rpim, ilnym, ilm, mtm are all on a par with each other and are some kind of inferior gods related to the dead. Noting that the common Northwest Semitic term ilnym is thought by scholars to mean inferior gods, he also states: “This use is reflected in 1 Samuel 28:8 where Saul asks the woman: ‘Divine for me by a spirit (‘lhym’)….. (See also 8:19).”\textsuperscript{154} Unfortunately, Tromp reads the text wrongly here: Saul asks the woman to divine an בם and not an אוד as Tromp asserts. Samuel is, however, the אוד who appears. Nevertheless, Tromp understands the term אוד as a “title” given to a spirit of the departed that has knowledge. This indicates the existence of an old tradition wherein the spirits of the dead were thought to be more than human beings.\textsuperscript{155} They are now of the supernatural and may possess substantial knowledge. I, therefore, disagree with the position of Brian B. Schmidt when he says: “Care for or

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 177.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Ibid.
feeding of the dead typically carries with it the implicit notion that the dead are weak; they have no power to affect the living in a beneficial way. . . . [T]he ancestors are not necessarily viewed as superior beings for they lack power.”

Thaumaturgy, the calling forth the departed to speak to those on earth to impart their superior knowledge, was an available divinatory technique of which some diviners made use. The Mesopotamians, indeed, used thaumaturgy. Irving Finkel relates that a male thaumaturgist was known, in Mesopotamia, as a ša eṭemmi or a mušēlu eṭemmi, a female practitioner was known as a mušēlu ūṣum, according to the lexical list Lu.158 The practice of raising a spirit of the departed was šūlū ša eṭemmi.159 Finkel reports several attestation of the practice although one, in a letter, is open to interpretation. The most well known report is contained within the Sumerian Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Netherworld. There, Negal summons the departed spirit of Enkidu from the Underworld for Gilgameš. Enkidu’s spirit rises thought a hole in the ground to converse with


158 Finkel, “Necromancy,” 1. Scurlock also reports that “a professional raiser of ghosts” existed, but again makes plain that this is attested only in lexical lists. Scurlock, “Magical Uses,” 106; citing Lu II iii 27’ and CAD, M/2, 265a s.v. mushēlu B lexical section, among other sources. See further “ša eṭemmi ” CAD, E, 401 “necromancer” (lexical lists only); “mušēlu eṭemmi” and “mušēlu ūṣum” CAD, M/2, 265 s.v. B3 “necromancer” (lexical list only); CDAkk, 221, definition 3: “priest performing incantation for the dead, “necromancer”; “šūlū ša eṭemmi” CAD, E, 133, s.v. elū v. 10d3’ “to raise or make appear” (Gilgameš).

Gilgameš. The relevant part of an Old Assyrian letter from Kuyunjik (TCL 4 5, lines 4–7) reads per Finkel: “Here we asked the female oracle givers (šā’lātum), the female diviners (bāriātum) and the spirits (etemmū): Assur repeatedly upbraids you….“ A second letter (ABL 614, reverse 2–8) reads, according to CAD E:

I shall show to the king [a tablet with the prophecy of a šā’iltu-necromancer] in the truth of Assur (and) Šamaš they (the spirits) have told me (that he will be) the crown prince of Assyria, her (the dead queen’s?) ghost blesses him (and says) as (the prince) has shown reverence to the ghost, “His descendants shall rule over Assyria!”

Notice that šā’lātum may be translated in different ways: “female oracle giver,” “necromancer,” and “female diviner.”

Finkel adds two other references to divining by the departed to this list of three: BM 36703 in Late Babylonian Akkadian from Babylonia and a Neo-Babylonian tablet from Kuyunjik, K 2779. The first and larger tablet has two incantations. The first is a precautionary incantation, just in case a malevolent demon or spirit, several of whom are

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160 That the spirits depart and rise through a hole in the earth is also seen in A. van Selms comment: “The grave as a hole in the ground is part of the domain of the earth-gods” A. van Selms, Marriage and Family Life in Ugaritic Literature (London: Luzac, 1954), 131; cited by Tromp, Primitive Conceptions, 177.

161 Finkel, “Necromancy,” 1, his translation.


163 Presumably from “šā’iltum”; CAD Š/1, 109–10.

164 Now cited as AfO 29 2 and AfO 29 4, respectively, as Finkel published copies.
named, accidentally arises through the opened portal. The second is less clear. Finally, the text (obverse, column ii, lines 1–10') requests “Šamaš to summon etemmi etūtī” (a deceased spirit from the darkness). Finkel states of this: “Šamaš...has the power and authority to bring up (šūlû) a ghost from the Underworld, and the whole operation is under his auspices. Somehow the ghost will enter into the skull [used to receive it], and answer questions put to him.” Lines 11’–13’ indicated that another ritual, involving the application of a potion and a spoken incantation, allow the thaumaturgist actually to see and hear the spirit in the skull: “you will see the ghost, he will [speak(?)] with you; you can look (at the ghost), he will [talk] with you.” Although the skull provokes a chillingly negative emotion in most of us moderns, skulls were important medically and for exorcisms in the ancient Near East and not negative per se.

The second tablet Finkel introduces is quite similar in many regards and may have been written by the same scribe. It also involves the ritual to enable the thaumaturgist to see the risen spirit of the departed, although here the tablet only says: “you can look at the ghost, he will talk to you.” It also contains a ritual incantation to

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166 Ibid., 5. My translation.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Ibid., 13.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid.
ward off any ill effects from contact with the crying of a spirit; thus, it is a namburbi (apotropiac ritual) tablet. Finkel states of this:

Given that the tablet belongs to the namburbi genre, it is fully intelligible that lines 10–18 should give ritual and incantation “to avert the evil (inherent) in the crying of a ghost” (ana lumun šis īt età ȅfèmmi parāsí, line 10). It is known from the omen series Šumma Alu that disastrous consequences, usually death, followed personal contact with a ghost. Lines 28–47 of Tablet XIX (CT 35 26 and dupls.) are devoted to this theme, and in twenty-two cases hearing the “cry” of a ghost is specified. Thus, the very process described in lines 1–9 of summoning a ghost with the deliberate intention of provoking speech from it could be fatally charged, unless steps were taken to remove the danger that would automatically be incurred.

I suggest that Finkel reads the text under the influence of modern biases shaped in medieval Europe, which I explain more fuller later in this chapter. We can see this best when he comments regarding the potion used in the ritual to see the departed spirit:

“At the testimony of both sources, an elaborate magical concoction quite worthy of Macbeth’s Three Witches is to be prepared.” Scurlock offers that the end of the month of Abu, one of those times when the departed could leave the netherworld, “provided a favorable opportunity to ask dead relatives to stop bothering their kin [if doing so], to persuade them to take along evils as they returned to the netherworld, and to consult them for supernatural advise.” Hence, the better understanding of what lies

172 Ibid., 5.


behind the provision regarding deadly ghosts in Šumma Alu is not that the presence of, or contact with, a departed spirit alone is the cause of death because spirits may also serve good purposes. Rather, we should understand that doing whatever it is that has made the spirit “cry,” will cause the spirit to act adversely toward one and to cause one’s death. I suggest that, in thaumaturgy, it is highly unlikely that one would intentionally call up an angry, crying, indeed homicidal spirit to read the future. What is more likely to happen is that one opens a pathway to the otherworld to reach a given spirit, and, in so doing, another spirit, who is also an unhappy, crying spirit, might arise to cause problems. Thus, one needs protection from such an accidentally raised spirit during thaumaturgy. I argue that the incantation of protection in K 2779 is much like in the first incantation, that is, it is for protection against a secondary crying spirit who might arise unintentionally and accidentally in the thaumaturgic process.176

In spite of whatever bias Finkel may or may not have, he goes on to suggest something of great importance based on these two tablets:

It seems reasonable on the basis of what survives to describe BM 36703 above as a necromancer’s manual listing a whole collection of rituals and incantations needed to undertake the safe conjuration of the spirits of the dead. Given that necromancy was practised at times, the existence of such a manual is to be expected.177

Necromancy was practiced in the ancient Near East, so much so that scribes produced a manual, a scientific treatise, for practitioners of the art. Scurlock has indicated more

176 Brian B. Schmidt follows Finkel here, and, thus, I again disagree with him. Schmidt, Israel’s Beneficent Dead, 216 n. 370.

recently: “We have a number of manuals or the performance of necromancy, or as the ancient Mesopotamians called such procedures, ‘Incantation (to be used when you wish) to see a ghost in order to make a decision.’”\textsuperscript{178}

If this were a wholly negative art, the likelihood is very small that an educated, palace or temple supported, scribal school would have written several such manuals. We have many anti-“sorcerer” texts in the ancient Near East, as we will see below shortly, i.e., texts against the negative and anti-social uses of magic, but no pro-“sorcerer” texts. No texts support anti-social uses of magic. I, therefore, conclude from the existence of necromancy manuals that were produced in the scribal schools that necromancy was a positive and useful divinatory art that could be practiced by those who had the requisite skills. H. W. F. Saggs concluded in 1978 that ABL 614 is evidence that the practice of thaumaturgy was well regarded in Assyrian society.\textsuperscript{179} Finkel deems this, however, as over-reading the evidence.\textsuperscript{180} Ironically, I believe that Finkel proved Saggs essentially correct, even if that one letter was insufficient to prove Saggs’ case: thaumaturgy was well regarded in various cultures of the ancient Near East. A manual of such is sufficient proof. Now we have many.


\textsuperscript{180} Finkel, “Necromancy,” 3.
Other cultures of the ancient Near East also divined by departed spirits. The Hittites practiced thaumaturgy, but the details of the procedure are lost to us.  

Robert K. Rittner has recently argued that “divination by the dead” is found in the Middle Kingdom, with precedents in the Old Kingdom, and is referenced in the Demotic Magical Papyrus. He maintains that, during the New Kingdom, the incubation rituals of the cult of Imhotep were a form of “necromancy” since the spirit of the dead Imhotep was conjured in a dream vision to answer petitioners’ questions regarding [medical] cures. Although this is not precisely how we think of thaumaturgy, it does have important points of contact. He also confirms the earlier suspicion that the many “Letters of the Dead” that we have in Egypt were used to inquire of the dead about many matters. He refers to the letters as “literary necromancy.” He continues:

By the time of Ramses III, the consultation of deceased royalty for popular instruction was a commonplace affair. At the workmen’s village of Deir el-Medineh…, an oracle of the early Eighteenth century ruler Amenhotep I had dominated local religion and jurisprudence for well over a century.

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183 Ibid., 91.

184 Ibid.

Carried in a litter borne by purified devotees in a heightened state of ecstasy, a statute inhabited by the spirit of the dead monarch was petitioned directly by members of the community. Motions of the litter or selected written texts indicted a response. Such questions concern not only “hidden knowledge,” but requests for “revealing future events”… Question for future knowledge concern almost every aspect of private life.\(^\mathrm{186}\)

Finally, by the time of the Hellenistic Demotic Magic Papyri, various vessel divination attest to bringing a “dead man” into the vessel to inquire of him.\(^\mathrm{187}\) One such incantation includes the formula: “Speak to me, speak to me…every spirit, every shadow who is in the west and the east! Do it, O he who has died! Awaken to me, awaken to me!”… [T]he deceased is summoned to provide an answer to “everything” that the seeker might wish to ask.\(^\mathrm{188}\)

Clearly this is thaumaturgy.

I now turn to human agents’ use of the supernatural to cause suffering. I have discussed above how human magio-religious personnel could harness the supernatural for good throughout the ancient Near East; they could also, however, harness it for evil.

Again, this phenomenon was not confined to Mesopotamia or any other single geographic region.\(^\mathrm{189}\) It is critical to understand that so-called “black magic” did not exist

\(^{\mathrm{186}}\)Rittner, “Necromancy in Ancient Egypt,” 93.


\(^{\mathrm{188}}\)Rittner, “Necromancy in Ancient Egypt,” 90; quoting col. 8/11–12, in Betz et al., \textit{Greek Magical Papyri}, 238–39.

\(^{\mathrm{189}}\)As Raymond Westbrook notes: “Witchcraft is an almost universal phenomenon, deeply rooted in folk culture. In the first millennium B.C.E. in Mesopotamia it was the subject of a major learned treatise, called \textit{Maqlû} (“Burning”), but there are many references to witchcraft throughout cuneiform literature, going back at least as far as the late third millennium.” Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 289.
as a separate art in the ancient Near East because the same techniques were used whether
to good purposes or to bad.\textsuperscript{190} Hence, the evil intention and goals of the practitioner were
the critical components in labeling a given use of the supernatural as positive or negative.
Any anti-social or negative use of magico-religious techniques was considered to be
capable of bringing significant harm, even death, to its victim. Hence, its use was
“criminal” in nature and many options for relief were possible, as I will soon discuss.\textsuperscript{191}

If someone used the supernatural in an ill-intended or anti-social manner, it was
\textit{kišpu} (sorcery or witchcraft) and the individual in question was considered either a
\textit{kaššāpu} (sorcerer or wizard) or a \textit{kaššāptu} (sorceress or witch) in Akkadian. The
Egyptians did not, on the other hand, distinguish linguistically between well-intended and
maleficent magico-religious practices: both were called \textit{heka}.\textsuperscript{192} We assume that the
professional diviners tended to use their craft for the good. Witchcraft accusations tend to
come against laypersons. Some of the divinatory practices, such as reading sheep entrails,
\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{190} As Westbrook states: “Magic can be white or black, according to whether its
purpose was to benefit or to harm.” Ibid., 290. While we do not agree with the use of the
terms “white” and “black,” the point is made. Scurlock disagrees with the position that

\textsuperscript{191} The distinction between civil and criminal law of the modern period does not
exist in the same way in ancient times. Moreover modern and ancient Near Eastern views
of culpability are not identical either. See further Johannes Renger, “Wrongdoing and Its
Sanctions: On “Criminal” and “Civil” Law in the Old Babylonian Period,” \textit{Journal of the
Economic and Social History of the Orient} 20, no. 1 (1977): 71–72; Raymond
Westbrook, \textit{Studies in Biblical and Cuneiform Law} (Paris: Gabalda, 1988), 8; idem,
create a duty in public officials to deal with it, as I will discuss below. Thus, I use the
word “criminal” here.

\textsuperscript{192} Scurlock, “Magic (ANE),” 4:466.
\end{footnotesize}
needed a certain level of expertise and would be difficult for a layperson to perform adequately, although others, such as creating a clay figurine and saying a maleficent incantation with it, were relatively easy to use. While the lore of the diviner was considered to be secret, I suspect that much was an open secret, available to those who chose to observe it. Consequently, the uneducated laity might harness them to good or evil purposes.

When someone was suffering, they would typically consult an expert to determine the source of the harm, but it was possible to suspect the cause without such consultation. Witchcraft could be blamed. It has been said that this worldview suggests that persons can ask the gods to do evil to a person and they will; it presumes that evil manipulation of the gods or other supernatural beings is possible, unless the perpetrator publicly made clear the evil intent. ¹⁹³ We will see in a moment that this may not be completely accurate. Of course, sorcerers or sorceresses could also harness demons and departed spirits to do their dirty work for them. ¹⁹⁴ Not all was left up to the gods in such cases.

When the kišpu seemed to have worked, the victim had several means of dealing with it. These include: 1) prayer to the gods, seeking either their aid or a formal legal judgment in the divine court against the perpetrator; 2) a defensive use of similar magio-religious techniques, which might include amulets, apotropaic figurines, and other rituals; 3) use of a professional exorcist to counteract the negatively intended magic; and 4) suing


the perpetrator in a human court. Because of the anti-social ends of *kišpu*, it was presumed that all such acts would be done in secret; thus, openness of the act was considered a defense to the charge of using *kišpu*.

The most important of the anti-kišpu rituals are found on the *Maqlû* (“burning”) tablets. The first ritual incantation in *Maqlû* describes, according to Raymond Westbrook, the petition of the sickened victim of *kišpu* “to the gods to judge his case.” He continues, “the case turns upon a…false accusation of the victim before the gods, which has led them to inflict him with certain injuries.” The harm alleged in this incantation is that the perpetrator (*elēnītu* “deceiver”) has lied and falsely accused the victim before the gods. Thus, false suit, perjury, and the anti-social use of the supernatural coalesce here. Consequently, the gods have not participated knowingly in the evil intention and goals of the perpetrator. Instead, the gods were misused when they were given false information. The gods are not willing participants in the anti-social use of magic, but they are manipulated through lies and false suits. Justice is available

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200 We would note that these gods are not, in this case, considered omniscient.
from the divine court, just as false suit, perjury, or homicide by other means would be in
the human court.\footnote{201}

It is critical to understand that we have, at this time, only one case where criminal
charges were reportedly lodged against \textit{anyone} for sorcery in any known legal document
of practice in the ancient Near East.\footnote{202} Two royal autobiographies describe one incident
each.\footnote{203} Several of the so-called law codes do, however, mention sorcery as illegal
activity.\footnote{204} I maintain that the use of the divine court was advisable in most of these cases
because the perpetrator of such was either unknown to the victim or the possible
consequences of a direct legal assault on a known or suspected perpetrator were too great

\footnote{201} Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 293.

\footnote{202} The only legal record of a witchcraft trial is Bo. 557 which is too broken to
determine the status of the parties according to Westbrook. Westbrook, “Witchcraft and
Law” reprint 294. An edition of the broken record may be found in Rudolf Werner,

\footnote{203} Hattusili III, of Anatolia, recounts, in his political autobiography, that before
he became emperor, his relative and political rival, Arma-Tarhunt\'ašša, his wife, and son,
together used witchcraft (\textit{alwanzatar}) upon him and Samuha, city of the god (II 74–79;
autobiography may be found in Heinrich Otten, \textit{Die Apologie Hattusilis III: Das Bild der

\footnote{204} Westbrook states: It is a recurring theme in the cuneiform law codes, albeit in
sparse measure: the laws of Ur-Namma (CU), Hammurabi (CH), the Middle Assyrian
Laws (MAL), the Hittite Laws (HL), and the Neo-Babylonian Laws (NBL) all have one
or more paragraphs dealing with diverse aspects of witchcraft. The Edict of Telipinu
devotes a paragraph to witchcraft, which is also the subject of several records of
litigation. Outside the cuneiform sphere, the Hebrew Bible has a few pertinent
regulations. Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 289–90. It should be noted that
Westbrook only mentions one litigation text (see n. 204, supra), and no other authors that
I found mention any.
to be risked.\footnote{Maqlû I informs us that the victim-plaintiff could, in this situation, bring a representative figurine of the unknown perpetrator before the gods, just as he or she would bring a defendant before the human court: “I have made a figurine of my sorcerer and of my sorceress (kaššapīa u kaššaptīa), of my wizard and of my witch (ēpišīa u muštepištīa), I have laid it at your feet and stated my case (adibbub dīnī).\footnote{While the translations given here of the phrase “ēpišīa u muštepištīa” are in no way unusual, I would note that they derived from epēšu II, meaning typically “to do, act, make, or build.” Literally, this phrase means “my doer (masc.) and my causer of it to be done (fem.)” It is only in this specific lexical context that the words might be translated “wizard and witch” or “sorcerer and sorceress.” Be that as it may, with the figurine and the requisite ritual, the victim-plaintiff would bring the perpetrator to divine trial and counteract any negative magico-religious forces at work by burning the figure.\footnote{Farber, “Witchcraft,” 1898.}} While the translations given here of the phrase “ēpišīa u muštepištīa” are in no way unusual, I would note that they derived from epēšu II, meaning typically “to do, act, make, or build.”\footnote{While the translations given here of the phrase “ēpišīa u muštepištīa” are in no way unusual, I would note that they derived from epēšu II, meaning typically “to do, act, make, or build.” Literally, this phrase means “my doer (masc.) and my causer of it to be done (fem.)” It is only in this specific lexical context that the words might be translated “wizard and witch” or “sorcerer and sorceress.” Be that as it may, with the figurine and the requisite ritual, the victim-plaintiff would bring the perpetrator to divine trial and counteract any negative magico-religious forces at work by burning the figure.}\footnote{Farber, “Witchcraft,” 1898.}}

Westbrook also suggests that the use of kišpū created a form of public pollution, much in the manner of blasphemy, idolatry, adultery, incest, and similar high culpability crimes, where the gods themselves were offended.\footnote{Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 291.} “[U]nlike homicide or adultery,”
however, “where impurity was a side-product, the very essence of witchcraft was to create impurity.”\textsuperscript{210} It was, consequently, a “highly toxic” type of crime.\textsuperscript{211} As a result, public officials were expected to deal with this type of criminal-polluting activity, just as they were expected to deal with other types of criminal-polluting activity.\textsuperscript{212}

Sorcery also created, per Westbrook, a private right in the victim for revenge or restitution, much like in the case of homicide, which we can note in the Code of Hammurabi (CH) §2. This paragraph addresses the situation where one individual accuses another of sorcery, but fails to bring rational evidence. The accused is sent to the river ordeal. If he fails (by dying), the plaintiff takes his house. If he should pass (and live), the plaintiff is killed for false suit and the defendant takes the plaintiff’s house in accord with \textit{lex talion}. As mentioned above, this penalty provision may be one of the key reasons that witchcraft accusations were rarely lodged in court.\textsuperscript{213} Westbrook suggests that the king or the victim might have been able to mitigate the penalty, as in the case of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{210} Ibid., 292.
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\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
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\textsuperscript{212} Per Westbrook, we can see this in both §50 of the Edict of Telipinu and in MAL A 47. Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 293. He says: “The interest of the palace in suppressing witchcraft is confirmed by, where the king intervenes to force an eye-witness to witchcraft who has been denounced by a hearsay witness to present his testimony. King, prince, and royal exorcist are all involved in the case. The paragraph gives the impression that witchcraft was seen as a public danger, requiring mobilization of government power in order to suppress it.” Ibid. For an edition of the Edict of Telipinu (CTH no. 19) may be found in I. Hoffmann, \textit{Der Erlass Telipinus}, TdH 11 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984), 42–99.
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adultery.\textsuperscript{214} In the Code of Ur-Namma (CU) ¶13, the penalty is only 3 shekels for the false accusation, which seems light.\textsuperscript{215} Thus, Westbrook suggests that CH ¶2 may address an intentionally false accusation, where the one in CU ¶13 addresses one made in the heat of argument; the fine addressed the difference in culpability.\textsuperscript{216} According to the Hittite Laws (HL) ¶170, where an attempted use of sorcery did not result in harm, the penalty was reduced where the perpetrator was a free man, but this is not true where the perpetrator was a slave—the attempt equals the commission in that situation.\textsuperscript{217}

Although we agree with Westbrook on the above, he additionally argues that the so-called law codes and “autobiographical” materials suggest that a class of professional sorceresses existed.\textsuperscript{218} “Sorceresses” is the appropriate term because, he maintains, such

\textsuperscript{214} Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 293.

\textsuperscript{215} Ibid., 294. Cf. HL 44b, about which Westbrook says “is an apt illustration: leaving the polluted residues from a purification ritual (\textit{kuptar}) elsewhere than in a designated incineration dump is regarded as so serious a matter that it could result in death for the culprit. In HL 44b and 111 (leaving the residues from a purification ritual on a person’s property and making a figurine, respectively) the performing of acts of sorcery without proof of actual harm is deemed sufficiently serious to be referred to the king’s jurisdiction, presumably because the royal court has the authority to impose the death penalty.” Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 293.

\textsuperscript{216} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{217} Ibid., 294; citing HL 170: “If a free man kills a snake and speaks the name of another, he shall give 40 shekels of silver. If it is a slave, he himself shall die. Although the penalty was high for a free man.” Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. points out, however, that penalty is relatively high. Harry A. Hoffner, Jr. \textit{The Laws of the Hittites: A Critical Edition}, Documenta et Monumenta Orientalis Antiqui 23 (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1997: 189, §44b).

\textsuperscript{218} Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 294.
professionals were for the most part women; men were the rare exception. Penalties for such professionals were much greater than for the amateur who ventured into the area. Westbrook notes that we have record in the Tawananna affair, when Mursili accused the Queen Mother of allegedly causing his wife’s death by witchcraft, that the Queen Mother hired a woman who pronounced spells (hukmaš-incantations) against Mursili’s wife. Further, Westbrook argues: “Maqlû (III 121–122) raises the possibility of someone commissioning a professional witch (ēpištu) or sorceress (sāḫīrtu).” I am less inclined to agree to this suggestion. It is very difficult to assess his claim. First, his evidence here, unlike many of his works, is somewhat sketchy and poorly argued. Second, although it is always hard to separate out anyone’s post-Enlightenment European biases on the subject, Westbrook makes his fairly plain. He states during his analysis: “Lev 20:27 prescribes public stoning for a type of professional medium, whose gender is identified as ‘a man or a woman,’ whereas the only known example of this type of medium in the narratives is a woman: the ‘witch’ of Endor (1 Sam 28:7ff.).” This convinces us that this part of his analysis of witchcraft is inadequate and more ideologically driven than philologically or legally based.

219 Ibid.


222 Ibid.
There is no doubt in my mind that women had divinatory powers that could often be exercised within socially prescribed bounds. If, however, they overstepped them, such as in performing the functions of the āšipu, they were considered witches. 223

Furthermore, no layperson had apparent access to all the available magio-religious techniques, and certainly not women. I think it does makes sense that some laypersons, who had some level of knowledge, could be hired out to perform some types of magio-religious rituals, but it is not yet clear that we should label them, in all cases, “professional witches” or that they were necessarily or usually women. It is more than possible that laywomen could harness certain types of magic to affect the supernatural world and, through it, the natural world. As I said earlier in this project, I believe that women, throughout history, have exercised their spirituality through whatever means they had at their disposal because they had significantly less access to institutional religious power. I have also argued that history has demonstrated that women were generally suspected more frequently of sorcery than were men and faced greater penalties, probably because their religious roles were so carefully prescribed and any move to circumvent them was treated harshly. Thus, I maintain that we must read all

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223 I note, e.g., his discussion of Neo-Babylonian Laws (NBL) ¶7: “NBL 7 apparently concerns a similar problem, involving a woman who is a professional but not, apparently, a witch: “A woman who performs nēpešu or a ritual purification (takpirtu) in a man’s field or boat or oven or anything, (concerning) the trees (literally, ‘wood’—what is growing in the field) on which she performs, she shall give the owner of the field three times its yield. If she does the purification on a boat, in an oven, or anything else, she shall give threefold the losses caused to the object (text: ‘field’). If she is seized in the doorway of a man’s house, she shall be killed.” Westbrook, “Witchcraft and Law” reprint 295. Nēpešu means “activity, procedure, CDakk, 250. On a linguistic level, no grounds exist for deciding the woman is a professional or a witch. Obviously, something deserving of a penalty has occurred here, but precisely what remains unclear.
witchcraft texts with hermeneutics of both suspicion and resistance. My conclusion is that much more work needs to be done on the ancient Near Eastern evidence before we can assert with any confidence that a professional class of sorceresses existed in fact and not merely in the possibly suspicion minds of male authorities (or modern male scholars) and that the law-codes of the ancient Near East address them.

What is clear is that much of ancient Near Eastern life involved magico-religious efforts. Divination was a logical, associative science. Divinatory practices played a central role in the ancient world, religiously and politically, privately and publicly. The boundary between divination and prophecy was nebulous in the ancient Near East.

Divinatory practice included thaumaturgy. The spirits of the departed were not necessarily evil or dangerous, but rather, could function in positive ways. They did have needs that had to be met to keep them content, just as living humans have fundamental needs that must be met if we are to remain content. If, however, those needs were met, the spirits of the departed would exist in peace and were available for consultation by those with thaumaturgic skills. Moreover, women had roles within many ancient Near Eastern divinatory systems. In some instances, a divine being could even speak through a woman or to a woman. Different cultures within this area seemed to grant women larger roles in the divinatory system than did others. Sorcery could be practiced by both men and women; and the most important elements in determining whether or not a given practice was sorcery had to do with whether one overstepped one’s socially prescribed role and whether one’s intention and goal were maleficent.
Not all divinatory practices were precisely identical over the geographic and chronological expanses of the ancient Near East. Some cultures seemed to have drawn a greater divide between certain types of divination and limit one or the other to certain professionals or classes of individuals. Women might have larger or smaller roles. Yet, these differences seem fairly minor. No culture seemed to oppose completely the fundamental worldview.

Israelites shared in this common worldview with others of the ancient Near East. This magio-religious worldview and specific divinatory practices deeply influenced the people of ancient Israel. Some Israelites adopted all of it most whole-heartedly; others criticized vehemently some of the practices. The divinatory views of Israel are not one; rather they are dialogic, as I am soon to demonstrate. The biblical writers are very much in dialogue with the views of the cultures around them and with each other. The Hebrew word study of Chapter 4 will help us to comprehend this idea more fully. Right now, however, we turn to medieval through post-enlightenment Christian European views on magic, divination, and witchcraft.

*Magic, Divination, and Witchcraft in Christian Europe*

In discussing Europe, I wish to begin at the end. I offer first a brief exploration and analysis of Robert La Roche’s statements about divination in Central Africa because I believe that he best articulates the ideology that Christian Europe generally brought to, and imposed on, African indigenous ways of life.\(^{224}\) His full-length study of divination in

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Central Africa speaks as no other work has concerning how Europeans experienced indigenous divinatory practices and why they sought (and continue to seek) to disrupt them. Although this was written in 1957, it expresses views very long-held both before and for some time after its date. While today his view may seem antiquated to many, it is, unfortunately, still present within some Christian contexts on the African continent. Only after this work, will I discuss the historical roots of this ideology.

Robert La Roche defines divination as “une espèce de superstition.”225 He defines superstition as “un attachment excessif à des croyances ou à des pratiques religieuses peu utiles et même fausses.”226 La Roche’s definition of these terms negates divinatory practices. This is seen in his further characterization of divination as “une vaine recherche des choses cachées par des moyens inaptes à les faire connaître...c’est au démon que la divination demande cette connaissance, peu importe les moyens employés: esprits, asters, sorts, entrailles des animaux, etc.”227 In discussing thaumaturgy, in particular, he asserts that a demon enters a cadaver and speaks through its mouth to give it its revelation.228 It is with such a sweeping negative ideology regarding divination that La Roche embarks on his research on divination in his book.

La Roche forefronts a distinction between the worldview of the “civilisés” and that of the “primitifs.” In his attempt to draw this distinction between the world of the

225 Ibid., 1.
226 Ibid., 2.
227 Ibid., 26.
228 Ibid., 101.
civilisés and that of the primitifs, La Roche states, “Pour le noir, plus que pour nous, la vie est entourée des mystères: nombre d’événements et des faits, qui se passent autour de lui, restent inexplicables” (“For the black more than for us, life is surrounded with mysteries: [a] number of events and facts happening around him remain inexplicable”).229 The civilisés know about cause and effect. Le noir has no knowledge to explicate events and facts around her-him. The civilisés participate in knowledge production; le noir cannot. Les civilisés sont “nous;” les primitifs sont “eux,” les noirs, les autres.

He asserts les indigènes de l’Afrique central believe in a world filled with divine beings: the Supreme God who is good and sovereign. This Supreme Being does not govern the world, but allows “des subaltern beings,” the spirits to rule. Such spirits, affirms La Roche, can be both good and bad. Le noir, because they are ignorant of scientific cause and effect, explains sickness and other life calamities through the actions of angry spirits, who can cause epidemics, death, and other catastrophes. Among the civilisés, spiritualists speak with authority of disincarnated souls, while among the primitifs, indigenous people turn to the spirits of ancestors, who accomplish extraordinary things, but with the help of demons.230 The indigenous diviner is believed to have the ability to communicate with these spirits / demons.

Finally, La Roche draws another difference between divinatory practices performed dans nos pays versus those performed en Afrique Centrale:

229 Ibid., 61.
230 Ibid., 25.
Dans nos pays Chrétiens, la consultation d’un diseur de bonne aventure ou d’une cartomancienne est tout au plus une faute légère lorsqu’on agit par curiosité, par plaisanterie, sans ajouter réellement foi aux réponses obtenues. Mais nous ne croyons pas que ce soit le cas pour l’Afrique Centrale, étant donné la façon véritablement supersticieuse suivant laquelle les devins et magiciens de tous genres pratiquent leur art et parce que, d’ordinaire, lorsqu’ils vont consulter le mfumu ou un devin quelconque, les indigènes sont dans la disposition de faire tout ce qu’il leur prescrira, comme de faire une offrande ou un sacrifice à un esprit, d’accomplir tel rite superstieux en faisant usage d’un remède.231

He highlights the difference between a fortune-teller in European Christian countries and the type of diviner found in Central Africa. Those in European Christian countries perform such a divinatory practice simply as a matter of curiosity or joke, without attaching any faith to the results. Indigenous people of Central Africa, however, consult the diviner and act on what such diviner prescribes because they are naturally superstitious.

La Roche then turns to the Bible to prove his point about the evilness of divination. He asserts: “Dans ses instructions au peuple hebreu, Dieu avertit que les pratiques de divination et leur prédicitions sont au fond l’oeuvre du démon.”232 To support his claim, La Roche quotes Mic 3:6 [without specifying the version he uses]: “Vous aurez la nuit au lieu de visions et vous aurez des ténèbres au lieu de divination...les voyants seront confus et les devins rougiront de honte.” The problem with La Roche’s assertion is that this particular biblical passage does not support his claim. As we shall see in the course of this study, this passage does not negate the practice of

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231 Ibid., 321.

232 Ibid., 71.
divination. He further refers to Deut 18:10 for the purpose of demonstrating the evilness of divination.\footnote{Ibid., 163–65.} This passage does not support La Roche’s claim either, as we shall also in the course of this study.

La Roche wrote about divination in Central Africa during the time when the Congo was a Belgian colony. Throughout his work, which is a published dissertation and, therefore, academic work, he portrays Central Africans as if they were homogenous. He defines and describes their systems of thought as superstitious. He then negates and demonizes the practice of divination, mocks diviners, ridicules the people who turn to divination, labels them *primitifs*, and refers to the people of his country as homogenously *civilisés*. He then turns to the Bible in order to prove the evilness of divination, using biblical passages that do not support his specific claims. The inner-biblical debate about divination as it stands in the MT differs significantly, I will demonstrate in Chapter 4, from the way it is portrayed in various receptor languages in Africa (as one can see from La Roche’s use of the Micah passage). I have earlier hypothesized that during the rise of the Belgian colonialism, the mission church and all those connected to it in the DRC had a vested interest in undermining the divinatory practices of native cultures. I suggest that the Bible, an artifact from a very ancient culture, further influenced anti-divinatory translations and interpretations in the African context. La Roche is an excellent example of this. I am interested, not only in the fact of the process, but also what drove this process.

To understand better what La Roche is up to here (and similar individuals), I
suggest that the postcolonial theorist Ashis Nandy, who addresses the psychological benefits to the perpetrator of colonization in the process of “othering” and devaluing the colonized, is especially beneficial. Nandy asks the question: What drives the colonizer to attempt to eradicate, not only the life practices of the colonized, but also their very souls, through the use of “othering,” devaluating, and terrorizing strategies? His answer is the psychological defense of projection, which arises out of a self-loathing within the colonizer, which must be handled in some psychological fashion. Nandy asserts that this self-loathing arises from sexist, ageist, and heterosexist ideologies. He maintains that a distinct culture, which may be difficult for the colonizer to understand, easily “becomes a projective test…[that] invites one, not only to project on to it one’s deepest fantasies, but also to reveal, through such self-projection, the interpreter rather than the interpreted.”

Through the colonization process, the victim becomes a projection of the lost self of the oppressor; in other words, the victim becomes the anti-image of the oppressor. These rejected and projected attributes of personality additionally serve to justify the oppressor’s acts of violence against the oppressed. In colonization, the oppressors project their own weakness, immaturity, and femininity onto their victims. As a result,

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235 Ibid., 79–80.

236 Ibid., 80.

they see the oppressed culture as effeminate, childish, weak, and undeveloped. The oppressors then can believe that the dominated need their help and protection. The subjugation, therefore, is done for “one’s own good.” In this way, the British (working here in India), who understood themselves as good, morally responsible people, were able to become oppressors without psychological dissonance. What Nandy claims is that sexism, and its offshoots, heterosexism and ageism, re-combined to form a particularly virulent form of racism in India. Thus, he maintains that sexism is a powerful support for racist ideology.

I argue that La Roche reflects a colonial ideology in his work, held in common by missionaries, academics, various colonial agents, and business leaders, that could justify, in the Congo, the acquisition of its land, the taking of slaves, the stripping of its mineral and other vast resources, and the murder of its people. Les noir were just barely people. They were black, primitive, ignorant, superstitious, pagan, divinatory, and demonic—truly evil. The colonizers, on the other hand, were white, civilized, knowledgeable, sophisticated (finding other ways of knowing simply comical), Christian, charitable, and agents of salvation—truly good. La Roche’s work illustrates clearly the

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238 For an example of such thinking, see B. Ward, *Five Ideas the Changed the World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1959), 79–115.

239 We must be careful not to suggest, however, that racism cannot, and does not, stand independently from sexism. Hence, I would disagree with Mary Daly. See Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women’s Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973), esp. pp. 179–98.

240 Some of the Basanga people were also taken as slaves although many were able to stay together in their villages. This is also true of the Balubakat tribe of my husband which lost people to slave raids in the Congo.
common interests of colonization, Christianization, and racism. Nandy demonstrates that patriarchy, ageism, and homophobia are also in this mix just below the surface. The thoroughgoing trashing of African divination as seen in La Roche’s work is not a by-product of colonization; it was rather one of the key instruments of colonization. To remove divination from a culture grounded in divination is to remove its primary means to knowledge, power, authority, and control. It is to strip the entire culture of its soul and ability to resist physically and psychologically.²⁴¹

Missionary-colonizers mistranslation and use of the biblical text in regard to divination on the African continent were not innocent mistakes. They were acts meant to control the inner-biblical debate about divination for the purpose of enhancing and justifying colonial aggression. In my own situation, the vocabulary of divination as translated in the LSG and Kisanga infused into native persons an entirely different and negative understanding of divination, an understanding that does not only misrepresent the Hebrew version, but also aims to construct the native’s way of life according to the translators’ agenda. Thus, cultural biases have contributed far more to the negative translations and readings of 1 Sam 28:3–25 than has any misunderstanding of the basic vocabulary of the pericope. Translators control the inner-biblical debate by deciding to demonize the woman’s divinatory practice through the choice of terms used in the receptor languages.

La Roche was not the first to demonize divination. A history of such can be found in the Christian world, long before Europe was Christianized. Christian Europe inherited

this early Christian view from Asia Minor.\textsuperscript{242} One cannot say that everywhere and in all cases divinatory practice was rejected, because in some cases divination, including thaumaturgy, was considered part of critical knowledge.\textsuperscript{243}

Eventually, however, the words for divination and witchcraft became interchangeable, certainly by the late Medieval period. According to Anne Llewellyn Barstow, in many European societies before 1500, women functioned as diviners and folk healers, playing a significant role in the production of knowledge and medical care. Rivalry emerged, however, between these diviners and Christian priests, and between the folk healers and the new breed of university-trained doctors.\textsuperscript{244} Elite groups and some villagers began to view female healers and diviners as evil. Hence, a negative label was attached to them, and eventually many others. This is not to lay the blame on the masses and issues of popular belief, but rather to argue that the mechanisms of authority and justice began to take issue with certain popular beliefs and created an environment where

\textsuperscript{242} See the materials at Chapter 1, nn. 43–44.


the masses became suspicious.\textsuperscript{245} Witch-beliefs and demonologies became common knowledge through the merciless persistence of accusations, confessions, and public executions by burning. Witchcraft was

formulated in medieval Europe as a Christian heresy. Adherents were believed to have disavowed Christianity and Jesus Christ, made pacts with Satan, participated in orgies and sacrificial infanticide that included their own children, and practiced cannibalism.\textsuperscript{246}

Women, whether healers or not, were so accused of practicing witchcraft and were persecuted. Those who “invoked the spirits” were put to tortured and put to death.\textsuperscript{247} In

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{245} Trevor-Roper, \textit{European Witch-Craze}.
\item \textsuperscript{247} Kramer and Sprenger, \textit{Malleus Maleficarum}, viii, xvi, 5. The craze came to an approximately two centuries later when secular courts were taking power back from ecclesiastical ones and all the courts determined that they were losing control over the issue. Trevor-Roper, \textit{European Witch-Craze}.
\end{itemize}

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her investigation of the history of the European witch persecution, Barstow argues that
witch-hunting was woman-hunting pure and simple.248 On witchcraft, she states the
following:

Witchcraft, far from being odd, esoteric, or disgusting, turns out to be a
capital topic for studying the transition from medieval to early modern
society. By forcing the historian to focus on women’s lives and how they
were changed and limited by the greater power of the seventeenth-century
churches and states, the witchcraft phenomenon illuminates the racism and
imperialism that Europeans were beginning to export around the world.
What European men and women did to the people whom they colonized,
European men first did to European women….249

We can see this phenomenon operating on the linguistic level, as well, in the same
period. During the Middles Ages, the word “necromantia” “became corrupted into
‘nigromantia,’ and was used to translate the common Arabic word for ‘magic’—
‘sihir.’”250 Erika Bourguignon additionally notes that the now common term “black arts”
for “magic” is founded in the expanded use of the word “necromancy.” This term, asserts
Bourguignon, appears to be based on a corruption of “necromancy (from Greek necros,
“dead”) to negromancy (from Latin niger, black”).”251 In European hands, then, this anti-
divinatory view became greatly magnified and took on racist overtones linguistically in
addition to the patriarchal ideology it already possessed.


249 Ibid.

250 Charles Burnett, Magic and Divination in the Middle Ages (Aldershot:

Alan Charles Kors and Edward Peters state that 1100 A.D. was a turning point in the labeling and persecution of witches:

Before 1100 or so, churchmen generally professed skepticism concerning the alleged activities and magical powers of witches, although they strongly condemned certain kinds of activities as deviant practice from their concept of normative religious life. Churchmen, after all, by 1100 had virtually disarmed the last bastion of pagan beliefs by convincing men and women that “the gods of the pagans were demons in disguise” (Psalm 95 [96]: 5), that all pagan religious practices (whether Mediterranean or northern European) were superstitions (as much stronger word than now), and that some pagan religious practices constituted forbidden magic…. From 1100 on one can observe (and sometimes even date rather precisely) the appearance of certain common elements of both sorcery and witchcraft and the emerging realization that the victory of Christianity had not, after all, been complete and that something new and dreadful in the history of Christianity had appeared. Many contemporary observers from the fourteenth century on looked upon manifest diabolical sorcery and witchcraft as quantitatively and qualitatively the single greatest threat to Christian European civilization…. At the height of these fears in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, churchmen and others speculated on when and why the concerted and terribly assault of the diabolical sorcerers and witches had begun.252

The Reformation and Counter-Reformation, according to several scholars, increased the practice of seeking out, trying, and executing so-called “witches.”253 This


had a great deal to do with an increased “awareness of the Devil’s presence in the world and … [a determination] to wage war against him.”254 It also resulted from an emphasis on personal piety and sanctity and a deep sense of sin, which caused a need for “[t]he relief of guilt through projection on to another person[,] which could easily lead to witchcraft accusation and prosecutions.”255 Brian P. Levack states the Protestant pastors were especially eager to challenge the ritual aspects of so-called witchcraft and, during their attacks, did the following:

Since these Protestant pastors wished to alert their congregations to the moral and spiritual implications of magic and witchcraft, they emphasized the commerce with demons that all such activities involved, rather than the actual effects of magical action. As good Protestants, they also drew on the Bible, especially the books of the Old Testament, to establish the types of “witchcraft” they were condemning,”256 which was just about all divinatory practice. Thus, sorcery and witchcraft became separated from intention as they had been for millennia. They now were, at best, a kind of strict liability crime. At worst, innocent people—and many more women than men—were unjustly accused of the acts of sorcery and witchcraft (as the authorities now defined it), tortured for their confessions, and executed in grisly ways.

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255 Ibid., 106–7, quote on 107.

256 Ibid., 109–10.
Yet, another issue related to both racism and religious exclusivism stood along side the growing witch-crazes aimed at women, that is, anti-Semitism. Hugh R. Trevor-Roper argues that the persecution of women and the persecution of Jews stood so closely together as to be almost one.257 During the Inquisition, of course, both groups were persecuted and tortured. The declared rationales for these persecutions were similar. In the case of the Jews, Christian authorities argued that the Jewish ancient hatred of Christ and Christians, Jews murderous seeking of blood, both caused Jews to kidnap and murder the innocent babes of Christianity for sacrificial use in their rituals.258 In the case of witches, they too offered up young Christian innocents to confound Christianity. Both Jews and women were subject to ghastly persecutions, for precisely the same reason: they were socially marginalized and powerless groups, who were readily available for the projection and removal of sin, scapegoating.

I do not, however, understand these issues as parallel but separate. I suggest, rather, that anti-divinatory sentiments in Christian Europe were related to a basic mistrust of all things that stemmed from ancient Judaism. As Pauline theology was interpreted in the Middle Ages and Reformation, the Jews were

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257 Trevor-Roper, *European Witch-Craze*. Today, rare is the person who believes that Jews held such ideologies, acted in such ways, and that confessions were anything but forced alignment with the beliefs of their torturers under the duress of torture, consistent with the views of torture articulated so well by Elaine Scarry, *Body in Pain*. Yet, scholars continue to assert that the women victimized in such a way held some measure of responsibility in their victimization. I want to resist this as does Trevor-Roper. Ibid.

258 Ibid.
different, weak, inferior, and in need of the law to control their insatiable and humanly uncontrollable desires. Even God’s law did not help them because they participated in human sacrifice against God’s law; they practiced divination against God’s law; they raised the departed against God’s law, and so on. Now, non-Jews, especially female non-Jews, were joining them. Ilona N. Rashow has studied the rabid anti-Semitism and anti-female ideology of this period and how they were made manifest in various biblical translations. In translating the Old Testament, Christian religious authorities embedded anti-Jewish and anti-women sentiments into the text and then used it against both Jews and women. I find it particularly abhorrent that, in this way, Christians misappropriated a Jewish text to their own ideological ends: the cultural and eventual physical extermination of Jews. The Holocaust, as most now acknowledge, was not the work of one mad man or a freak of the times. Rather, it was the culmination of a long history of European anti-Semitism. Furthermore, the history of Christian biblical interpretation was an essential part of that genocidal ideology. Anti-divinatory sentiments cannot be separated from this ancient pattern.

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In the midst of this exclusivist Christian, anti-Semitic, anti-black, anti-female, anti-divinatory, witch- and Jew-hunting environment, missionaries came to Africa. One author puts it so kindly: “Missionaries throughout the world encountered other religions and in their zeal lumped all non-Christian practices into one denounced category of witchcraft.”\textsuperscript{261} I suggest that, when colonial-missionizing agents came to Africa, they carried long and deeply engrained beliefs with them that served to dehumanize Africans. William Young reminds us that Europeans thought that Africa had no civilization and no religion. He states: “Long before European contact, which began in earnest in the 1400s, many highly developed cultures arose in Africa…. The notion that civilization only came to Africa with the arrival of the first Europeans about 500 years ago reflects the cultural arrogance of the invaders.”\textsuperscript{262} He observes additionally: “One of the first Portuguese to land on the southern coast of Africa reported that ‘The people… have no religion’…. Unfortunately, most of the rest of the world still has little awareness of traditional African religions. Those who do are most likely to have a distorted impression, with images of wicked ‘witch doctors’ casting evil spells

and cannibals preparing dinners of boiled missionaries.”

Moreover, we must not forget that the benefits to the colonial project of associating the black arts with black-skinned people and the demonization of African divination were fabulous—psychologically, socially, politically, and economically. It was not simple overzealousness that motivated this move to discredit the ways of life and divination in Africa. It had extensive European roots that also served colonial interests exceedingly well. The path to African cultural genocide was created by treading hard through Christian European ideology.

*Divination and Witchcraft in the Context of the Basanga Way of Life*

Having just walked along the well-worn paths of both the ancient Near East and Europe, I am still hearing the echoes of the many voices of divination and witchcraft encountered along the way. Now, I come to Africa where I continue to walk, this time along another well-worn path. I must not hurry, though; I have to stop in order to listen to yet more voices regarding divination and witchcraft. This time, the voices emanate from the African continent and particularly among the Basanga. The African ground on

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263 Ibid., 49.

264 As Raja Rao states of telling an Indian story in English: “The telling has not been easy. One has to convey in a language that is not one’s own the spirit that is one’s own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word ‘alien’ yet English is not really an alien language to us. It is the language of our intellectual make-up—like Sanskrit or Persian was before—but not of our emotional make-up. We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not.” Raja Rao, *Kanthapura* (New York: New Directions, 1938), vii; reprinted as “Language and Spirit,” in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, ed. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Hellen Tiffin, 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2006 1995), 296.
which I stand is shaking under my feet, and I am overwhelmed. Nonetheless, I must share what I am experiencing. First, let me state that divination is to Africa like breath is to living beings. Divination sustains life and keeps the equilibrium needed for the wholeness of the community. This is why it is so difficult to deal with negative western Christian attitudes towards divination. To remove divination from the African way of life is to destroy its essence, the source of knowledge, authority, and power.

In saying this, I must also recognize at the start that one way of life does not exist in Africa. One may say that some common ground exists among African indigenous ways of life, especially in their agreement regarding the existence of the world of the supernatural and the spirits, which intermingle with the world of humans and the world of matter. This does not, however, mean uniformity on the African continent. Africa is amazingly diverse in geography, ethnicity, culture, and language. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone, it is estimated that more than 200 languages are currently in use within hundreds of ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own specific understandings of the supernatural and natural world. Moreover, divinatory practices may differ among ethnic groups. Thus, we cannot reduce the whole variety of African practices on the African continent to one and, then, place it under the label, “African religion.” One also cannot speak of African divination.”

265 It is impossible to speak of “African divination.” The numerous books written on African divination demonstrate this difficulty. See Philip Peek, ed., *African Divination Systems: Ways of Knowing*, African Systems of Thought (Bloomington: Indiana University Press). Although much work of this scholarly work has focused on the divinatory practices among peoples in Nigeria, especially the Yoruba, they do not represent divination on the African continent. See, e.g., For just a small sampling of the

African divination” exists. One may speak, however, about “divination in Africa,” and each ethnic group can then speak of their own practices. In this final section of the chapter, I, therefore, speak of the ancient way of life and the importance of divination to it in the Central African context, specifically divination among the Basanga (also known as Sanga) people, which I call for ease of reference “Sanga divination.” I will examine the practice of, and attitudes toward, divination, paying particular focus on the specific concepts and terms of divination pertinent to our study.

As I walk on my Basanga path, I hear the echoes of the many voices I encountered through my walk along the paths of the ancient Near East. On this African ground, the voices of the ancient Near East and the Basanga are not identical. There are, however, certain reminiscences in Africa that recall ancient Near Eastern practices. Those reminiscences will be part of my discussion of the Basanga people. The Basanga material will provide the primary basis for my cross-cultural / contextual reading and translation of 1 Samuel 28, but the ancient Near Eastern environment is also undergirding my analysis because of the echoes.

I mentioned above that, as I tread this path across the Disanga, where my people live, the ground shakes, which makes me full of awe. What is this phenomenon? The land, the ground, is the foundation that holds the meaning of the voices of divination.

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266 Herein out, I will italicize terms and phrases from both Kisanga and Kiswahili, but I will not italicize the terms Basanga, Sanga, or Musanga. In regard to the age of our people, no one knows how long we have been a separate people. William Young states: “Near the beginning of the common era…, Bantu-speaking peoples began a southward migration from the eastern coast into the central forests and throughout eastern and southern Africa.” Young, The World’s Religions, 50. We are part of the Bantu family, and, thus, a very old people.
Lesana, in whom the Basanga strongly believe, makes the ground quake. Who is *Lesa*? A Musanga will reply to this question by saying: *Lesana* *Lesana* “God is God.” A Musanga understands *Lesana* through *Lesana*'s attributes, which are: 1) *Lesana Ilunga wa bisela,* “*Lesana* the one who is the cause of all phenomena”; 2) *Lesana jinyinya mitumba,* “*Lesana* the one who shakes the mountains”; 3) *Lesana wa kupanga ne kupangulula,* “*Lesana* the one who constructs and deconstructs”; 4) *Lesana kapinganwa nabo,* “a Supreme Being, none other is like *Lesana*”; 5) *Lesana shakapanga wapangile djulu ne ntanda,* “the only one creator who created heaven and earth”; 6) *Leza na kwala kapala,* “the one who established the attic [firmament]”; 7) *Lesana kapole mwine bantu,* “the ancestor of the whole human race”; 8) *Lesana katelwa-telwa,* “*Lesana* the unamenable who is not to be talked about in vain”; 9) *pakumutela twatenga panshi,* “when we name Lesana, we touch the ground”; 10) *Lesana kibanza-banza Kyoto kyotelwa kulampe, kwipi wapya lubangi,* “*Lesana* who is a flame whose warmth one enjoys from a distance, once one approaches it, one burns”; and 11) *Lesana i wa nyake* “*Lesana* is eternal.” The ground on which the Sanga people walk is subjected to *Lesana*, who can shake it anytime. The Basanga’s way of life is understood in light of this reality. As a result, the *Basanga* see the necessity of learning how to walk on such a ground. This is not so much a Mesopotamian or Egyptian concept, but this is highly evocative of Yahweh, who placed (Job 38:4; Ps 75:3) and can shake the pillars of the earth. As Samuel’s mother sings in 1 Sam 2:8:

He raises up the poor from the dust;  
he lifts the needy from the ash heap,  
to make them sit with princes  
and inherit a seat of honor.  
For the pillars of the earth are the LORD’S,  
and on them he has set the world.
Job reminds us:

The pillars of heaven tremble,
and are astounded at his rebuke (Job 26:11).

The Basanga’s way of life is not compartmentalized; it is, rather, holistic.

Religion encompasses every aspect of life. It is not a separate from other aspects of life.

There is no public/private division. Thus, I refer to the Basanga’s way of life as “holism” or “Uzima” in Swahili. The Sanga people have two related fundamental principles that shape their conceptual framework: the mbusa and the luuku. The mbusa is the force that runs through the belief system of the Sanga people and holds them together. Sanga holism is understood through the mbusa, “la matrice,” “the womb,” which holds the people together and imparts wisdom to them as they learn how to walk on such a ground. The mbusa is the rule of the way of life. It is all that makes us Basanga, it is what is at the core of being human. It contains and teaches us about the supernatural and natural world (which includes four types of spirits: Lesa, the tribal ancestors [Kiluba and Beya], the ordinary spirits, and the spirits of nature),267 our theological and anthropological beliefs, our community (which encompasses living individuals, animals, and the spirits of the departed) and its history and social institutions, our ethics, our ritual practice, and the psychology of the human being. In brief, the mbusa is about our ontology, which, for us, includes our epistemology and cosmology. Furthermore, it

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267 The fourth type, the spirits of nature, are not relevant to our study. Such spirits of nature are known by the terms baluwe (in the plural) and balaba (again, in the plural). Baluwe operate exclusively in the bush. They can be beneficent and facilitate the hunter to succeed in his hunting. They can also be maleficent and cause the hunter to get lost in the bush. The balaba are aquatic spirits and can also be both beneficent and maleficent.
encompasses the idea that space is tangled with time, which is to be understood as cyclical as opposed to segmented. The Basanga’s experience of time is as a circle, with neither beginning nor end. The circle of life, according to the Basanga, is a complex *mélange* of absent and present. This is reflected in our understanding of the departed, which I will explain in a moment. This unity, *Uzima*, is assured through the ceremonies of the *mbusa*, which are performed at significant stage of life such as birth, rites of passage, marriage, conception, enthronement, and death. Women have a tremendous significance among the Basanga. The *mbusa* is entrusted primarily to a woman in each clan because the female is viewed as a good custodian, enlightened in all matters related to the way of life. This explains why the Basanga have a matrilineal and matriarchal system. The *luuku* is a combination of insights and wisdom. Both men and women are believed to have this. These two principles are to be passed on from generation to generation.

Those primarily responsible for showing the way are trained at what I term “traditional institutions,” where they learn from well-trained and initiated men and women, who have been enlightened by the sages and who are able to communicate with the supernatural. The first thing such persons learn in their study is ontological in nature, as their teaching focuses on learning about their holistic identity as Basanga through the *mbusa*. Thus, those entrusted with the responsibility to tend to cultic matters are highly educated and their responsibilities included many aspects of life, much like those cultic personnel in the ancient Near East.268

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268 See n. 5, *supra*. 
The female is also important in Basanga cosmological understandings: the Basanga believe that they originated from two female ancestors named Kiluba and Beya. For this reason, the Basanga are referred to as *bana ba Kiluba na Beya*, “Children of Kiluba and Beya.” These two ancestors are deified and are believed to function as intermediaries and intercessors, both of whom present the people’s petitions to *Lesa*, whom the people believe to be both present and distant at the same time. The two deified ancestors stand closer to *Lesa*, closer to the people, and between the living (the people) and *Lesa* (the Supreme Being). With such a background, it felt right to say the Catholic prayer asking Mother Mary to intercede on our behalf while I was attending Sacré Coeur Roman Catholic Church.  

It felt right to recite the *Symbole des Apôtres*, in which one affirms one’s faith, declares that Jesus “viendra pour juger les vivants et les morts,” and also one affirms one’s belief in “la communion des saints.” The reference to a near-deified female, the living and the dead, the communion of saints, are not alien concepts to the Basanga. Thus, they could have been talking points between the mission-church and indigenous people. Unfortunately, the indigenous way of life and their discourse were *primitifs*.

Apart from these two ancestors of the Basanga people as a whole, there exist also ordinary ancestors of a particular clan or a family, who are the departed. When someone dies, we offer funerary rituals to help her-him make the transition to her-his new home with peace. These ordinary ancestors dwell in the village of ancestors, known as *Kalunga*.

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269 See the materials at my Prologue, n. 16.

270 See n. 230, supra.
or Kalunga Nyembo, “a world under the water.” These funerary rituals are much like the funerary kispu offering of the ancient Near East. Our understanding of these ordinary ancestors is very much wrapped up in our understanding of time. Because time is cyclical and infinite, the departed are both absent and present, dead and living, at the same time. They died and yet continue to live in two ways, which I will discuss momentarily. This experience is an interlocking of the living and the dead. These ancestors are referred to as bakishi (or mukishi in the singular). In some instances, the majestic plural bamfumu is used instead of the singular form mukishi, depending on the status the person held in the community while still alive.

Such ancestors are a part of the community of the Basanga and play a significant role in the social structure of our society, much in the way that the departed do in the ancient Near East. François Kabasélé Lumbala explains precisely how this works in the Luba culture of Katanga, DCR, which is similar for the Basanga:

The interdependence among the members of the Bantu clan reminds one of vases communicants: the pressure exerted on one point of the liquid is integrally transmitted to all other points. In the Bantu conception, life is comparable to such a liquid: the individual receives it from the first vessel, which represents her or his Ancestor, and with which the individual remains in ongoing communication. Everything that later enhances the degree of participation in life is of the highest interest to the Ancestors, and has repercussions on all other members of the clan.  

The bakishi participate in the life of the living in two ways: through rebirth or dwelling in someone. A mukishi can choose to be reborn. In such case, a mukishi appears

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in a dream, mostly to barren or forsaken women, who are looked down upon because they either do not have children or their children have died. A mukishi would declare her-his intention to be born. The newborn baby will carry the name of the departed ancestor and will be seen as the departed ancestor, who has come back.\textsuperscript{272} A mukishi, if not reborn, can choose to make her- or himself available to be summoned through a human intermediary to provide guidance in a time of crisis. They can, for instance, be seen in dreams or apparitions. In some cases, a mukishi chooses to dwell in someone for a period. The person in whom a mukishi dwells or the person with the ability to summon a mukishi for guidance is enabled by such spirit to see in the beyond and tell what she-he sees. The mukishi speaks through the mouth of the person who summoned her-him. Thus, the individual in whom the mukishi dwells channels the spirit so that it may communicate with the living. In other words, the person with the ability to summon a mukishi has the gift of thaumaturgy. Unlike the rituals of the Mesopotamian thaumaturgy manual, however, the spirit of the person does not go into a skull or a bowl and the thaumaturgist does not need any special ointment or ritual to be able to see and hear the spirit of the departed. We see this phenomenon, then, in ancient Near Eastern prophecy, where the prophet will often speak for the deity in the first person. The mukishi sees the individual spirit in their mind’s eye, can describe them, can hear them, and can vocalize their message. I believe that this process is relevant to our reading of 1 Samuel 28.

In the Basanga’s weltanschauung, bakishi diviners are especially important

\textsuperscript{272} Thus, my mother had such a dream of my grandfather, who said he would be born again in me, as I discussed in my Prologue.
because they help the community cope with the reality that evil is in the world. Their unique world experience has taught them that evil is caused by bad spirits: *mufu* (plural *bafu*) and the *bibamda,* “a legion of demons.” *Mufu* means ghost or revenant (in French meaning “the one who returns”). The *mufu* is, however, always angry and comes back to haunt someone who did something wrong. In this sense, it is not like the Akkadian term *etemmi,* which can refer to spirits of the departed who are beneficent, neutral, or angry and haunting. The term *mufu* is crucial to our study because the Kisanga Bible translation of the Hebrew word מִיֵּלֵע, whom the woman of Endor sees, as *mufu* is not accurate. This labels Samuel’s spirit an angry, haunting ghost, which it most certainly is not. He is not even the equivalent of an *etemmi,* because he has very human characteristics. Samuel’s spirit is more like a *mētu,* which has generally a more positive connotation than does an *etemmi,* because he has quite human characteristics and still wears his robe of distinction. Yet, I think the Hebrew text goes even further than this. In using the term מִיֵּלֵע for Samuel’s spirit, his profound knowledge is emphasized like that in the Ugaritic materials we studied above. Moreover, the close relationship to the deity is made explicit, because only after this is the deity מִיֵּלֵע referred to as YHWH. This is why I think it is best to translate the term in the English as “godly spirit.” In translating this term *mufu* in the Kisanga, Samuel is disparaged and aspirations are cast on the woman’s action. The *bibanda* (singular *kibanda*) are evil spirits or demons, who always come in a group and dwell in someone, causing all varieties of sickness. Nothing like the *mufu* or the *bibanda* is mentioned in the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 28.

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273 This point will be discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5, *infra.*
The Basanga do not participate in the range of divinatory techniques that were available in the ancient Near East or are used by other ethnic groups in Africa. We do not, for example, cast lots or read livers or other entrails. We primarily divine through dreams and communicating with the spirit world. Dreams are available to many. There are also two divinatory practices used to examine the truthfulness of an established belief: the *kiipa* and the *mwavi*. The *kiipa* is practiced when a family or a clan believes that a curse has been placed on them that remains and moves with the family from generation to generation. The *kiipa* divinatory practice is performed in order for this claim to be proven true or false. The king, surrounded by the elders (the *bilûmbu* and the *banianga*) and his close diviners (the *kitobo*) summon the invisible living, namely, the spirits of the ancestors. Then, the king asks a hunter to go hunt an animal. He is to take down the first animal seen. The carcass is then brought before the king, who inspects it to see whether it is a male or female. If the animal is female, the *soi-disant* curse is illegitimate because the female symbolizes life.

Another divinatory techniques use the *mwavi*, a potion known only to the *bilûmbu* and the *banianga*. It is used to prove innocence or guilt whenever there is conflict. The accused will drink the *mwavi*: if one is guilty of murder, adultery, theft, or another crime, one will fall. This has similarities the ordeals of the ancient Near East,274 and, in particular, the *sotah* ritual of Numbers 5.275

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Finally, there is a divinatory practice among the Sanga people where one passes through fire and never becomes consumed by it. This divinatory practice is performed


when a crime has been committed, and the accused claims to be innocent. He or she will be caused to pass through fire to find out whether she or he is guilty. In case of guilt, the fire will consume him or her. In case of innocence, the fire will not cause any harm. In other cases, a family goes through fire for purification or dedication to the spirit of ancestors.

As I said above, communication with the spirit world is one of the prime means of divination among the Basanga. Two types of experts in communication with the spiritual world exist: the kilûmbu and the ñanga. There is fundamental difference between the two types of diviners. The former can refer to either a spirit who takes possession of someone in order to communicate or to one who summons such a spirit. Such a spirit is not evil and has no maleficent intention. Rather, the spirit is one of discernment and provides guidance. The literal meaning of this term kilûmbu is “one who tells the meaning” or “one who explains.” When referred to as a spirit dwelling in someone, such spirit may be called either a mukishi or a bamfumu “a godly spirit.” It is an ancestral spirit, a spiritual gift that one comes with one at birth. It is hereditary. The spirit has incommensurable insights because she-he has supernatural wisdom. Such spirits have the capacity to protect the living by intervening in their daily life. The person with this gift can do exorcisms and offer aporopaic rituals and prayers, much like the Mesopotamian āšipu and bārû, although the process of divination is quite different. The latter Sanga diviner, the ñanga, is a diviner to whom people go for healing. Such a diviner primarily draws from three types of sources of medications: herbal, animal, and mineral. Nonetheless, they too have
divinatory powers. Thus, this role has a strong resemblance to the Akkadian practitioner asû.

Both the kilûmbu and the nanga have the ability to access the spiritual realm in order to extract the meaning of specific situations that happen to individuals. Their role is to bring wholeness to individuals or communities. They both can divine through dreams or by a spirit. After they have performed appropriate rituals of invocation, the spirit will come and speak through her-him. If one is ill due to a committed crime, the nanga is able to reveal that crime and can demand that the criminal restitutes the victim. In cases of negligence vis-à-vis the spirits of ancestors, various offerings will be given to them to rectify the situation much in the way the kispū is offered to appease an angry, offended spirits in the ancient Near East.

The mission-church discourse has, however, successfully negated these Kisanga terms and associated them with demonic practices. It is with such negative connotations that the terms bañanga (or nanga in singular) and bilûmbu (or ilûmbu in singular) appear in 1 Samuel 28 to translate דניאנה and the רוח הנני, respectively. Moreover, in translating מיער as kilûmbu and translating the being she sees (אלדנה) as mufu, the entire episode is seen as demonic, rather than helpful in relating God’s decision to Saul in a manner that he can now hear. That the connotative meanings of the respective Hebrew terms are lost through the Kisanga translation is highly problematic. The narrator, Saul, Saul’s servants, and the spirit of Samuel do not negate the woman’s action. As a result, we need to use Sanga divinatory terms that have resisted the negativity.276 Kisanga has a

276 See Chapter 6, infra.
term for a “godly spirit,” which is the better term used in translation of the Hebrew term בָּרוֹן; it is bamfumu.

Africa has a still growing problem with witchcraft, which has been well documented. Many of our ethnic groups see demonic forces at work in the world. Such groups often find in distressing situations the work of demonic forces, spiritual and human. Witches are people who have been turned to the demonic side of life due of various causes, some psychological, some sociological, others of a spiritual nature, including possession by an angry or demonic spirit. At the traditional educational institution, our experts learn to listen to the voices of the bakishi and, thus, be able to discern between the voices of the bakishi and those of the bibanda, the maleficent spirits, and thereby distinguish between the workings of positively and negatively focused spirits. Thus, witchcraft should be distinguished from what is considered positive uses of divination in Africa. Reading the will of God or spirits (and, therefore, present and future events) is understood, in the African context, quite differently from the casting of harmful

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spells on individuals. Adam Ashforth argues that the distinction between using the supernatural for healing rather than hurting is essentially moral. In this respect, witchcraft in Africa is understood much more like it was understood in the ancient Near East. Witchcraft was a matter of maleficent intention and goals. The practice of divination alone was not witchcraft, even by non-specialists. Africa never shifted in its view as to what constituted witchcraft, as did Europe in the late Medieval and early Reformation periods. Nonetheless, the issue has been confused theologically and placed in a peripheral situation academically because of two factors: 1) Reformation and Counter Reformation understandings of divination as always constituting witchcraft; and 2) racist colonial presuppositions about the “mental and intellectual capacities of ‘native’ peoples and subaltern classes.”

African cultures that believe in the demonic are, therefore, hardly the first to have done so, as evidenced the ancient Near East and European Christianity. In fact, some parts of the Christian family continue to believe in Satan and demons. The practice of exorcism lives on the in Roman Catholic and Pentecostal Christian traditions. Africans have been attracted to Christianity, in part, because of this similarity. Christianity

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279 Ibid., 211–42.


281 Ibid., 7.
promises deliverance through the blood of Christ and the empowerment of exorcists. The Basanga people are no different. We have a thorough demonology and understanding of witchcraft, with many associated terms. We, too, have a positive, protective divinatory craft to counteract sorcery or witchcraft. The nanga uses incantations prophylactically by placing a mwanzambala within someone. Again, the nanga functions much like the Mesopotamian āšipu / mašmāšu. Such a nanga may offer a lusanzo, which is an incantation prayer addressed to the ancestors, to the spirits of nature, and, in some rare cases, to Lesa. This type of prayer causes any maleficent acts or practices to be averted. Such a person can also do a ritual with the lusanzo to forgive a crime and causes the crime to disappear. One who has this art is also immune against maleficent witchcraft /

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282 The specific terms for maleficent practices include bufwichi or buchi, both of which mean witchcraft. Through bufwichi, a mfwichi (witch) is able to destroy one’s life or one’s possession. This practice is parallel with the Akkadian kišpu (sorcery) that is performed by a kaššāpu (sorcerer or wizard) or a kaššāptu (sorceress). One becomes a mfwichi either by choice or by the parents’ election of the child. In bufwichi or witchcraft, terms such as Tunzunji or tuyebela refer to agents, people of very small stature with backward feet, who walk and travel during the night and play with children in order to hit them in the head. The term nso te refers to an agent in the form of a snake that resides in the holes of the village or in the river. It sucks the blood of the bewitched until the victim dies. Kasempe (from kwela muntu kasempe, “to throw a kasempe against someone”) refers to a curse caused by casting a bad spell on an individual or a group. Such a spell makes one mentally ill, causes quarrels, and disputes. It also may urge someone to commit suicide. Bisasembe refers to a curse that has been placed on someone using a sorcerer’s incantation. The victim can become physically ill, mentally ill, or even die. The term ngowela is a curse placed on someone through witchcraft/sorcery that takes place exclusively at the ritual of initiation of a girl, known as the Kisungu. The woman who is expert in conducting such an initiation may, out of her meanness, cast a spell on the girl who is being initiated, causing her sterility, to remain unmarried, or to become a simpleton.

sorcery. It is significant to note that anyone whose life is in harmony with the spiritual world and in harmony with other living (community) can say a lusanzo and whatever petition she-he requests of the spiritual world will be granted. The lusanzo is especially worthy of mention because, even though this term is not directly relevant to our study 1 Samuel 28, it is relevant to the Book of Samuel as a whole. I would note that Hanna’s prayer is an intercessory prayer, a lusanzo, which is within the world of divination. Hanna’s lusanzo and the woman of Endor’s action hold the book together, as an inclusio of women’s actions. 284

The problem in Africa, as in the ancient Near East and Europe, is that innocents can be blamed for alarming situations, and those blamed are most often women. I spoke in my Prologue about the serious accusations against my aunt and the inquires of my uncles regarding my status. It is difficult to articulate well in a language not my native tongue to people outside of my culture what it was like for my aunt and for me, in my own brush with a witchcraft accusation. It has, at best, seriously adverse psychological and sociological impact; one is branded for life. At worst, one may be killed. Tinyiko S. Maluleke has been able to discuss with both great clarity and passion an accusation against her paternal grandmother, which brought social stigma and withdrawal of certain rights to her grandmother. 285 Her grandmother was wrongly accused of using witchcraft

284 Again, I will discuss this more thoroughly in Chapter 5, infra.

to cause the sudden deaths of Maluleke’s mother and another aunt. In fact, the relationship between the women was excellent, and her grandmother was a hardworking woman who cared for Maluleke and her siblings after their mother’s death. Maluleke shares:

You cannot begin to imagine what was unleashed into the family and clan when the diviner fingered my grandma as the witch. To this day, we live with the consequences not only of the accusation, but the loss that followed…. Looking back, I see how much anger, shame, trauma, and fear lay behind my father’s many masks of male bravado…. Given this background, how could I pretend that I could refrain from comment on “women’s issues,” and simply let women get on with it? How could I pretend that I do not realize the oppressive elements in my culture? My grandma’s main qualification for the witchcraft accusation was that she was a woman—an African woman. She was old, hard-working, and was only a Maluleke by marriage…. Surely, witchcraft…could only be brought by a “foreigner.”

This is a severe and growing problem, a problem with both patriarchal and xenophobic roots, now exacerbated by the importation of Christian European ideology.

In sum, I cannot deny the problem of witchcraft among my people. At the same time, this is a phenomenon separate from divination for the good, as it was in the ancient Near East. Many cultures and religious traditions, including a number of Christian traditions, believe in demons and in humans who may somehow come under their influence to wreck havoc in the world. Many cultures, even Western cultures, continue to pray, say incantations, use rituals to effect positive outcomes in the world. They also use prayer, meditation, and divination to know the will of beings in the supernatural realm. Christianity’s demonization of African ways of life, especially all its divinatory practices,

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286 Ibid., 240–41.
is, therefore, a false dichotomy based in racism, colonialism, imperialism, sexism, and just plain old fashioned scapegoating. I, therefore, believe that the Basanga people’s rich understanding of the positive side of divinatory practice with the spirits of the supernatural world, including the spirits of our departed ancestors, and its many terms for spirits and divinatory practices can be most helpful in reading the events in 1 Samuel 28. For now, I turn to understanding the Hebrew text through my Bakhtinian word study.
CHAPTER 4

CROSSING THE *DISANGA* OF LIFE AND THE BEYOND IN THE HEBREW BIBLE: A BAKHTINIAN WORD STUDY OF THE LANGUAGE OF DIVINATION

Africa is a vast landmass, distances are often great between points, and traveling can be long and arduous. Like in Africa, I have walked very far on this path just to arrive at the place where the true work begins. I pause to look at this place. This is where I will begin my study of the Hebrew vocabulary of divination in the context of its ancient Near Eastern environment. Israel meets the rest of the Near East at the *disanga* at which I now stand. ¹ I perceive and listen carefully to the multiple voices that speak here. To hear them better, I must take my load of tools from my head and place it on the ground. The voices I hear, I realize, come from the very ground that *Lesa* can shake, the ground that is the very ground of being. These voices beg to be heard. I, therefore, must use my tools for the purpose of digging into and plowing that ground. I shall unearth, with my Bakhtinian tools, the words—the utterances—of divination that undergird these multiple voices about life and the beyond that I am hearing in this huge field—the Hebrew Bible. The

¹ I shall be examining the translations in many standard Bibles. Hence, I list their abbreviations here again for the readers ease. JPS = Jewish Publication Society Tanakh; KJV = King James Version; NJPS = New Jewish Publication Society Tanakh; NIV = New International Version; NJB = New Jerusalem Bible; NRSV = New Revised Standard Version; and RSV = Revised Standard Version.
first voices are in Hebrew. They resonate with the earth. They sing contrapunctually. Later come still other voices—voices in English, French, Kisanga and many more languages—that attempt to sing in translation about ancient Israelite divination. In this chapter, I shall free the sounds with my Bakhtinian tools and listen to the Hebrew voices, all the while comparing them with those later voices in English, French, and Kisanga, which have resulted from translation.

Unfortunately, the voices in translation do not sing precisely as the Hebrew voices sing. Often they are quite inappropriate to the original. These are not simple variations, adaptations, or arrangements; these are not even contrapunctual lines; rather, they sing a discordant line. In this chapter, I wish to demonstrate just how inappropriate these translations of the Hebrew vocabulary of divination have been. My greatest emphasis will be on the English Bibles under study because: 1) I am writing in this dissertation primarily to an Anglophone audience; 2) English Bibles are in great use in Africa; and 3) the problems in the French and Kisanga versions under study are equally represented in the English versions. Thus, to talk about the English versions is to help us understand also what is happening in the French and Kisanga Bibles. Where this is not the case, I shall offer a special discussion of the French or Kisanga translation problems.²

With my Bakhtinian tools, I shall be digging into the ground of the vocabulary of divination in the Hebrew Bible and its long social history. I shall, in this manner, be able to see that the terms of divination are rich, with their long literary and social history, even

² My English translations of the LSG and the Kisanga Bibles are offered in Appendix B for the ease of my English readers. All translations in this chapter are mine unless other wise indicated.
within the Hebrew text alone. We will discover a multitude of divinatory terms, each with
designative, connotative, associative, and emotive meanings attached to them. To be still
more precise, a given term may have a consistent designative meaning, or it may have a
range of designative meanings. A term within a single designative meaning may have a
consistent connotative meaning or change its connotative meaning depending on its
context. The Bible also associates some terms with other terms when it strings them
together in abstract legal sentences, as it does, for example, in Deut 18:10–11. Yet, that
associative meaning may not be suitably applied in another literary context of the Hebrew
Bible. The same is true of the emotive content of these words. They may shift with
context.

Moreover, the social history of divination is long and complex. Israel is a small
piece of land. Its importance lies in several factors. First, it is a land bridge between
Europe, Asia, and Africa, standing between many important powers in the ancient world.
Second, it is located on the Fertile Crescent, having some arable land. Third, it has access
to the Mediterranean, although no one would argue that it had outstanding ports for
shipping. These three factors caused many powers to trade with and through Israel, and
many powers attempted to control Israel. Israel was, thus, interacting constantly with its
stronger ancient Near Eastern neighbors, and, as we know, was eventually conquered by
Assyria in the North and the Babylonians in the south. The Persians, Greeks, and Romans
took the land with their own separate conquests of the region. Israel, then, in attempting
to define its own identity and to understand its many colonizations, wrestled with its
understanding of this world and the world beyond this one. As a part of that process, it
also wrestled with what were both accurate and religiously permitted divinatory methods, that is, divinatory methods from YHWH. We will discover that authors of the Hebrew Bible did not always agree concerning divination. A Bakhtinian analysis accepts the polyphonic nature of a community in dialogue. It allows one to hear the different points of view within the Hebrew text regarding divination and allows this inner-biblical dialogic tension to stand without difficulty.

My starting point is the study of the Hebrew vocabulary of divination, during which I shall pay attention to the manner in which the key words of divination function from one context to another within the various texts of the Hebrew Bible. Using Bakhtin’s understanding of the utterance, heteroglossia, and dialogism, I shall examine in this word study the various designative, connotative, emotive, and associative meanings of the significant divinatory terms, so that we might understand those terms in the source text. During the examination of each Hebrew term, I will compare the terms with their various translations in key English versions, primarily the KJV, RSV, and NRSV, although I will interact on occasion with other Bible versions and scholarly translations in English, French, and Kisanga. The gathered results should then provide an answer to the question whether the Hebrew language of divination in 1 Samuel 28 has been generally translated adequately into English. These findings will, in turn, help us to understand more clearly the ideology, politics, and fear of the disanga in various translations of 1 Samuel 28 that have arisen in the European ideological anti-divinatory context. This will permit me to draw conclusions regarding the accuracy and helpfulness of the French
LSG and Kisanga translations used in the Southern Congo. To achieve this task, I divide this chapter into three parts.

Part I of this chapter studies Deut 18:10–11, which provides the Hebrew terms of divination that are most relevant to our understanding of the vocabulary of divination in 1 Samuel 28. Not only do some of these terms appear in 1 Samuel 28, but this passage is typically used as a template through which to read 1 Samuel 28, whether or not the particular divinatory vocabulary of Deut 18:10–11 appears in 1 Samuel 28. Such relevant terms are as follows: הרש אש יהודה, שלאל אוב וינון, זכר. The terms of Deut 18:10–11 can be grouped into three categories, as they describe ritual practices, persons who practice divination, and thaumaturgic procedures. The following chart lists the relevant vocabulary, and these categories will structure my discussion.

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<tr>
<th>Rituals</th>
<th>Diviners</th>
<th>Specific Thaumaturgic Procedures</th>
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<td>קָפָס קָפָס</td>
<td>שלאל אוב וינון</td>
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<td>הרש אש יהודה</td>
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<td>מָעַבְדֵךְ בָּנְרוֹדְךָ נָשֶׁע</td>
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<td>מָעַבְדֵךְ בָּנְרוֹדְךָ נָשֶׁע</td>
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It is most apparent that diviners and their rituals or procedures can and should be discussed separately. What is less apparent is why I have separated the בָּנְרוֹדְךָ נָשֶׁע ritual from the thaumaturgic procedures of שלאל אוב וינון and
This is due to the distinct nature of the ritual and the long history of misunderstanding regarding its nature. It is typically understood as a sacrificial rite rather than a divinatory process. In fact, I believe it is a divinatory procedure, but one that is not related to thaumaturgy. For these two reasons, I treat these as distinct categories that are addressed in Deut 18:10–11.

It is crucial to state at the outset that all of these terms bear a distinctive mark of social history due to the specific literary context of Deuteronomy 18. These practices are therein labeled ḫוּבָשִׁים (“abominations”) of מַעֲרֵרִים (“the nations”). What is most important here is the connection, in this specific literary context, of each of these words with the divinatory practices of מַעֲרֵרִים (“the nations”), of the alien, the foreigner, the other. Because these practices and persons are abominable to YHWH, YHWH is going to dispossess these nations, and he will give their land to the children of Israel. Hence, the reader of this pericope is to understand that what makes these practices an abomination is that they derive from foreign sources. A severely negative connotation has, therefore, been imposed on each of these terms through such xenophobic classification of these persons and practices as both alien and horrific. Consequently, one has the sense, from a Bakhtinian perspective, that the author of Deut 18:10–11 was engaging in a monologic authoritarian objectivism that rejected the foreign and sought to impose his religious will on an entire community, using YHWH to back his efforts.

The significance of Deut 18:10–11 to the current project resides in the fact that biblical scholars have consistently read and interpreted the 1 Samuel 28 narrative in light
Many scholars maintain that the informational introduction in 1 Samuel 28 echoes the history of the ban on divinatory practices enumerated in Deuteronomy 18. Yet, is that true? Does the negative, xenophobic, authoritarian objectivism of Deut 18:10–11 succeed in producing a monologue throughout the Hebrew Bible or even within Dtr? The study of these Hebrew terms will answer this question. I shall, then, test this claim through this word study.

In Part II of this chapter, I execute a Bakhtinian word study of the specific vocabulary of divination, especially thaumaturgy, in 1 Samuel 28 within the context of the Hebrew Bible. Such terms include the words used for intermediaries and the verbs of intermediation. Here, I cannot use the same terms as above because in thaumaturgy, the thaumaturgist is one agent of intermediation between this world and the beyond. He or she calls forth a spirit of the departed to communicate. Yet, the spirit itself communicates the message either directly or with the assistance of the thaumaturgist. Thus, intermediaries in the thaumaturgic process include both the thaumaturgist and the spirit that is called forth. The verbs of intermediation relate to the specific actions of the thaumaturgist that call forth the spirit and bring the sought-for answer. There are other significant terms that are reminiscent of, or related to, the mentioned divinatory practices, such as יָמָל ("died"); כִּזְמְנֵה ("they lamented"); וְדִמְעֵה ("they buried him"); and רָמָה ("Ramah") (v. 3a), as I shall show in the literary reading of 1 Samuel 28 in the next section.

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4 Ibid.
For now, however, I shall focus exclusively on specific terms used for intermediaries and verbs of intermediation. The intermediaries comprise the רדındים and the אדוה (vv. 3, 9); אוהב (v. 7); and אֶל (v. 13). The verbs of intermediation include קסם (v. 8); עלה (v. 11); and ראה (vv. 12–13). I chart these as follows, and, again, this categorization will structure my discussion.

*Chart II*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermediaries</th>
<th>Intermediation Verbs</th>
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<td>אֶדָה</td>
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<tr>
<td>אוהב</td>
<td>עלה</td>
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<tr>
<td>אַדוה</td>
<td>ראה</td>
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The woman of Endor, who is referred to in Hebrew as אַדוה, stands as the subject of the three verbs of intermediation. She is reported to have had the ability to קסם עלה and ראה. The direct object of these verbs of intermediation is an אדרים, another intermediary. In the context of 1 Samuel 28, I will demonstrate that these terms share family relationships both grammatically and contextually.

Part III of this chapter, entitled “A Bonus,” is a word study of the term אָדוה and an analysis of its function within the realm of divination. This is important because wisdom is profoundly connected to the concept of divination in both the Hebrew Bible and in Africa. Thus, understanding how this word functions in relation to divination will be helpful to the overall project.
Part I: Terms in Deut 18:10–11

The Ritual of מְכַבֶּר מַ noun בַּרְאֵשִׁית בּאֶשׁ The ritual of מְכַבֶּר מַ noun בַּרְאֵשִׁית בּאֶשׁ is mentioned in the Torah (Deut 18:10) and in the Former Prophets (2 Kgs 16:3–4 [=2 Chr 28:3–5], 17:17, 21:6 [=2 Chr 33:6]; 23:10). Although this practice is not mentioned in 1 Samuel 28, this is a key ritual because it is mentioned first in Deut 18:10–11 and, thereby, sets the tone of the whole passage. This ritual is typically understood as the most horrific of all the practices and persons mentioned in Deut 18:10–11 and establishes the intensely negative associative and emotive character of the pericope, which, in turn, casts a negative pall over the reading of 1 Samuel 28. This is because this passage has often been understood as one involving human sacrifice. For example, the RSV translates this phrase in 2 Kgs 23:10 as “no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech” (RSV). The NRSV follows suit with “no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech” (NRSV). We would note that both the RSV and NRSV are consistent in adding the phrase “as an offering”—a phrase which is not in the Hebrew text. This is

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5 See BDB, 77, s.v. 4, where it discusses altar-fire and includes “fire in child-sacrifice” (דֵּאָבָה בּי הָאֲשֶׁר). This phrase is usually followed by the preposition ב. BDB cites in this section 2 Kgs 16:3; 21:3; cf. 17:17; 23:10; 2 Chr 33:6 and so forth.

6 Other scholars maintain that this practice is confined to the monarchic period because all the occurrences of מְכַבֶּר מַ noun בַּרְאֵשִׁית בּאֶשׁ are found exclusively in Deuteronomy 18 and in 2 Kings. See, e.g., Brian B. Schmidt, who contends that during the seventh or eighth century, none of the prophets denounced any of the divinatory practices listed in Deut 18. Brian B. Schmidt. Israel's Beneficent Dead: Ancestor Cult and Necromancy in Ancient Israelite Religion and Tradition, Forschung zumm Alten Testament 11 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1994), 179–90. Of course, this, too, could be debated.
problematic because it imposes a false interpretation of this practice and orients the reader toward seeing a possible practice of child sacrifice at every occurrence of the phrase. The passage as it stands in the Hebrew text does not, in fact, lend itself to such an understanding. I ask: Why would the writer leave out such an important detail if it were the case? The addition of these words is highly problematic.

Let us compare the ritual of מַלְכִּיָּה וְנַרְדּוֹבֶה פַּהֲנָה with other instances in the Bible where children are clearly to be sacrificed. Abraham, who receives an order from מָלַכִיָּה, commanding him to sacrifice his only son Isaac is the best case. In the story world of the Bible, it is undisputable that Abraham and מָלַכִיָּה know of a tradition wherein children are sacrificed. Abraham does not apparently resent the practice or the divine order. He is, instead, ready to execute his son with little emotion. This instance signals that child sacrifice to the deity was known in ancient Israel. The author of Genesis 22 seems to believe that it existed from the earliest times. The language of this pericope is significant. Genesis 22:2 reveals that God said to Abraham: “Take your son, your only son Isaac…and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there לֵילַה (“as a burnt
The language used by הֶלְוָה in requesting Abraham to practice child sacrifice is הָעַבְרָה (“offer him there as a burnt offering”) and not הַלַעֲבָה (“cause your son to pass through fire”). The word הָעַבְרָה is repeated six times in Genesis 22. A study of הָעַבְרָה indicates that the offering never passes through fire. Rather, it is typically placed on the altar fire (e.g., Lev 1:13, 17; 3:5; 4:10; 1 Kgs 18:33; 1 Chr 6:49; 2 Chr 29:27). I would also note that, in 2 Kgs 3:26–27, the king of Moab sacrifices his son when the war is not going well. Verse 27a states: “Then he took his firstborn son who was to succeed him, and offered him as a הָעַבְרָה (“burnt offering on the wall”).” Again, the son does not pass through fire but is burnt on something. Jeremiah 7:31 states that the people built a high place of Topheth in the valley of Ben-Hinnom to הָעַבְרָה (“burn their sons and daughters in the fire”). The RSV and NRSV, therefore, do not do justice to this practice by adding the words of offering to 2 Kgs 23:10, making this appear as a human sacrifice.

In reading הָעַבְרָה as a human sacrifice, the RSV and NRSV additionally misrepresents הָעַבְרָה by misunderstanding what it means “to pass through fire.” One may actually pass through fire without being burned to death or even harmed. Thus, in passing through fire, one is not necessarily served up as a burnt offering. The passages of Deuteronomy and 2 Kings do not contain the verb “to burn.” Certainly, the verb הָעַבְרָה (“pass through”) and הָעַבְרָה (“burn”) are composed of the same three root letters. It would, therefore, be quite easy to offer an emendation of the text. This is not generally, however,
what scholars do. Rather, they read “burn” in “passing through,” which they feel is justified when it is fire through which one is passing. I argue that the practice of passing through fire is divinatory, rather than sacrificial, and that the RSV, NRSV, and many scholars misrepresent the practice. יְבֵל has nothing to do with offerings or child sacrifice.

If we investigate the passages that contain יְבֵל, we see generally a connection of the passage to divinatory terms rather than to sacrificial terms. I chart each passage and its associated vocabulary below.

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<th>Chart III</th>
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<td>מַכְסָה</td>
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<td>דְּרַשׁ-אֶל-יָפָה</td>
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We can, thus, see that this ritual is usually associated with divinatory practices or stands alone, rather than being associated with sacrificial rites. Only in 2 Kgs 16:3–4 = 2 Chr 28:3–5 is there any association with a sacrifice, and, there, the references are to traditional sacramental rites rather than to rites out of the ordinary or abhorrent in any manner. Further, it can be argued that these are distinct practices—the sacramental from
the divinatory. Thus, the act of passing through fire needs a new explanation. I would turn to the traditions of the Sanga people for such elucidation.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, there is, among the Sanga people, a divinatory practice where one is caused to pass through fire and may not be burned or consumed by it. This divinatory practice is performed when crime has been committed and the accused claims to be innocent. He or she will be caused to pass through fire to find out whether she or he is guilty. In case of guilt, the fire will consume him or her. In case of innocence, the fire will not cause any harm. The practice, therefore, is an ordeal and divinatory in nature, rather than in the nature of a ritual sacrifice. In other cases among the Sanga people, a family will pass through fire for purification or in dedication to the spirits of their ancestors. This is a normative religious ritual during which no one is burnt or dies. I believe these practices may be highly enlightening for understanding what I believe that it is a divinatory practice, which would make the most sense in the context of the Deut 18:10–11 and where else it appears.

The narrator announces, in Deut 18:10–11, to the children of Israel that when they come into the land that YHWH their God is giving them, they ought not to follow the abominable practices of those nations, including that no one shall “cause his son and/or his daughter pass through fire” (Deut 18:10). The literary context of (“one who causes his son and/or his daughter pass through fire”) attaches a negative connotation to the designative meaning of the Hebrew phrase. This

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8 See the material at Chapter 3, p. 214, 216.
literary context establishes that this practice is הַבָּטֵל (“an abomination”); it is the first on the list of prohibited divinatory practices viewed as abominations of הָנָעְרוֹם הַדָּמָם (“these nations”), the foreign nation (Deut 18:9). The different associations with this divinatory practice in this literary context are: foreign, condemned by YHWH, an act justifying conquest by the children of Israel. Here, Israel is the conqueror, not the conquered. Interestingly, when one is conquered, one becomes an alien in one’s very own land; and the conqueror becomes the native because the deity has so ordered it. God orders conquest and structures the world in this manner; thus, it is natural that the conqueror becomes the native and the native becomes the alien. We can observe that the author of Deut 18:10–11 wishes to distinguish Israel from those it conquered. Israel, according to this author, should abhor the practices of the indigenous people and seek to make them alien.

In the Former Prophets, Ahaz is reported to have followed the ways of the kings of Israel, and to have חַלְכֵּל בָּנוֹן הָנָעְרוֹם בָּאָשָׁה (“caused his son pass through fire”). The RSV translates this: “He burned his son as an offering”; The NRSV has: “made his son pass through fire” (2 Kgs 16:3). In this literary context as well, the designative meaning holds a negative connotation as it again is associated with the הָנָעְרוֹם (“nations,” the foreign, the others, whose practices are nothing but הָנָעְרוֹם הָנָעְרוֹם (“abominations of the heathen” per the KJV; “abominable practices of the nations” per the RSV and NRSV) (2 Kgs 16:3). This literary context establishes that YHWH has dispossessed these foreigners before the children of Israel (2 Kgs 16:3). It also establishes that this divinatory practice
seems to be well rooted within the ancient world, including the Northern Kingdom, whose kings resort to it. Even the people, the children of Israel themselves, are immersed in this practice: יַעֲבֹרַת אֵנֶקֶנֵם אֱלֹהִיתוֹת בְּאֵשׁ ("they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through fire") (2 Kgs 17:17). Here, the KJV translates the Hebrew accurately ("They caused their sons and their daughters to pass through fire"); the NRSV is similar ("They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire"); yet the RSV imitates here the way it handled Deut 18:9–10 and translates this: "They burned their sons and their daughters as offerings" (RSV). Even King Manasseh בחיה אֶבֶן מָנָסֵע ("caused his son pass through fire") (2 Kgs 21:6). The three translations remain consistent between 2 Kgs 17:17 and 2 Kings 21:6.⁹ I also observe that, according to all the relevant passages, kings caused only their sons to pass through fire. Daughters are not mentioned. The people, on the other hand, caused their sons and daughters pass through fire.

King Josiah, one of the biblically favored kings of the Southern Kingdom, fought this divinatory practice in his Deuteronomic reforms. A case in point is seen in his action at Topheth in the valley of Ben-Hinnom where such divinatory practices via fire took place (2 Kgs 23:10). Josiah defiled that place so that לאֲפַל הַעֲבֹרַת אֵנֶקֶנֵם אֱלֹהִיתוֹת בְּאֵשׁ ("no one might cause his son or his

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⁹ Again for the reader: “He made his son pass through the fire” (KJV); “he made his son pass through fire” (NRSV); “he burned his son as an offering” (RSV) (2 Kgs 21:6).
daughter pass through the fire to Molech). It is only in this passage that we have a reference to a specific foreign god. This does not mean, however, that this is a type of offering to Molech. It is more likely that Molech is considered to be the god who controls this divinatory procedure.

These instances indicate that a number of different peoples in the ancient world use divination by fire. It was clearly employed within Israel and Judah. Hence, this practice is part of the “common property” of the ancient Near East and such words are “half someone else’s.” The author of Deut 18:10–11 may have sought to appropriate them to his authoritarian monologue, but I will demonstrate that he was ultimately unsuccessful. Although this practice is not directly related to the divinatory practices in 1 Samuel 28, later readers have sought to impose the views of that author of Deut 18:10–11 on the passage under study. I reject this both from a Bakhtinian and Sangan perspective.

The Diviners: מֶשֶׁכָּה מָשֶׁכָּה מָתָנָה מַטָּנָה כָּפָם כָּפָם כָּפָם


11 See the Bakhtinian discussion in Chapter 2, n. 37, supra.

12 See the Bakhtinian discussion in Chapter 2, n. 38, supra.
The root Msq appears twenty-six times in the Hebrew Bible. Msq is translated in various ways. In its verbal form, Msq is translated as to: divine (KJV, RSV, NJPS), consult (NRSV, NIV), disclose the future (NJB), give oracles (NRSV), tell fortunes (NIV), and seek an omen (NIV). In its nominal form, Msq is translated as: divination (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NJPS, NIV, NJB), witchcraft (KJV), divine sentence (KJV), inspired decision (RSV, NRSV), prediction (NJB), augury (NJB), prudent (KJV), divining (NJPS), diviner (KJV, RSV, NRSV, NJPS, NIV, NJB), soothsayer (KJV, RSV, NIV, NJB), omen (NJPS), and lot (RSV, NRSV, NIV, NJB). One can immediately see from this list that the possible range of this term’s designative meaning is wide and the connotative, associative, and emotive meanings are also range from the highly negative to the quite positive.

In the Torah, Msq appears in four instances (Num 22:7, 23:23, Deut 18:10, 14). It is listed among the prohibited practices mentioned in Deuteronomy 18 and is usually translated as “useth divination” (KJV); or “practice divination” (RSV; NRSV; NJB). JPS translates this as “who is an augur,” which demonstrates that we really do not have a sense in the English among a diviner, augur, and soothsayer, let alone in the Hebrew! Interestingly, in Luther’s Bible, Msq is translated as Wahrsagerei (“soothsaying”), which is particular because the word means literally “truth-saying.”13

In Numbers, Msq occurs in its nominal form carrying a positive/neutral connotation. A literal translation of the Hebrew phrase Msq would read as

13 This is repeated in Num 23:23 with the use of Wahrsagen.
“divination(s) in their hand” (Num 22:7). This is translated as “rewards of divination” (KJV); “fees for divination” (RSV; NRSV); and “versed in divination” (NJPS). Although we know from ancient Near Eastern practice, diviners were often paid, neither “reward” (KJV) nor “fees” (RSV; NRSV) are mentioned anywhere in the Hebrew text of this verse. There is, however, an instance where Saul and his servant brought “a quarter shekel of silver” to the man of God for him to tell them the whereabouts of the lost donkeys (1 Samuel 9:5–9). In this passage, the term מַשָּׁא does not appear, but some form of divination is clearly involved.14 As a result, the KJV, RSV, and NRSV English translations are not accurate. If any fees or reward were involved in this instance, why would the author leave it out?

Another way to look at this is that the term מַשָּׁא is used here to refer to some objects that Balaam needs to touch as he practices divination. Again, it is common knowledge that, in the ancient Near East, one might well go see a diviner with some objects. The Mari texts contain examples of divinatory practices where one had to bring an object to the diviner so that a contact might be established with the subject of the inquiry. For instance, in a letter to the king, we learn that a divinatory practice had been performed in relation to the well-being of Tuttul and that a lump of earth had been brought to the diviner (ARM 1 153:13–33).15 Victor Avigdor Hurowitz draws on this

14 Could it be that, in 1 Samuel 9:7–8, the writer purposely avoided using the term מַשָּׁא because of its association with “foreign practices”? 

Mari text and others to propose the possibility that the elders brought some objects (e.g., baked clay models of the entrails) to Balaam.\textsuperscript{16} In the absence of such specification in the Hebrew text itself, whether a fee or a related object was brought to the diviner remains speculative. Moreover, we As a result, I disagree with the KJV, RSV, and NRSV, which translate the Hebrew phrase וְקוּשָּׁנִים בְּיִדְוֶהֶם רָכְבָּם אֲלֵ֣מָלִיתֵם as “rewards / fees of divination in their hand.” What it should be, however, is less clear. The rendering of the NJPS, which reads, “The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, versed in divination, set out” is a distinct possibility because בְּיִדְוֶהֶם may mean to possess something or to possess the power of something.\textsuperscript{17} It may also mean, however, by the agency or instrumentality of something, “especially…speaking by the agency of prophets.”\textsuperscript{18} In such case, one might render this phrase, “The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian, under the authority of divination, set out” In either possible translation, the connotative and emotive meanings are most positive. I prefer, however, the latter possible translation because it fits the literary context of the passage far better than the former.

In Balaam’s second oracle (Num 23:23), he continues to deliver YHWH’s message, declaring that there is no מַרְאָה. Here מַרְאָה occurs with a positive/neutral connotation. The term מַרְאָה (“divination”) functions as an oracle. In this


\textsuperscript{17} BDB, 388, s.v. 5.b–c.

\textsuperscript{18} BDB, 388, s.v. 5.d.
context, the preposition † reads better when translated as “against” as it highlights an adversative circumstance. The KJV, RSV, and NRSV, all represent this accurately when they translates the phrase as: “Surely there is...no divination against Israel.” “No divining in Israel,” as translated by the NJPS, demonstrates how translation and interpretation complement one another. “No divining in Israel” reiterates the anti-divinatory statement of Deut 18:10: “There shall be found no one...יִמָּשֵׁל (“who practices divination”). It should be noted that YHWH uses a diviner, Balaam, a foreigner, in this instance. This differs significantly from the literary and social context of Deuteronomy 18, which portrays the practice negatively and attributes it to foreigner. Consequently, it is inappropriate to read Num 23:23 through the lens of Deuteronomy 18. This interpretation strategy and resulting translation silences the dialogic nature of the Torah toward divination by foreigners. The Torah is, rather, polyglotic when it comes to the practice of מְסַק. YHWH does not condemn this type of divination on one hand, but, the people of Israel, on the other, prohibit it and attribute the prohibition to YHWH.

In the Former and Latter Prophets, מְסַק appears twenty-two times (Josh 13:22; 1 Sam 6:2, 15:23a, 28:8; 2 Kgs 17:17; Isa 3:2; 44:25; Jer 14:14; 27:9; 29:8; Ezek 12:24; 13:6, 7, 9, 23; 21:21–23 [vv. 26–28 HB], 29 [v. 34 HB]; 22:28; Mic 3:6, 7, 11; Zach 10:2). Just as in the Torah, there is not only one position toward מְסַק in prophetic material. I will take up the Former Prophets before the Latter Prophets, except that I will

leave my discussion of the instances of בָּלָאָא in 1 Samuel until the end of this part of the discussion. I begin with Joshua.

In Josh 13:22, it is reported that the children of Israel put Balaam בָּלָאָא to death. In this literary context, בָּלָאָא should be translated as “the diviner,” and is one who speaks oracles as we know from the Numbers passages in which he appears. The term carries a neutral connotation here. The particular literary context of this passage is that the narrator is describing Moses’ and Joshua’s defeat of a number of area peoples and putting them to death as a part of giving the tribes of Israel the inheritance of Moses (Josh 13:1–32). Many die in the course of these events, and the narrator informs us that Balaam was one of those who died. The term is planted in a literary context that is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 18. At the same time, however, the passage reminds the reader of YHWH who does not condemn Balaam’s divinatory gifts and practices (Num 23:23). In this specific context, we have an entirely neutral statement that Balaam was a diviner. He did not die because he was a diviner. He died because he was foreign. Consequently, we can observe once again that the Torah is polyglotic when it comes to the practice of בָּלָאָא. The NRSV represents this accurately in translating Balaam as one “who practiced divination.” Yet, the translations of the KJV and RSV, “the soothsayer” are unhelpful as this word clearly carries a negative connotation in English arising out of Deut 18:10–11, although a different Hebrew word is represented by “soothsayer” in these English translations of Deut 18:10–11, that is בְּלֶאָא הַט.
Turning to 2 Kgs 17:17, we find that King Hoshea, son of Elah, had reigned in the Northern Kingdom (2 Kgs 17:1). Eventually, Israel became a vassal state of Shalmaneser, and, failing to pay the appropriate tribute, was conquered (2 Kgs 17:1–4). The children of Israel were then carried captive to Assyria (2 Kgs 17:5). The biblical writer attributes this to the evil practices of King Hoshea and the people, offering a long list of their sins (vv. 2, 7–22). They are reported here to have practiced מִסֵּק ("they divined"), one of the sins listed in Deut 18:10. Ultimately three sins of the same sins as listed in Deut 18:10–11 are given here:

יהשעישו יִזְבוֹנִים יָאַה בִּנוֹתִיהָ מִסֵּק יָאַה בִּנוֹתִיהָ מִסֵּק מַיִם יָאַה. The literary context negates the practice of מִסֵּק by offering it as one of the reasons for the captivity and linking it to Deuteronomy 18 via three equivalent references.

In First Isaiah, however, the מִסֵּק is listed among the dignitaries that YHWH will remove from Jerusalem and from Judah: “the mighty man and the warrior, the judge and prophet, מִסֵּק ("the diviner") and elder”(Is 3:2). The KJV translates מִסֵּק here as “the prudent,” which makes little sense after a reference to the prophet. The RSV and NRSV translate it appropriately as “the diviner.” The context does not suggest that any of these specialists are illegitimate. Rather, the nation will be deprived of all these well-regarded

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20 It is commonly held that the books of Kings were completed about 600 B.C.E. after the death of Josiah; a revision under a heavy Deuteronomic influence took place about 550 B.C. and under that of the Priestly code. See, e.g., Norman H. Snaith, Ralph W. Sackman, and Raymond Calkins, “I and II Kings,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 3: *Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job*, edited by George Arthur Buttrick (New York: Abington Press, 1954), 4.
specialists; they are listed with a positive connotation. None of them is more legitimate than the others. I would note additionally that the אַבְרָדָּם to which Isa 2:6 refers with a negative view are not listed among the dignitaries in 3:6.

Second Isaiah, on the other hand, seemingly portrays אַבְרָדָּם negatively. In the midst of a message of hope, assuring Jerusalem that YHWH is her redeemer, YHWH states that he is the one who “frustrates the omens of אַבְרָדָּם (“liars”) and makes fools of אַבְרָדָּם (“diviners”)” (Is 44:25a). In this specific cola, it seems that YHWH does not appreciate diviners, and equates them with liars. Yet, vv. 25b–26 give us additional information that seems to explain this. They continue that YHWH is also the one:

who turns back the wise,
and makes their knowledge foolish;
who confirms the word of his servant,
and fulfills the prediction of his messengers;
who says of Jerusalem, “It shall be inhabited,”
and of the cities of Judah, “They shall be rebuilt,
and I will raise up their ruins”

Isaiah 44:25–26 does not have a problem with diviners or the wise in and of themselves. The problem is when they lie or rely entirely on their own knowledge. If YHWH is not the source of their information, they are, indeed, liars and fools. We must, consequently, distinguish between diviners who follow and listen to YHWH and those who hear themselves or other gods. \[^{21}\] In Isa 44:25, the reader sees that diviners are becoming

\[^{21}\] This fact is not often dealt with in careful ways. See, e.g., Kaiser and Garrett, Archaeological Study Bible, 1137, where they state that Isa 44:25 connects אַבְרָדָּם to: Balaam (Josh 13:22); the “medium of Endor”; and with soothsaying and sorcery in Isa 3:2–3. The problem with this comment is that, in 3:2–3, אַבְרָדָּם is listed with prophet, elder, etc. in a positive light.
endangered species, under attack for eradication. This is followed by a declaration about
the image of YHWH as the Creator, the only deity (v. 24) and topped by a declaration
about “his servant,” whose word the Creator will confirm and “will fulfill the prediction
of his messengers” (v. 26). In her comments on Isa 44:25, Susan Ackerman states that
“the image of the YHWH as Creator (v. 24) is paired with the image of the YHWH as
directing the course of history, which is revealed to the prophets (v. 26) but is unknown
to other gods’ diviners and omen-seekers (v. 25).”22 It is interesting that the term used in
the LXX, μαντείας, translated as “prophecies,” is also translated as “prophetic power,
power of divination.”23 Both in Hebrew and Greek, this practitioner conveys some kind
of knowledge from or about the divine. Ackerman clearly articulates the dynamics going
on here: God the Creator and prophets are important, not foreign gods or their diviners.
Here is a case where power is reflected through language to establish one set of belief as
true and to annihilate others.

In Jeremiah, মষ occurs three times (Jer 14:14; 27:9; 29:8). Here, too, we can see
that prophecy, visions, and divination en soi are not the problem. In Jer 14:10–12,
Jeremiah is prophesying the negative repercussion to the people due to their straying from
YHWH. The people’s superficial religious ritual are meaningless to YHWH because their
hearts seem not to be in them. Their behavior is full of iniquity, and YHWH will respond

22 Susan Ackerman, “Isaiah,” in The New Interpreter’s Study Bible, NRSV, edited
by Walter Harrelson (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 2003), 1018.

23 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, Greek-English Lexicon (Oxford:
Clarendon, 1968), 1079.
adversely. Nonetheless, YHWH is aware that prophets have spoken a false word about the situation by maintaining that all is well (v. 13). To this YHWH responds in v. 14:

“The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination,” and the deceit of their own minds.” Here, prophets are the subject of verb אוח (“to prophesy”) whose direct object is false vision and worthless divination. This is important because we see that prophets both have visions and divine. YHWH also puts in parallel: 1) lying visions; 2) worthless divination; 3) and the deceit of their own minds. This reinforces that prophets both have visions and divine, but additionally we discover that the visions lie and the divinations are worthless because they arise, not from YHWH, but from the deceit of the prophets’ own minds. Thus, Jer 14:14 is a reiteration the sentiments of Isa 44:25–26, wherein diviners and the wise fool themselves with their own knowledge. Unfortunately, KJV omits the adjective “worthless,” which has a significant role in the interpretation of this verse. In so doing, KJV changes the problem from one of false divination to divination en soi. In truth, the adjectifs qualificatifs אַלֹּי (“worthless”) and זָרֶד (“false”) that characterize prophecy, vision and divination given by prophets constitute the actual problem. The issue is similar in both Jer 27:9 and Jer 29:8: YHWH is concerned not with prophecy or divination per se, but with messages that misrepresent his word. Again, we find diviners and prophets in parallel. In Jer 27:9–10, God admonished the people not to listen to נבֵיתאֲבֵד (“your prophets”), קְסַמְיָבוֹ (“your diviners”), נָדִּים (“your dreamers”),
soothsayers”), and תומיש ("your sorcerers") because they are telling them falsehood that they shall not serve the king of Babylon. In this instance, three of the terms are related to terms in Deut 18:10–11: בַּנַּיִם, נַעַמִּים, and מִקְיַם. One might, therefore, argue that the pericope is meant entirely negatively in regard to these roles. Nonetheless, we also have these associated with divinatory roles that are viewed generally quite positively: prophets and מַכְּהִים ("diviners") are also listed next to each other and run in parallel to dreamers. In Jeremiah, prophets and diviners co-exist. Vision and divination are paralleled; prophets see visions and divine divination. In these two literary contexts, the difficulty is again in the fact that prophets and diviners deceive the people. Thus, I suggest that the three passages in Jeremiah are far more complicated than often assumed; they relate the true nature of divination in ancient Israel. Diviners, prophets, visionaries, and dreamers are all roles within the realm of divinatory functions and often overlap, just as we see in the rest of the ancient Near East. Whether the divination is of the oblativa type (that is, unsolicited, intuitive, or natural divination found in prophecy, oracles, visions, dreams, and omens) or of the impetrita type (that is, solicited, inductive, or artificial divination such as the casting of lots), so long as YHWH is at the root of the practice and his truth is spoken all is well. A prophet is a diviner in ancient Israel, and YHWH expects all diviners to give their full allegiance and attention to him alone.

The term מִקְיַם occurs ten times in Ezekiel (Ezek 12:24; 13:6, 7, 9, 23; 21:21–23 [vv. 26–28 Hebrew Bible]; v. 29 [v. 34 Hebrew Bible]; 22:28). As in Jeremiah, prophets and diviners are associated in Ezekiel and are critiqued for offering words that are false.
For instance, Ezek 12:24 reports that הוהי ידיענו ("false vision") and חלומין ("flattering divination") will be removed from the house of Israel. We can clearly see a connection here between those who see visions and those who divine. That the prophet, seer, and diviner are connected is made explicit within Ezekiel 13. This chapter begins with YHWH telling Ezekiel: “Mortal, prophesy against the prophets of Israel who are prophesying; say to those who prophesy out of their own imagination” (v. 1a). Ezekiel is to relate to them that trouble lies ahead “for the senseless prophets who follow their own spirit” (v. 3a) and for those who have “envisioned vanity and lying divination” (v. 6a). Then addressing these false prophets in the second person plural, YHWH states through Ezekiel: “Have you not seen “false vision” or “divined a lie”…when I did not speak?” (v. 7) Ezekiel, again speaking for YHWH in the second person plural reiterates: “Because you have uttered falsehood and envisioned lies, I am against you, says the Lord God. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations” (vv. 8–9). Such prophets are to be excluded from the community of Israel (12–13). This indicates that prophets could see visions, prophesy and divine. Seeing a vision or divining is not bad; prophesying or divining out of one’s own imagination is reprehensible (13:2) and that is why the Lord God’s hand shall be against prophets who see vanity and divine a lie (13:9). These prophets will no longer see false visions or חלומין ("divine") (13:23). In this specific context, divination is paralleled with false visions. In this case the adjective בזק ("false, lie") qualifying חלום is not mentioned. The prophets remain the subject. They function as seers and diviners. The RSV translates בזק חלום.
in this pericope as: “They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie” (13:6). This is a mistranslation, as it does not translate what is in the Hebrew text. This removes the relationship between prophets and visionaries. The KJV and NRSV read correctly with the Hebrew text.

The word of YHWH comes to Ezekiel again asking him to prophesy against Jerusalem’s sanctuaries and the land of Israel (21:1–30). This prophecy is confirmed through divination practiced by the King of Babylon, who is reported to have stood at the bifurcation of a road מֶשֶׁךְ מֶשֶׁךְ (“to divine”). He actually uses three types of divination: he shakes the arrows, consults the teraphim, and sees in the liver (21:21 [v. 26 HB]). These types of divination practices are of the impetrita type, but they are not typically used in ancient Israel, who preferred the lot. Nevertheless, the מֶשֶךְ of the Babylonian king is about and for Jerusalem: “Into his right hand comes the מֶשֶךְ (“divination”) (v. 22 [v. 27 Hebrew Bible]) for Jerusalem. This will appear to them as if it were a משכית מֶשֶךְ (“false divination”)” (v. 23 [v. 28 HB]). This foreign king has practiced divination, and it worked. A prophet—Ezekiel—and a diviner—the king of Babylon—serve the divine purpose. Nebuchadnezzar applies three forms of divination: choosing arrows, consulting cultic objects/gods, and reading marks on the livers of animals. To the surprise of its inhabitants, Jerusalem is chosen and their culpability is confirmed by their capture. Here, YHWH uses foreign divination to reveal his divine purpose.24 The

prophets of Israel, on the other hand, have seen only vanity and lying "divination" (“divination”), claiming that God has spoken to them (Ezek 22:28). Among the Israelites, there are those who see worthless visions and divine a lie (v. 29 [v. 34 Hebrew Bible]).

Again, *false* divination is what is bad, not the practice of divination. Ezekiel represents true prophecy and the King of Babylon represents true divination. Significantly, while the Deuteronomist rejects foreign divination, YHWH here affirms it! The material of the Latter Prophets is following Dtr’s line. Another voice exists!

In Micah, "Msq" occurs three times with a positive connotation (Mic 3:6, 7, 11).

Micah is rebuking the prophets because they lead people astray, and proclaim peace only when one feeds them. When they do not receive anything, they wage war (3:5). As a result, the prophets will be without vision and without "divination" (Mic 3:6). The NRSV has “revelation”; the RSV has “divination”; and the KJV has “ye shall not divine.” In this literary context, “vision” is again in parallel to “divination.” The prophets will be deprived of both vision and divination. It will be night without vision, and dark without divination. According to Micah 3:7, "the seers” will face shame and the “diviners”) will be in confusion. They will all cover their lips because God is not answering (3:7). Here, we see seers and diviners now in parallel. "God”) could communicate through the seers and diviners, but now, God is not answering. As a result, they will cover their lips in shock because that is not how it used to be. We further learn that during Micah’s time, “priests”) teach for a price and the prophets (“divine”) for money (3:11). Greediness is bad, *not* the practice of "divination”. This context
reveals additionally the existence of some partnership among priests and prophets. They functioned side by side. The prophets can also שורף. There is no competition between divination and prophecy. Both are functional during Micah’s time. Prophets, priest, seers, and diviners are legitimate messengers through whom אלהים speaks; however, because of bribery, אלהים will be silent. While Micah 3:5–8 speaks against the prophets and other recipients of special revelation; vv. 9–12 summarizes the condemnation of all leaders who have failed.”25 The word “prophet” appears in vv. 5, 6, and 11; yet, it is absent in 2:6–11. Daniel J. Simundson argues: “This word likely originated with the emergence of kingship in Israel to describe persons who advised the king about God’s will (e.g., stories of Samuel and Saul in 1 Sam. 9–15, Nathan and David in 2 Sam 12, Micah ben Imlah and Ahab in 1 Kgs 22). The word חזק (“seer”) in v. 7, functions as synonym for “prophet” and used in parallel with the word prophet. The “diviner” in v. 7 is not condemned in this passage.26 He also states, however, following the lead of the Deuteronomist:

The diviner שורף v. 7 is usually condemned because of the methods that he used to receive a divine word. These methods, which included the reading of various omens—sticks, arrows, livers of animals, astrology, etc.) were generally considered by Israel (or at least by the biblical author) to be foreign practices that were unacceptable ways to receive a revelation from God. The prophets usually received their messages in more subjective ways (dreams, voices, visions, etc.) rather than by manipulating exterior devices. In this passage, Micah does not make these distinctions. He lumps together all intermediaries in the same condemnation. Whether their gifts of perception, clairvoyance, and predicting the future are legitimate is beside the point. Micah is less concerned with their method than with their willingness to sell themselves, their skills, and their influence for a price.”27


26 Ibid., 557.

27 Ibid., 558.
Thus, I disagree with Simundson in this last aspect of his reading.

With Zechariah, we learn that the יסוב (“diviners”) see lies (Zech 10:2). The יסוב function as seers. Unfortunately, they see רע (“falsehood”). They probably tell false dreams as well. Zechariah finds lies to be reprehensible, not the practice of יסוב.

Zachariah also denounces the nonsense uttered by the teraphim. The returning Jews need encouragement, not all the lies, futile dreams, and false consolation. YHWH will do good to them at home and abroad. Zechariah reveals that, in Judah, the יסוב were among the shepherds or leaders (v. 3). Unfortunately, these shepherds deceived the people, who now, therefore, wander like sheep without a shepherd (v. 2).

From the above survey of the Latter Prophets, I conclude that in prophetic literature, יסוב carries positive and neutral connotations. What negates this divinatory practice are the adjectifs qualificatifs יָלָל (“worthless”) and רע (“false”). It becomes evident that the יסוב functioned alongside other dignitaries, who constituted together the human support system for Jerusalem. With this information, I wish to discuss יסוב in 1 Samuel.

יסוב appears three times in 1 Samuel (6:2; 15:23, 28:8). In the first occurrence, the Philistines called upon their priests and the יסוב (“diviners”) for divine guidance. They asked: “What shall we do with the ark of the YHWH? Tell us what we should send with it to its place” (1 Sam. 6:2). The term carries a positive connotation in this literary
context. In this particular instance, the מַשְׁפִּים ("priests") and the מִסְפָּרִים ("diviners") are attributed knowledge in matters divine in order to provide guidance during a time of crisis. They advise the Philistines to send away the ark of the God of Israel along with a guilt offering for their healing (6:3). There appears to exist, in this instance, a collaboration between the מַשְׁפִּים ("diviners") and the מַנְחִים ("priests") among the Philistines. Moreover and I believe even more importantly, these are foreign priests and diviners who are truth-sayers, 

_Wahrsagen_. They tell the Philistines that it is in their best interests to cooperate with the Israelites and their God! It seems that once again YHWH can have his interests served through foreigners who divine. Thus, this passage contradicts the monologic authoritarianism of the author do Deuteronomy 18:10–11.

In the second occurrence, however, the Hebrew term מַסְקִים carries a negative connotation. Samuel is reported to have declared, while still alive, that the sin of rebellion is equal to the sin of מַסְקִים ("divination"). Nonetheless, this is not always so translated: although the RSV; NRSV; NJPS; and NIV; all have "divination"; the JPS translates this word as "witchcraft"; and the KJV and NJB have "sorcery" (15:23). No indication exists that witchcraft and sorcery are involved. There are two problems with the negativity attached to מַסְקִים in this second occurrence (15:23). First, the first occurrence (6:2) and the last (28:8) strongly disagree with the negative connotation embedded in 1 Sam 15:23. The second problem is the fact that the supposed speech uttered by the spirit of Samuel in 28:15–19 does not refer to the negative statement about מַסְקִים. The omitted statement reads as follows: “For rebellion is as a sin of מַסְקִים ("divination") and stubbornness is like
iniquity and idolatry” (15:23a). To understand this better, I will turn to 1 Samuel 28. I must advise the reader, however, I will take up both 1 Samuel 15 and 28 at far greater length in Chapter 5, where I do my literary reading of 1 Samuel 28.

In the third occurrence, Saul asks the woman of Endor to ἴδω (“divine”) by an ἴδων, and the term carries a positive connotation. As we saw from the study of the Latter Prophets, a prophet is a seer and a diviner. Paul L. Redditt argues in line with this idea:

[O]ne way prophecy in the OT may be studied is by paying attention to the principal Hebrew terms used of prophets: roʾeh, from a verb meaning “to see”; hozeh, from a different word meaning “to see”; and nabi, the meaning of which is disputed…. Today a roʾeh might well be called a diviner, that is, one who can discover things that are hidden.” 28

He goes on to say of this: “One classic text for understanding the term [roʾeh] is 1 Samuel 9–10, where Saul and his servant seek out Samuel for Samuel to divine the location of the donkeys of Saul’s father. 29 I believe he is correct in his understanding and articulates this most helpfully.

In 1 Sam 28:15–19, however, the spirit of Samuel is reported to have said the following:

Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up? …Why then do you ask me, since the YHWH has turned from you and become your enemy? The YHWH has done to you just as he spoke by me; for the YHWH has torn the kingdom out of your hand, and given it to your neighbor, David. Because you did not obey the voice of the YHWH, and did not carry out his fierce wrath against Amalek, therefore the YHWH has done this thing


29 Ibid.
to you today. Moreover, the YHWH will give Israel along with you into the Hands of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons shall be with me; the YHWH will also give the army of Israel into the hands of the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:15–19).

The grave omission of such an important indictment of מַסְכָּה remains suspicious. To understand the practice of divination as portrayed in 1 Samuel 28 in light of the seeming negative connotation underlined in 15:23a is superficial and misleading. In addition to the intermediation verb מַסְכָּה, there are also verbs used when one is seeking for a person with the ability to provide divine guidance. It is significant to mention these terms although it is beyond the scope of this word study to examine them in each of their occurrences beyond the book of 1 Samuel. These verbs include: בָּכָל (“to seek”); הָלַל (“to go”); and דָּרָשׁ (“to inquire”). Saul commands his servants to בָּכָל (“to seek out”) a woman-master of a spirit so that he may הָלַל (“go”) to her and דָּרָשׁ (“inquire”) of her (v. 7).

This language of divination used in 1 Sam 28:7 is reminiscent of that used in 1 Sam 9:1–9 [especially v. 9]. Both narratives involve servants who know of an anonymous expert מִשְׁפָּחָה בֹּאָלָה אֲחִיאב (“a man of God”) (9:6), a בָּכָל (“a woman-master of the spirit”) (28:7) to whom they turn in time of a crisis. Saul’s servant tells him מִשְׁפָּחָה אֲחִיאב (“There is a man of God”) (9:6) and advises him to go to the man for guidance. Similarly, Saul’s servants respond to Saul’s request saying,

30 For an excellent word study and discussion of the various meanings of דָּרָשׁ, especially its both divinatory and rational sense within the legal context, see Bruce Wells, *The Law of Testimony in the Pentateuchal Codes*. Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für Altorientalische und Biblische Rechtsgeschichte 4 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), 94–99.
There is a woman-master of a spirit (“There is a woman-master of a spirit”) at Endor (28:7). The narrator then reports that, in the former time when someone went לַאֱלֹהִים (“to inquire of God”), one would say “Come, let us go to the seer for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer” (9:9). These exact same verbs לַחֵיל (“to go”) and רוּפֵא (“to inquire”) are used by Saul (28:7). In 1 Sam, רוּפֵא occurs twice (9:9; 28:7) and carries a “communicative, consultative or advisory element” and is preceded by a verb of motion לֶחָל (“to go”). In both cases, רוּפֵא carries a positive connotation. Both narratives culminate in finding an expert in divine guidance. The anonymous woman функционирует как мудрец, к которому Саул обращается за помощью в трудное время.

The anonymous local מָתיֵלָה (“man of God”) of 1 Sam 9:6 is referred to as רָאשִׁים (“seer”), then as נְבוֹע (“prophet”) (v. 9) and, only later on, is named Samuel (v. 14). The editor, in this case, participates in the constructing of the new exclusive meaning of mediation. In 1 Samuel 28, however, מָתיֵלָה (“a woman-master of the spirit”) functions as an effective mediator through whom Samuel’s spirit speaks.

1 Samuel contains many voices of divination. The priests and קָסָמִים (“diviners”) have the ability to access knowledge or guidance in matter divine (6:2). Samuel—while living (9:6ff) and after he is dead (28:13ff)—and the woman-master of a spirit invested with the ability to summon the spirit of the departed. These instances are textual evidence about the existence of various experts in divination among the Israelites, as well as among the Philistines. As we read the language used in the editorial comment found in

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I Sam 9:9, however, we see the power of the narrator in action. He states that “Formerly in Israel, anyone who went to inquire of God would say, ‘Come let us go to the seer’ for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer” (9:9). This comment demonstrates the power of the narrator manifested through use of words. The narrator wants his readers to join him in not only silencing the “seer,” but also in extinguishing the term by replacing it with a term known as “prophet.” The narrator makes of the term “prophet,” the established designation and the only means through whom divine guidance will be conveyed. This understanding is resisted in 1 Samuel 28, where it is fine for a prophet’s spirit to be invoked by בֵּלֶל through an אֱלֹהִים. What does the rest of the Hebrew Bible say about the בֵּלֶל? This question will be answered in Part II of this Chapter. Before getting to that point, however, I have still other words to dig up.

In the Writings, the word בֵּלֶל occurs only once in Prov 16:10a: “בֵּלֶל (“divination”) is on the lips of the king; his mouth does not sin in judgment” (Prov 16:10). Here, בֵּלֶל carries a positive connotation because the king has the power of divination and speaks it out. The parallelism of the verse suggests that the king used divination to decide legal cases. The translators of the KJV, RSV, and NRSV would agree with that assessment. They translate the term בֵּלֶל as “a divine sentence” (KJV); and “inspired decisions” (RSV; NRSV), both of which carry a positive connotation and association. Other translations are less precise and less positive. The NJPS translates בֵּלֶל as “magic”; the NIV as “an oracle”; and the NJB as “prophecies.” While the latter two translations also have positive connotations and associations, they do not respect the
parallelism of the verse. The NJPS has a translation that is both erroneous in this literary context and introduces a negative connotation, association, and emotion where it is inappropriate. Eryl W. Davies31 and, recently, Raymond C. van Leeuwen32 have argued that the king may have used the Urim and Thumim or casting lots in settling legal disputes.33 Based on the etymology of this Hebrew term, Davies argues that the Arabic verb *qasama* was used in reference to denote a “method of obtaining a divine decision by drawing lots at a sanctuary by means of headless arrow.” As a result, Davies maintains that, in Prov 16:10, the king’s “inerrant judgment is based on the decision rendered by the lot.”34 Van Leeuwen suggests that לְהִיא, in this particular instance, should have the following sense: “In a judicial case, when the king’s lips report a divine judgment (conveyed by the casting of lots or some other device), his judgments do not err.” Van Leeuwen bases this understanding on v. 33 that reads as follows: “The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is YHWH’s alone.” In Prov 16:10, however, there is no word לְהִיא (“a lot [for casting]”).35 Nonetheless, the readings of both Davis and van Leeuwen are clearly possible because much evidence of the judicial use of lots exists in the Hebrew


33 See also Wells, *Law of Testimony*, 94–95.

34 Davies, “Meaning of *qesem*,” 554–56.

In conclusion, from its first occurrence (Num 22:7, 23:23) to its last (Zech 10:2), the term מִסְרָא (Msq) occurs mostly with a positive or neutral connotation rather than with a negative connotation. Prophets, seers, and diviners run in parallel. They can all be used by YHWH and are among the dignitaries of Israel. Further, YHWH can work through foreign prophets/seers/diviners, when Israelite prophets are deaf to his words. Divination en soi is not problematic in most instances. Even foreign divination is not problematic in most instances. What is problematic is when prophets/seers/diviners do not hear the word of YHWH but speak out of other interests, such as their own or that of other gods. English translations reflect their struggle in translating מִסְרָא, especially in its nominal form. We observe repeatedly, however, that in the KJV, RSV, NRSV, in other English Bibles, and in scholarly work, the word מִסְרָא and its literary context are (mis)read through the lens of Deut 18:10–11 and, then, mistranslated. A negative pall that is not in the Hebrew is inserted into the text. This is an ideology at work in translation. There is no reason, based in the Hebrew text, to prioritize the negative view of Deut 18:10–11, when positive voices appear far more frequently.

36 Wells, Law of Testimony, 94–95.
The next prohibited divinatory practice of Deut 18:10–11 is the נַנִּים. The root נָנַיִם, as pertaining to divinatory practice, occurs nine times in the Hebrew Bible. In the Torah, the term occurs three times (Lev 19:26; Deut 18:10, 14) and in each occurrence, it carries a negative connotation. In all three occurrences, the term should be understood as a type of diviner endowed with a deep sense of perception. These individuals could obtain a message by observing nature, including observing the clouds. The designative meaning of נָנַיִם in Leviticus 19:26 should be “perceive.” Thus, such diviners engaged primarily in unsolicited, intuitive, or natural divination, where one waited for a divinely-initiated sign from natural phenomenon, otherwise known as oblativa divination. In Leviticus, the children of Israel are given moral holiness that prohibits them from the practice of “perceiving” through observing nature. The Greek term used in the LXX is ὀρνιθοσκοπήσωθε—a verb indicative future middle second person plural of ὀρνιθοσκόπωμαι translated as to observe birds, interpret their flight and cries.” In the LXX, the word is translated as “divine by inspection of birds” (Lev 19:26). The first part of the Hebrew text reads “You shall not eat בַּדָּם (“on the blood”) while the LXX reads “You do not eat ἐπὶ τῶν ὀρέων (“on the mountains”) (Lev 19:26). The LSG translates this as “Vous ne mangerez rien avec du sang. Vous n’observerez ni les serpents, ni les nuages pour en tirer des pronostics.” My translation is: “You shall eat nothing with blood. You shall observe neither snakes, nor clouds for predictions.” Thus, it seems that the Priestly Writer does not favor oblativa divination. Yet, translations go much further than this in their negativity. The KJV offers here “observe times,” which is
not overly negative; but the RSV and NRSV translate this as “practice witchcraft.”

Nothing in the text argues for such an interpretation and translation.

In Deuteronomy, this Hebrew term occurs in participial form and has the
designative meaning of “those who perceive” or “perceivers.” It also carries a negative
connotation. The word used in the LXX is κληδονίζωμενος—a verb participle present
middle nominative masculine singular of κληδονίζω—translated as “to give a sign or an
omen” or “to be a diviner.”37 The KJV translates this, similar to the Leviticus passage, as
“observer of times”; the RSV and NRSV have “soothsayer.” Once again, the RSV and
NRSV inject still more negativity and disapproval than the Hebrew actually conveys.

Thus, I argue that, in the literary context of the Torah, נַעַר is oblativa divination,
which is rejected by the writers of the specific passages of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.
Furthermore, the term is given a history linked to the alien, the others, the nations. It is
assigned a meaning associated with a theology of “othering” and “conquering.” Such
practice becomes, thereby, a נאライン (“abomination”) before YHWH. As a result, the
term נֵעָר takes on far more meaning than a simple scientific term of the ancient Near
East. It is more than simply rejected as poor science. It becomes associated with the
foreign, with the alien, and with the disgusting. In this way, indigenous practices are
thoroughly rejected with utter repugnance. In such an emotional environment, it is easy to
conquer. People are no longer seen as human, but rather as something unclean like pigs or
excrement.

37 Ibid., 958.
In the Former and Latter Prophets, the root מַעֲנָן occurs six times (Judg 9:37; 2 Kgs 21:6; Isa 2:6, 57:3; Jer 27:9; Mic 5:11). It carries a neutral connotation in Judg 9:37 where it is related to a place מָעֲנוֹן ("a tree of diviners"). It is translated (or not!) as: “Meonenim” (KJV); “the Diviners’ Oak” (RSV); and “Elon-Meonenim” (NRSV). It is also translated as “the soothsayers’ tree.”\(^{38}\) Paula M. McNutt notes that “Tabbur-erez, ‘The Naval of the Land,’ designates the location of the temple. Elon-meonenim means ‘Diviner’s Oak,’ possibly the oak of the pillar in v. 6.”\(^{39}\) It is fair to conclude that both מָעֲנוֹן and “the oak of the pillar” could have been sacred places because the context lends itself to such an understanding. The cases in point comprise references to temples such as the temple of “Baal-Berith” (9:4), the “temple of their god” (v. 27), the “tower of Shechem” (vv. 46–47, 49), the “temple of El-Berith” (v. 46), all of which are thought to be referring to the same temple within Judges 9. “A great fortress-temple excavated there has been identified as the temple of this chapter. It was constructed in the seventeenth century B.C. and lasted until the city’s destruction by Abimelech in the twelfth century B.C.”\(^{40}\) In such a context with references to sacred places, it is probable that the Diviners’ Tree or “soothsayers’ tree” was a sacred place where a מַעֲנָן could go and get knowledge from observing movements of the leaves as they respond to the command of


\(^{40}\) Ibid., 363.
the wind. A then could also hear a message from the sounds made by the leaves.

Under such a tree, a could also hear messages from the sounds made by insects dwelling in that tree as well as from birds that came to the tree for the purpose of singing a message. All of this is reminiscent of what my mother used to do. Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs report in regard to the origins of this word: “Ar. Nasal twang, hum of insects, whence diviners as crooning; Ew Gerber of diviner as interpreting hum of insects, whisper of leaves, etc.”41 In 1 and 2 Kings, the narrators draw on Deut 18:10–11 to provide a theological explanation of the misfortune that had happened to both Samaria and Jerusalem, and to articulate the role of the prophet as the only one acceptable way to channel God’s message, not other means including מַלְאָכָּה.

In 2 Kgs 21:2, Manasseh is accused of evil in the eyes of YHWH by following the מִלְחָמָה הָעָרִים (“abominations of the nations”). The reader gets a hint as to how to understanding the actions of King Manasseh. He then (“perceived through nature”). The literary context characterizes Manasseh’s practice as רֹאָה (“evil”) (v. 2) and points back to Deuteronomy 18 to associate this practice with “others, the foreigners, the nations” and thus assigns an emotive meaning to the term. The LXX translates ἐκλησίονέτο as “he used divination.” The term is translated as “observed times” (KJV); and “practiced soothsaying” (RSV; NRSV) (2 Kgs 21:6), and carries a negative connotation.

41 BDB, 778.
This term is also quite negative in Isaiah. In Isa 2:6, the practice of מְלַפֵּלָה (“those who perceive”; “perceivers”) is depicted as a foreign practice associated with the Philistines, and the term carries a negative connotation (“soothsayers” per the KJV, RSV, NRSV). In Isa 57:3, the term occurs in feminine מְלַפֵּלָה, again with a negative connotation and associated with a woman and translated as a “sorceress” by the KJV, RSV, and NRSV, which does not reflect the Hebrew adequately. In this instance, the feminine goes hand in hand with negativity; otherwise, how can translating מְלַפֵּלָה as “sorceress” be justified? Jerusalem is pictured as a מְלַפֵּלָה and a harlot. The LXX carries, however, a different word ἀνομοῦτος—the adjectival masculine plural of ἀνόμος—which is translated as “lawless, without law.” The English translations present a מְלַפֵּלָה, who far is different from the one in the Hebrew text.

Yet, I want to say that the term, whose designative meaning is “those who perceive,” resists such negativity. Again, I see, in my mind’s eye, my mother and other women sitting out among the natural world, listening to its hums, whispers, chirps, and twangs, and I see nothing evil about it. There they sat, listening to the voice of God speaking through nature. No maleficence could be attributed to them. No harm to anyone was intended. The point was to be in tune with nature and its songs, its voices, its messages, carried from God through nature to them. While the ancient Hebrew writers were more suspect of this because of their fear of the alien and their fear of conquest, many cultures enjoy this contact and find it saturated with meaning. Here, we must read with a hermeneutic of suspicion. Women are feared and the carriers of evil in this ancient
world. Men are allowed multiple wives, concubines, and prostitutes, but women must be chaste or monogamous. Men project their uncontrolled sexual expression on to women. Women represent what is suspect, alien, and uncontrollable. Women are responsible for men’s sexuality and religious duties. Women are the measure of the religious success or failure of a culture, and metaphors based on these images are applied to those who divine. Women, being often excluded from power within institutional forms of religion—thus having responsibility but not control—often seek other religious outlets. Divination is one of these outlets. It gives them direct access to the divine. Yet, men fear this access and call them harlots and sorceresses. In the 21st century, it might be best if we finally reject this situation and the images that arise out of it.

Fortunately, other voices exist within the Hebrew Bible that are more positive than those I have just considered. In Jer 27:9, the מַעֲנֵי (“those who perceive”) are listed with prophets and other specialists to whom people could resort for divine guidance. The immediate literary context does not resonate with the negativity assigned to the term in Deuteronomy 18. The negative associative meaning imposed on the term Deuteronomy 18 fails to reach this far because, here, the מַעֲנֵי stand alongside prophets and various other intermediaries. Now, Jeremiah advises the people not to listen to these intermediaries. The term, therefore, is again translated with highly negatively charged connotative and emotive meanings, including: “enchanters” (KJV); and “soothsayers” (RSV; NRSV). This is an unreasonable rendering to my mind. In Mic 5:11, the מַעֲנֵי (“those who perceive”; “perceivers”) will not be available. The term carries a neutral connotation in this literary context. In conclusion, I argue that the מַעֲנֵי were a type
of diviners who could interpret everyday events by means of knowledge acquired through observing natural phenomena. נוֹמַה functioned alongside prophets. In some instances, within the Hebrew Bible, they were suspect because they were considered to be practicing a foreign or female art. Nonetheless, this voice is not alone. It does not succeed in exercising without any resistance a monologic authoritarian patriarchal voice. The hums, whispers, chirps, and twangs of both nature and its perceivers continue to sing a different song in the Hebrew Bible, creating a tune within it that has contrapunctual lines.

The root נוֹמַה has a broad semantic range as it occurs throughout the Hebrew Bible: it means different things. In the thirty-one occurrences, it is translated as “serpent” eleven times, as “brass” nine times, and the root is related to divination eleven times. In this study, we are dealing with the root נוֹמַה as related to the practice of divination. In the Torah, the term נוֹמַה, in this sense occurs for the first time in Gen 30:27 where Laban declares to Jacob saying: "I learned by divination") that YHWH has blessed me because of you.” Here I agree with the RSV and NRSV in this translation. The KJV translates the verb as “I have learned by experience,” thus removing it from the realm of divination. Moreover, Terence E. Fretheim asserts: “Laban’s reference to divination, however, is theological hocus-pocus. Jacob tells it straight: Laban knows that God has blessed him through Jacob from his own experience (without divine revelation): he can
Thus, Fretheim would ultimately agree with the KJV that this is not divination. In this literary context, however, הָזְכִּית is a way of knowing, and it carries a positive connotation. We know that, through הָזְכִּית, one could know the whereabouts of a lost item. Joseph, for instance, has the capability to הָזְכִּית (Gen 44:5). The KJV renders the Genesis passage as “divineth”; the RSV “he divines”; and the NRSV “divination.” I would translate Gen 44:5: “Is not this that my lord drinks from and in it he indeed learns by divination? You are evil in that which you have done.” Also, we learn that “Joseph said to them, ‘What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed learn by divination? (44:15). Here, the English texts acknowledge that divination is involved: “certainly divine” (KJV); “indeed divine” (RSV); and “practice divination” (NRSV) (v. 15). Nevertheless, on Joseph’s ability to 햐ָזוּכִי expressed in Gen 44:5, 15, Fretheim observes: “It may be that Joseph does not actually practice divination (cf. v. 15).” Joseph has many abilities, including a diverse range of divinatory techniques. He is, among other things, an interpreter of dreams. In spite of what Fretheim states, I argue that these three passages provide biblical evidence supporting the fact that the people of ancient Israel had various ways available for dealing


43 Ibid., 638.
with everyday-life crisis and for finding divine guidance. In these occurrences, הָשָׁנָה carries a positive connotation as a way to know the will of God.

In the Holiness Code, the practice is outlawed: “You shall not eat on the blood. You shall not learn by divination, and you shall not learn by perception” (Lev 19:26). The term is innocent, but the literary context associates it with the negative. Obviously, the Israelites did not intend to prohibit all divination or perception! Thus, we must try to understand precisely what it is that the writers of the Holiness Code wanted to prohibit.

The KJV translates the term as “use enchantment”; the RSV and NRSV translate this as “practice augury.” There is, however, no textual basis upon which to make these connections.

In Numbers, הָשָׁנָה occurs in the second oracle of Balaam where he declares that there is no הָשָׁנָה against Israel. “For there is no learning by divination in Jacob and there is not the practice of divination in Israel; at this time, it shall be said to Jacob and to Israel what God has done” (Num 23:23). The term carries a positive/neutral connotation. When one reads it in light of prohibited practices (Deut 18:10) and of Josh 13:22 where Balaam was put to death by the children of Israel, one would infer that the two Hebrew terms, נַעֲרָם and הָשָׁנָה, intentionally placed in parallel in Num 23:23, are intended to be viewed negatively. The NJPS reads the relevant phrase as “No divining in Israel,” with a footnote (h) that states: “Cf. Deut 18:10–15.” The KJV, RSV, and NRSV all use “enchantment” (Num 23:23). Nevertheless, the immediate literary context does not negate הָשָׁנָה. In his third oracle, Balaam does not look for הָשָׁנָה: “And Balaam saw that
it was good in the eyes of the YHWH to bless Israel; he did not go, as at other times, to seek to learn by divinatory signs, but set his face toward the wilderness” (24:1). KJV uses “enchantments”; the RSV and NRSV “omens” (Num 24:1). The context does not negate הָנָק; it is informative. One could learn by divinatory signs as well. In Deut 18:10, the practice is prohibited “There shall not be found among you…‘one who learns by divination’” (18:10). Here again the KJV uses “an enchanter”; the RSV and NRSV use “an augur” (Deut 18:10). The associated negative meaning attached to this term in Deuteronomy 18 and Leviticus 19 finds another associative, positive meaning in Genesis 30, 44 and in Numbers 23 and 24. “The oracles of Num 24:1–25 exhibit some striking parallels to the Deir Alla inscriptions, which were written on plaster panels dating to the 8th century BCE, found in a temple in modern-day Jordan. One inscription recounts the vision that a prophet named Balaam received from a council of gods called the “shaddai” gods. The Hebrew word Shaddai (typically translated into the English as “Almighty”) occurs in the biblical Balaam oracles as a name for Israel’s God. Balaam is the one “who sees the vision of the Almighty [Shaddai]” in Num 24:4, 16 (see also Gen 17:1; Exod 6:3). In the Deir Alla inscription, Balaam asks that the gods reverse their decision to send a drought. Similarly, in the biblical Balaam oracles, a planned curse is reversed and instead changed into a blessing.”

In the Former Prophets, the term הָנָק occurs three times (1 Kgs 20:33; 2 Kgs 17:17, 21:6). In the first occurrence, הָנָק functions as a means of knowing (1 Kgs 20:33).

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The narrator states that Benhadad’s men נותא (“learned by divination”) (1 Kgs 20:33). The KJV takes the divinatory meaning of this phrase by translating it “did diligently observe.” The RSV and NRSV, however, leave in the divinatory meaning by using “were watching for an omen.” This happened when the Aramaeans were defeated. Then King Benhadad’s men went to plead for mercy to Ahab, king of Israel. King Benhadad’s men asked Ahaz to spare their king’s life. Ahaz said to them, “Is he still alive? He is my brother” (1 Kgs 20:32). Benhadad’s men נותא (“learned by divination”) and found it in Ahab’s own words: “He is my brother” which they took to be an omen. Benhadad’s men quickly replied saying, ‘Yes, your brother Benhadad’” (v. 33). King Ahab spared Benhadad’s life. נותא in this context stands as a way of knowing although we are not told the manner by which Benhadad’s men knew. The term carries a positive connotation, but we still cannot understand fully what divinatory technique is being employed here.

In the second occurrence, the literary context negates the neutral term נותא. It listed among the sins that are reported to have caused the deportation of the Northern Kingdom to Assyria. The children of Israel “caused their sons and their daughters to pass through fire, they practiced divination, they learned by divination” (2 Kgs 17:17). The KJV translates this as “they used enchantments”; the RSV uses “they used sorcery”; the NRSV employs “they used augury” (2 Kgs 17:17). Here, we hear repeatedly the voice that was uttered in Deuteronomy 18. This context describes the practice as evil.

In the third occurrence, נותא also has a negative connotation. Manasseh, king of Judah, committed four sins repeating voice uttered in Deuteronomy 18. “He learned by
divination” (2 Kgs 21:6). Following its translations in 2 Kgs 17:15, the KJV has “used enchantment”; the RSV and NRSV, however, now switches to “practiced augury” (2 Kgs 21:6). To the voice uttered in Deuteronomy 18, which is repeated here, the narrator adds another utterance to demonstrate the truism of the prohibition. Namely, Manasseh’s sins have caused his death (2 Kgs 21:18). According to 2 Kings, these divinatory practices are sins that caused Samaria and Jerusalem to be destroyed and the people to be taken in exile (21:10–15). Claude F. Mariottini observes:

The book of Deuteronomy serves as an introduction to the Deuteronomic History and as the proper foundation for understanding the history of Israel as presented in Kings. As a historical book, 1 Kings is a theological interpretation of the monarchy and of the kings of Israel and Judah until the reign of Ahaziah.45

The voice uttered in Deuteronomy 18 is needed here for understanding the reasons for the deportations that both the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom had to endure. Israel should not imitate the ways of life of “the nations.” Such foreign practices are strictly prohibited (Lev 19:26). While this repeated voice uttered in Deuteronomy functions as a chorus, there is another chorus formed of other voices which portray the practice of positively (Gen 30:27, 44:5, 15; Num 23:23; 1 Kgs 20:33). Theodore Hiebert notes:

Divination, the determination of divine intentions by some kind of ritual procedure, seems entirely acceptable when practiced by Laban and Joseph (44:5, 15); yet it is condemned elsewhere in the Bible (Deut 18:10). Certain

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religious practices were regarded differently at different times and places in the biblical period.\textsuperscript{46}

Other scholars find ways to demonstrate that this practice could not have been practiced in ancient Israel. F. V. Greifenhagen, for instance, maintains that the practice of $\text{Israel}$ which is prohibited in Lev 19:26 seems to be acceptable in an Egyptian setting where Joseph is reported to have a goblet that he uses for $\text{Israel}$ “divination” (Gen. 44:5, 15).\textsuperscript{47}

According to Greifenhagen, the positive connotation of the practice of divination in this passage ought to be understood in Joseph’s Egyptian’s context. He contends that Joseph’s Egyptian identity is being reinforced: “he is like Pharaoh,” says his brother Judah (44:18). Greifenhagen fails to see in this passage the evidence that this type of divination was certainly not foreign to Joseph’s brothers. Joseph’s brothers’ answers to the questions demonstrate that both Joseph and his brothers lived in a world where this type of divination was common. He fails to mention its existence in the larger world that both Joseph and the Egyptians shared. In fact, in the hymn to the sun-god, Shamash is praised as a universal god: “O Shamash, all the world longs for thy light. By the cup of the diviner, by the bundle of cedarwood, \textit{thou dost instruct} the oracle priest and the interpreter of dreams.”\textsuperscript{48} According to this passage, through two types of divination, that

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\textsuperscript{48} “Hymn to the Sun-God,” \textit{ANET}, 388.
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is, by the cup and by the bundle of cedarwood, Shamash instructs two types of diviners, namely, the oracle priest and the interpreter of dreams. In the case of Laban, who learns by אות (30:27), Greifenhagen notes that Laban was a Mesopotamian as if this type of divination were exclusively a foreign practice.\footnote{Greifenhagen, \textit{Egypt on the Pentateuch's Ideological Map}, 38, n. 44.} אות is known to Joseph, not because he is in Egypt, a foreign land where they use this type of divination as Greifenhagen suggests.\footnote{Ibid.} Rather, he knows about them because the Israelites knew about them. Thus, the voices about this practice sing in Israel and sing contrapunctually.

In the last two occurrences (2 Kgs 21:6; 17:17), אות is portrayed in such a negative picture to the extent that the RSV translates it as “used sorcery” (2 Kgs 17:17) while translating the same word as “practiced augury” in 2 Kgs 21:6. This wavering in translating אות characterizes all three versions: the KJV; RSV; and NRSV—which portray the term negatively in the two occurrences (2 Kgs 17:17; 21:6) and positively in the five occurrences (Gen 30:27, 44:5, 15; Num 23:23; 1 Kgs 20:33).

אות occurs once in the Writings (2 Chr 33:6) in a retelling of King Manasseh’s sins. He אות (“learned by divination”). Again, the KJV has “used enchantment”; the RSV and NRSV “practiced augury.” It is the same repeated utterance voiced in Deuteronomy 18 heard contrapunctually with other voices already mentioned above.
In conclusion, מָדַע en soi is positive. There is a voice that speaks negatively about this practice along with others listed in Deuteronomy 18 as already stated. In doing so, the phenomenon of double voicing occurs. As a result, the term carries positive connotation as well as negative. Ancient Israel, its neighbors, resorted to מָדַע for learning about divine guidance and for problem solving. A final word, however, needs to be said about the wavering translations of the KJV, RSV, and NRSV. I want to suggest that, before the late 1800s, we had no Assyriological basis for making a decision about what specific practices were involved. The KJV translation committee had nothing upon which to decide what the term meant. Reading through the negative lenses of the so-called law codes of the Hebrew Bible, they translated the terms with what they had available in the Middle Ages to reflect negative divinatory terms: enchantment, sorcery, augury, and so forth. The fact that they used these terms interchangeable marks that they had no idea what the Hebrew said exactly. That is understandable for this period in time. Unfortunately, the RSV and NRSV, wishing to remain in line with the KJV, continued this tradition even though each translation committee had access to ever better textual and material sources from the wider ancient Near East. I, therefore, maintain that we can now have a much better sense of what practices are involved and that our translations should reflect them more accurately. To fail to upgrade these translations is to carry on medieval necessarily uninformed and highly anti-divinatory translation decisions.
occurs twelve times in the Hebrew Bible. It occurs three times in the Torah (Exod 7:11; 22:17; Deut 18:10). It appears once in plural מִלְמַשְׁתָּא תָּא (Exod 7:11) and is translated as “sorcerers”; once in masculine singular מִלְמַשְׁתָּא תָּא (Deut 18:10) and is translated as “witch” (KJV) or “sorcerer” (RSV; NRSV); and once in feminine singular מִלְמַשְׁתָּא תָּא (Exod 22:17) and is translated as “witch” (KJV), “sorceress” (RSV), or “female sorcerer” (NRSV).

In the first occurrence, Pharaoh is in the face of crisis and summons his experts in intermediation: the wise men and the מִלְמַשְׁתָּא תָּא (“diviners”) (Exod 7:11). The terms en soi are not negative. This is an utterance, a voice that informs the reader about the ancient world and its experts in matters divine. In this case, a non-Israelite makes the utterance. The literary context of Exod 7:11a does not negate Pharaoh’s experts. The last part of the verse, however, assigns a category “magicians” to these מִלְמַשְׁתָּא תָּא, whose ways of doing the same signs as those performed by Moses and Aaron are from a different origin and, thus, viewed as inferior (vv. 12 ff.). Theodore J. Lewis refers to this practice in Exod 22:17 as “black magic.”

What makes this practice “black magic”? Nothing in the text refers to such terms. All these characterizations serve to negate the practices of these non-Israelites. From an African postcolonial perspective, this is highly problematic!

In the Former and Latter Prophets, the word מִלְמַשְׁתָּא occurs eight times (2 Kgs 9:22; Isa 47:9, 12; Jer 27:9; Mic 5:11; Nah 3:4; Mal 3:5; Dan 2:2); and, in all occurrences, the

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term is translated as “witchcrafts” (KJV); “sorceries” (RSV; NRSV) (2 Kgs 9:22) and carries a negative connotation. In the first occurrence, the larger context tells the story of prophet Elisha who commands a man to go to Ramoth Gilead in order to anoint Jehu as king in private. The anonymous man is to pour oil on Jehu’s head and to declare the following:

Thus says the LORD the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. 7 You shall strike down the house of your master Ahab, so that I may avenge on Jezebel the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD. 8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish; I will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. 9 I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah. 10 The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her (2 Kgs 9:6–10; NRSV).

After accomplishing this mission, the man opens the door and ran as instructed by Elisha. Jehu has been anointed and now “drives like a maniac” (v. 20) going after Joram. Joram sees Jehu and asks him “Have you come in peace, Jehu?” Jehu replies, “What peace, so long as the fornication of Jezebel your mother and divinatory practices (נ bày) are many?” (v. 22). In this context, the practice of נしない is associated with foreignness as it has been the case with other practices uttered in Deuteronomy 18. In addition to foreignness, however, the narrator adds another association, which is the feminine gender. What is foreign is abominable; the female Jezebel is abominable as well. Misogyny is embedded in Jehu’s words and actions. He goes down to Jezreel. Jezebel hears about it, she looks down through the window, and she sees Jehu. Jehu orders the eunuchs who were with Jezebel to throw her down. These men threw her down, and her blood splashed on the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot (vv. 32–33).
While this gory scene is taking place, Jehu goes in and eats and drinks. He says, “Take care of הָרִיצְוֹת הָיָה and bury her, for she is a king’s daughter.” English translations translate the Hebrew phrase as “this cursed woman,” adding the word “woman.” Although this might makes sense in English, it is not what the Hebrew text says. The French reads better: cette maudite “this cursed.” The French does not need to add the word “woman,” because the feminine is built in the adjective maudite. The best translation in English would be “this cursed feminine” or “this cursed her.” This translation expresses the misogynistic accent that Jehu unleashes. Jehu’s misogynistic stance resurfaces in his reply to people who tell him that all they find of Jezebel’s body is nothing but her skull, feet and hands. He says:

This is the word of the YHWH, which he spoke by his servant Elijah the Tishbite. “In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel.” (vv. 36–37)

Freshly anointed in the name of YHWH, God of Israel, Jehu drives like a madman and goes to kill. The “Witch of Zezreel” is killed. This is how the hiphil of בַּדְבֵּד operates.

The God of Israel is reported to have commanded that destruction of the house of Ahab. God’s command is in first person: וַיֹּאמֶר (2 Kgs 9:8). It destroys a foreign woman and her practice, whatever פֶּסַח was. The text does not explain it.

In Isa 47:9, 12, although the word occurs in positive or neutral light, the language used in the larger context wants to portray it negatively. Here also, the language associates נָחָל with foreignness and feminine—the term is masculine plural construct with a second person feminine singular suffix. In this case, the prophet is foretelling the
The feminized city will remove her veil, strip off her robe, uncover her legs, her
nakedness will also be uncovered, and her shame will be seen (vv. 2–3). She is to sit in
silence (v. 5) and watch two things come upon her in one day: “the loss of her children
and widowhood” in spite of the abundance of her “divinatory practices” (vv. 9, 12). This
utterance echoes the negative voice heard in Deuteronomy 18 and adds a new element,
namely, the language of divination is feminized in addition to its being associated with
foreignness and thus portrayed with a doubly negative connotation.

In Jer 27:9, the מֵאָסָרָה ("diviners") are listed alongside the prophets, the מַעֲשֵׂי
the dreamers, and the מַעֲנִי. The word מַעֲשֵׂי does not carry a negative connotation.
These intermediaries מַעֲנִי ("prophesy"). According to the context, the five types of
intermediaries prophesied. The problem Jeremiah denounces is the fact that these
intermediaries prophesy רְקָה ("a lie") (v. 10). All five types of experts are different and
can prophesy while being precisely who they are. This challenges the negative
connotation assigned to the practice of מַעֲשֵׂי in Deuteronomy 18, which is just one voice
among many in the Hebrew Bible.

מַעֲשֵׂי occurs once in Mic 5:11(v. 12 Eng) and is translated as “witchcrafts” (KJV),
“sorceries” (RSV; NRSV). In this literary context, the word מַעֲשֵׂי is listed among
practices and things to which people turned to for worship and YHWH will מַעֲשֵׂי
(“destroy”) the מַעֲנִי and there shall be no מַעֲנִי ("those who perceive") (v. 11).
Things to be destroyed include horses (v. 9), cities (v. 10), images and pillars (v. 12). YHWH will נָצֵל (“pluck up”) the אֲשֶׁרֶת (“groves,” KJV; “Asherim,” RSV; and “sacred poles,” NRSV), and will שָלֵם (“destroy”) the cities (v. 13). Although the term אֲשֶׁרֶת (literally translated “your Ashera”) reminds the reader of a Phoenician goddess Ashera, in this context, these should be understood as images of a deity. All the listed practices, the מֵשָפִּים, the images, etc. are direct objects of a series verbs in the hiphil that include ברה. The purpose of this cleaning up is for the people not to bow לְמַעֲשֵׂה (“to the work”) of their hands (v. 12). In this context, מֵשָפִּים could mean either divinatory images or practices related to communicating with the divine.

In Nah 3:4, the term occurs twice. In this literary context, Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, is portrayed in feminine image. She is the מַעֲשָה מַשָפֵי (“female-master of divinatory practices”). The KJV uses “mistress of witchcrafts,” and the NRSV “mistress of sorcery.” The RSV omits the word מַעֲשָה entirely and translates only מַשָפֵי as “charms.” The second occurrence is the last word in the same verse. “She sells nations through her fornications and families מַשָפֵי.” Here again stands a case similar to that of Jehu mentioned earlier. A misogynous tone filled with pornographic language is heard as Nahum prophesies. The feminine Nineveh, a foreign city, referred to as מַשָפֵי, will face humiliation: the YHWH of hosts, declares Nahum, will lift up her skirts over her face and let nations look on her nakedness and kingdoms on her shame (v. 5). Again, here, the context is not helpful in defining what this practice was except
that it is rendered alien, feminized, associated with fornication, and assigned a negative connotation.

In Mal 3:5, מִלְחָמָהּ (“diviners”) are involved in some prohibited practices.

Again, there is no description of what this particular practice is except that these practitioners are listed with adulterers, those who swear falsely, oppressors of the hired workers, oppressors of the widow and the orphans, and so forth. The content of the book places it in the postexilic context because of the focus on the functioning of the temple.52 In addition to their mischief, these types of diviners do not fear YHWH (3:5b). The literary context negates the מִלְחָמָהּ because of their mischief and the fact that they lack the fear of YHWH.

מִלְחָמָהּ (“diviners”) occurs once in the Writings (Dan 2:2), and is translated as “sorcerers” in all three versions. In this context, King Nebuchadnezzar is reported to have had troubling dreams. So he summoned the מִלְחָמָהּ, מַשְׁפְּתִים, and מַשְׁפְּתִים (Dan 2:2) to interpret his dream. According to the context, the מִלְחָמָהּ are understood as a type of diviners who had some access to hidden knowledge, and the term does not carry a negative connotation. This echoes Pharaoh, who also summoned the מִלְחָמָהּ (Exod 7:11). מַשְׁפְּתִים and all other types of diviners are classified under the large umbrella of נַחַפֵּי חֲבוּל ("wise men") whose chief perfect becomes Daniel after telling the king what his dream was, along with its interpretation (v. 48). These various types of

diviners were part of the power system in Babylon during the second year of Nebuchadnezzar.\textsuperscript{53} Jeremiah also testifies to the existence of the מָלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים, prophets, diviners, dreamers, and soothsayers in the Neo-Babylonian empire (27:9). In Daniel, these and other specialists failed to reveal the dream and its interpretation to Nebuchadnezzar. In Jeremiah, all the enumerated experts proclaimed a message of false hope, and Jeremiah, therefore, warns the people not to listen to them (27:9).

In conclusion, the above biblical evidence shows that the practice of מָלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים was widespread in ancient Israel and among its neighbors. Dreams and their interpretations had a central role in the ancient Near East. Specialists in interpretation of dreams, which include the מָלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים in this case, were consulted. Unfortunately, none of the occurrences wherein this term appears provides the reader with an explication of the manner in which this practice operates. Nonetheless, the practice of מָלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים is not related to the type of divination practiced by the "בַּשָּׁלֹם יְהֹוָה" in 1 Sam 28. The "בַּשָּׁלֹם יְהֹוָה" is not related to the practice of the מָלֶךְ אֱלֹהִים, who is to be put to death (Exod 22:17) as understood by Uriel Simon.\textsuperscript{54} He sees a connection here and, as a result, translates


“אשה מלחרואים” as a “witch.” He states that the woman of Endor is: “the sinful witch of Endor who should be put to death, yet risks her life in the first stage of the story in order to raise up the spirit of Samuel.” The practice of the אשה מלחרואים in 1 Sam 28 should not be read in light of Exodus 22:17. These are two different passages that deal with two different practices. Simon along with all the scholars who refer to אשה מלחרואים as מלחם are following the late 19th century scholar, Henry Preserved Smith, who concluded that the מלחם of 1 Samuel 28 would then be the sister of the מלחם מיסים of Nah 3:4.” Unfortunately, this is an imposition since there is no connection between these two women’s practices, except of course the fact that the two are women and foreigners.

The root חרב occurs in numerous instances in the Hebrew Bible. חרב has different meanings. As a noun, it means “hurt” (KJV); or “striking” (RSV; NRSV) (Gen 4:23); “wound, stripe, bruise” (Exod 21:25; Isa 1:6; 53:5; Ps 38:6 [5]; Prov 20:30); as a proper name, “Hebron” (Num 13:22; Judg 1:20); and “Heber” the Kenite (Judg 4:11, 17, 21; 5:24). As a verb, it may mean “to join or to touch, to associate” (Job 16:4; Ezek 1:11,

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55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
37:19) or “united” (Judg 20:11). Other designative meanings are possible. In this study, I confine my examination solely to those instances where רבק is related to divination.

Only four occurrences deal with divination, and they are found in Deut 18:11; Isa 47:9, 12; and Ps 58:5. It is interesting, however, to note that in Exod 39:4, רבק occurs in participial form and is used in relation to the ephod. The ephod was רבק (“joined”) together by its two edges. In the Torah, our study deals only with רבק רבק mentioned in Deut 18:11. In its first occurrence, it is listed among divinatory practices that are abominable and foreign. One who רבק is a type of diviner that uses incantations. It is translated as “charmer” in the KJV; RSV; and as “one who casts spells” in the NRSV. The NJPS and the NIV also translate it as “cast spells;” while the NJB translates it as “weaver of spells.” The first רבק in this pair is a verb: the qal participle masculine singular absolute of רבק, which means “be joined, to tie a magic knot or spell, charm.”

It is followed by רבק, a noun masculine singular absolute meaning “company, association, spell.” The noun also means “a band of (bad) priests.” In his comments on Deut 18:9 14, Ronald E. Clements starts with the following opening statement: “The older law of Exod 22:18 demands the death penalty for any woman who acted as a

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58 BDB, 287.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., 288.
sorceress, casting spells to bring sickness or some other harm to a person.\textsuperscript{61} Clements’ comments orient the reader to understanding a הַבֵּרַע as a sorceress who casts spells to harm others. The Hebrew text as well as the KJV, RSV, and NRSV do not cast הַבֵּרַע as a female practitioner.

In the Latter Prophets, הַבֵּרַע (\textquoteright incantation\textquoteright) occurs twice: in Isa 47:9, 12. In both occurrences, the term is translated as “enchantments” and carries a neutral connotation. The language used in the larger context, however, associates this divinatory practice foreign and feminizes it as with the verb הַלָּכָה. Second Isaiah prophesies against Babylon. Babylon will have no support system: her הַבֵּרַע, her הַלָּכָה, and even her stargazers and astrologers will not save it and its inhabitants from what is about to come upon them. This does not portray the term הַבֵּרַע negatively, as the larger context demonstrates. The passage is rather informative: the experts whom Babylon has will not be able to defend her.

In the Writings, the term הַבֵּרַע occurs once in Ps 58:6 (v. 5 Eng), which is a psalm of prayer for vengeance. The term is translated as “charming” (KJV), and “enchanter” (RSV; NRSV). Ann Jeffers translates it as “mutterers of incantation” and observes that הַבֵּרַע is listed among the evildoers in the Ugaritic inscription of Ras Ibn

\textsuperscript{61} Clements, “Deuteronomy,” 271.
Hani 78/20. It states that the wicked speak lies, and they have venom like that of a serpent: “like the deaf adder that stops its ear, so that it does not hear the voice of מְלָא צִיוֹן חָפֵר חַבִּיס מַחְבָּבָה ("those who recite incantations who whisper wisely"). In this context, the verb מְלָא צִיוֹן helps the reader understand that these diviners whispered as they were practicing their type of divination. The last word מַחְבָּבָה, a verb pual participle masculine singular absolute, is appositional with וחיכה, a verb qal participle masculine singular absolute. It explains the action (חיכה) of the חיכים. The KJV, RSV, NRSV, all translate this word as if the חיכים were a different type of practitioners. חיכים recited the incantation wisely, but the ears of the wicked were too deaf to hear. The term, therefore, carries a neutral connotation. This practice was prominent in the ancient world. The Hebrew Bible is replete with such cases. A case in point is Psalm 83, which is called שִׁיר (“a song”).

O God, do not keep silence; do not hold your peace or be still, O God!... They conspire with one accord; against you they make a covenant— the tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, Moab and the Hagrites, Gebal and Ammon and Amalek, Philistia with the inhabitants of Tyre, Assyria also has joined them; they are the strong arm of the children of Lot. Do to them as you did to Midian, as to Sisera and Jabin at the Wadi Kishon, who were destroyed at En-dor, who became dung for the ground... O my God, make them like whirling dust, like chaff before the wind. As fire consumes the forest, as the flame sets the mountains ablaze, so pursue them with your tempest and terrify them with your hurricane. Fill their faces with shame, so that they may seek your name, O LORD. Let them be put to shame and dismayed forever; let them perish in disgrace. Let

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them know that you alone, whose name is the LORD, are the Most High over all the earth (Ps 83: 1, 5–10, 14/18; NRSV).

These same words, when placed in the mouth of foreigners who use them against ancient Israelites, become somewhat negative. Those foreigners would be referred to as מַלְאֵי־שֶׁמֶן הוֹרָר הַבָּרִים (“those who recite incantations who whisper wisely”). These are incantations even if wise one. When the children of Israel use this same genre, however, it is called שֶׁרֶד (“a song”). Language works as a means to exercise power over someone else. Similar divinatory practices have different labels depending on who is using the practice. Negativity is attached to foreign practices. Nevertheless, there is no common ground between the divinatory practice performed by the חָבָּר הַבָּר and that performed by the woman-master of a spirit in 1 Sam 28.

Thaumaturgic Procedures:

The next prohibited practice listed in Deut 18:11 is שֶׁמֶל אָב רוֹדְנֵינוּ. שֶׁמֶל אָב רוֹדְנֵינוּ appears only once in the Hebrew Bible and that is in Deuteronomy 18. The three translations lack consensus. It is translated as “a consulter with familiar spirits, or wizard” (KJV); “a medium or a wizard” (RSV); or “who consults ghosts or spirits” (NRSV). According to the KJV and RSV, these are two distinct types of diviners, while, the NRSV distinguishes two types of spiritual agents: ghosts and spirits that people could consult. One common thread they share is that the practice is portrayed negatively. A second common thread is that the phrase deals with mediation through supernatural
beings. The question is, however, why is בָּשָׂפֵי translated as “ghost” (as the NRSV translates it here) when it translates as it as “spirit” in 1 Samuel 28? Why does the RSV translate it as “medium” in this instance, while translating the same term as “spirit” in 1 Samuel 28? Why translate בָּשָׂפֵי as “medium” here and translate בָּשִׂא as “medium” as well? Why associate בָּשָׂפֵי (“medium”) and בָּשָׂפֵי (1 Sam 28:7) (“medium”) through translation? In doing so, the RSV creates an associative meaning that attaches to the woman. The reader associates once again the negativity and foreignness of the practices prohibited in Deuteronomy 18 to this woman. This phrase, as it appears here, differs from the way בָּשָׂפֵי and בָּשָׂפֵי appear in 1 Sam 28:3, 9. In the latter case, they both are in the plural; while in Deuteronomy 18, they appear in masculine singular absolute and are preceded by verb לָשָׂפֵי. The phrase בָּשָׂפֵי in 1 Samuel 28 is not literally mentioned in Deuteronomy 18. Since לָשָׂפֵי is the only occurrence of this phrase in the Hebrew Bible and since the context does not define or explain what this practice is, it imperative to examine the terms בָּשָׂפֵי and לָשָׂפֵי everywhere they occur in the Torah for the purpose of translating לָשָׂפֵי. After this has been accomplished, I shall continue to study בָּשָׂפֵי and לָשָׂפֵי beyond the Torah for the purpose of understanding the meaning of the terms and particularly the term בָּשָׂפֵי. Translating בָּשָׂפֵי (1 Sam 28:7) in light of Deuteronomy 18 is an imposition. Each voice of each vocabulary of divination should be heard in it own context. An examination of every each occurrence of the verb לָשָׂפֵי in the Hebrew Bible
is not necessary. I deal only with where אָדָם is related to 1 Samuel 28. As for now, let us listen to the voices of four intermediaries.

Part II

The Intermediaries: אָדָם, אָנָּא, אָנָּא, אָנָּא, and Their Actions

אָנָּא אָנָּא

Three of the intermediaries listed above, namely, אָנָּא, אָנָּא, אָנָּא, אָנָּא, and אָנָּא, all share grammatical and contextual relationships in the divinatory practice occurring in 1 Sam 28:7–19. For this reason, when I turn to אָנָּא in 1 Samuel 28:8, it will be necessary to consider the three terms together as אָנָּא does not stand in isolation. The three terms relate to each other by means of verbs of intermediation, that is, קָסֹן, מִלְחָמָה, and מִלְחָמָה. Presently, however, I start by studying the two words אָנָּא and אָנָּא together because אָנָּא always occurs in conjunction with אָנָּא in the Hebrew Bible. אָנָּא, on the other hand, occurs by itself in several instances as we shall see throughout this word study. The two terms appear four times in the Torah and the literary context attributes to them a negative connotation (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27, Deut 18:11). The KJV translates אָנָּא as “them that have familiar spirits,” while the RSV and NRSV translate it as “mediums.” In the two first occurrences, these terms appear in the plural, אָנָּא and אָנָּא (Lev 19:31; 20:6). I turn first to Leviticus.

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The children of Israel must not turn to תבֹּא and מִדְּנֵי (Lev 19:31). A theological claim is added to this utterance: “I am the YHWH your God” (v. 31b). Another claim is added in Lev 20:6 where it states that if anyone turns to תבֹּא and מִדְּנֵי, YHWH will set YHWH’s face against them, and will בֹּרֵא (“cut”) them off from the people (20:6). The verb is in the hiphil, which highlights the “causing of an event” 63 by YHWH. As for the manner in which the deity will actually בֹּרֵא תבֹּא and מִדְּנֵי, no explanation is provided. In this context, תבֹּא and מִדְּנֵי appear to be intermediaries. Are they human beings or spirits? The context does not tell the reader. Thus, we need to dig further in the remaining occurrences for the purpose of understanding such beings and translating them.

In Lev 19:31, the two terms stand as two distinct types of intermediaries because each is a direct object of its own verb. In addition, each is preceded by a preposition ל (“to, into, towards”). The children of Israel are to turn ל תבֹּא אֲשֶׁר, not to seek ל מִדְּנֵי. The KJV reflects this distinction better than the RSV and NRSV. It reads, “Regard not ל תבֹּא אֲשֶׁר, neither seek ל מִדְּנֵי to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.” According to the RSV and the NRSV, on the other hand, תבֹּא and מִדְּנֵי are direct objects of verb ל (“to turn”). Thus, to the second verb ל (“to seek”), the RSV and NRSV supply a personal pronoun “them,” which is not in the Hebrew text. In this

case, the KJV is the better reading because it reflects the original language. Still we must ask: Are they human beings or spirits? The context does not tell the reader.

In Lev 20:6, הָדוֹרֵנִים and הָדוֹרֵנִים are both direct object of verb הָדוֹרֵנִים (“to turn”), and they each are preceded by a preposition אל and tied together by the conjunction ו. These particles also mark the distinction between the two types of intermediaries: הָדוֹרֵנִים and הָדוֹרֵנִים. The literary context does not disclose whether these intermediaries are human beings or spirits. In the last occurrence, Lev 20:27, the verse reads “A man or a woman מְנָֽהֵגָה that hath ‘a familiar spirit’ or that is a ‘wizard’….” KJV, RSV and NRSV do not translate מְנָֽהֵגָה (preposition “ב” and suffix מְנָֽהֵג) “in them.” The KJV reads “A man also or woman that hath ‘a familiar spirit’ or that is a ‘wizard’….” The RSV and NRSV translate the Hebrew phrase as “A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard….” Leaving the particles “ב and מְנָֽהֵג” un-translated impacts the way בִּֽפִּקְרֵה and בִּֽפִּקְרֵה are translated and understood. A similar case is found in Is 19:3 where a preposition, noun and suffix are translated: “and the spirit of the Egyptians בִּֽפִּקְרֵה ‘within them…’ (RSV, NRSV) ‘in the midst thereof…’” (KJV). All three versions misrepresent בִּֽפִּקְרֵה and בִּֽפִּקְרֵה for dismissing such an important part of speech. I identify three problems related to translation as it stands in the KJV, RSV, NRSV. The first, identified in the Torah, is the omission of the prepositional phrase בִּֽפִּקְרֵה (“in them”) which affects the translation of בִּֽפִּקְרֵה (Lev 20:27) and thus the understanding of the term itself. The second, in the Prophets, is a double problem of a missing translation which
occurs in 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24 where the English translations avoid dealing with two important verbs בְּלֵי and דוּחֵל. The translated version then results in a misrepresentation of לָדוּחֵל and דַּעַח as mediums who are human beings. לָדוּחֵל and דוּחֵל could have been objects or images made for the purpose of entering in contact with the spiritual realm (2 Kgs 21:6) and Josiah burned them (23:24, 2 Chr 33:6). The third identified problem is the fact that the phrase לָדוּחֵל בְּלֵי of Deut 18:11 and 1 Chr 10:13 does not read the same as לָדוּחֵל בְּלֵי mentioned in 1 Sam 28:7–8 whom the Chronicler does not mention but whom the KJV, RSV, and NRSV assume that she is there and they each translates her. The technique of weaving words from the list of prohibited practices into the retold narrative about the woman-master of a spirit for the purpose of negating the practices fails. It is fair to conclude that the singular לָדוּחֵל is rightly translated as “spirit.” It is translated “ghost” in instances where it carries a negative connotation and in association with the foreign, the other as opposed to the people, Israel. This is true of its plural form לָדוּחֵל as well. In some cases, דוּחֵל is translated as “medium” as already mentioned. The plural form is consistently translated as “those that have a familiar spirit” (KJV) and as “mediums” (RSV), NRSV. Such penalty echoes the translation of the Middle Assyrian Laws clearly state that any man or woman who makes magical preparations will be put to death: “If either a man or a woman made up magical preparation and they were found in their possession, when they have prosecuted them (and) convicted them, they shall put the maker of the magical preparations to death.”64 Compare this with Exodus 22:17,

which reads, “You shall not permit a female sorcer to live” (NRSV). This literary context solves the problem. The terms clearly appear to be referring to spirits of intermediation. Based on Lev 20:27 in the Hebrew language, the בֵּית or a רְדֵעָן is within someone. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. understands בֵּית as “spirit of the dead.” He states: “Attempts to consult the dead spirits by way of necromancy are prohibited (v. 31).” He further explains, “Allegedly, the supposed spirit of the dead could later enter a person and become a ‘medium’ through whom control could be exercised over the spirit” in order to “give communications to the living (see 1 Sam 28:7–11; Isa 8:19).” In his comments on Lev 20:6, 27, he states that the hopes and belief that mediums have supernatural power “is another form of stealing glory from God and robbing God of the worship that belongs exclusively to the deity.” King Saul exhibited the dreadful outcome of the warning given here (see 1 Chr 10:13–14). It is another form of profaning and prostituting the worship of God.” This constitutes a solid ground for translating the two terms בֵּית / רְדֵעָן as “spirit(s) of the departed and מֵי / רְדֵעָן as “knowing spirit(s)” (Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27; Deut 18:11). Leviticus 20: 27 can thusly be translated as follows: “And a man or a woman who has in them a spirit of the departed or a knowing


66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.
spirit shall certainly be put to death,…” Now we can confidently translate the phrase טְפָאַל אַבּוּ רָדֹ֔שְׁטִי
dyw as “inquire of the spirit of the departed or of knowing spirits.” Such an understanding agrees with the NRSV translation of the same terms ידפנִי אב and ידפנ as “ghosts or spirits” in Deut 18:11. The NRSV’s inconsistency throughout in translating these two terms is not, however, helpful and departs from the MT, which uses the same terms consistently. These utterances are not confined to one monotonous voice, they sing contrapunctually.

Prohibiting anyone to turn to אב or to ידפנ along with the harsh punishment to put such people to death reveals that such practices were so deeply rooted in the ways of life of the people in the ancient world. ידפנ (Deut 18:11) is a practice that belonged to the people of the ancient world which include the children of Israel and the nations, “the others, the foreigners.” Anyone who had אב within them was killed (Lev 20:27). In the Torah, this divinatory practice is labeled foreign and the killing of anyone practicing it is justified. The deity sanctions this act of violence. This violent tone is insinuated in 1 Sam 28:3, 9 although at the same time the successful divinatory practice of the woman-master of a spirit resists the negativity imported from the Torah. The associating meaning created through the process of translation does not work in 1 Samuel 28 because the evidence in favor of contrapunctual juxtapositions is overwhelming in this text. While Deuteronomy 18 is emphasizing the foreignness of the practice, the inherent dialogic nature of language also emerges. There cannot be
prohibition unless the practice is in existence. This is the phenomenon of double voicing at work here.

In the prophetic material, the very first occurrence of מַעֲנַיִם and דּוֹגְנֵי is in 1 Sam 28:3. As they appeared twice in plural form in the Torah (Lev 19:31 and 20:6), in 1 Samuel 28, they also appear twice in plural (1 Sam 28:3, 9). In the Torah, the singular form וב and ידני in the literary context of Lev 20:27 helped determine that these are spirits, not human beings. In this context of 1 Sam 28:8–19, וב occurs by itself. In this case also, based on what is happening in vv. 8–19 and on Lev 20:27, we can confidently state that וב is within the woman of Endor and should be translated as “a spirit of the departed” who, in this case happened to be Samuel. In Lev 20:27, וב served us well in determining the meaning, in 1 Samuel 28, it is Samuel himself who is a departed spirit and speaks through the woman of Endor as we shall see below. Thus, I translate the plural forms דּוֹגְנֵי as “spirits of the departed” and מַעֲנַיִם as “knowing spirits” both in v. 3 and in v. 9.

The term וב appears also in the phrase וב שלהלァה וב אל דנה twice in v. 7, the only place where this phrase occurs in the Hebrew Bible. Here וב stands as part of the woman of Endor’s identity. She is an אל דנה. The masculine singular absolute וב follows two feminine singular construct terms: אל דנה. The masculine does not erase the two feminine terms אל דנה in the Hebrew text. In other words, the il stands next to elle-elle without erasing or crashing their feminine form. Rather the two
feminine constructs manage the *il*. How then might we translate this woman, the אשה בְּנַלְתָּא? We propose a translation that brings back to the woman all the three components built within who she is. We need a translation that expresses the two feminine constructs and the one masculine absolute. She is *elle-elle-il*. In the absence of a positive feminine term for בְּנַלְתָּא, we take the liberty to lose the feminine English term “mistress” in order to gain something; namely, to keep the positive connotation that is in the Hebrew בְּנַלְתָּא has a wide range of meaning. Its root בָּלַת in verbal form is translated as marry, rule over (cf. Arabic: own, possess, especially, a wife or concubine); Aramaic: take possession of wife or concubine. The present context does not require such translation. P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. sees in the Hebrew phrase בְּנַלְתָּא אֱלֹהִים אֲנָה a conflation of two terms: בְּנַלְתָּא אֱלֹהִים אֲנָה. McCarter’s view is followed by R. W. Klein and also by Theodore J. Lewis. M. Cogan, however, opposes McCarter’s view and argues that “the double construct can be appositional, i.e. ‘woman, mistress of an ōb’ and need not be a conflation” suggested by McCarter.

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69 BDB, 127.


Henry Preserve Smith translates אשה בנות רוח אשרות as “A woman who possess a talisman.” This translation lacks supporting evidence in the text itself. His translation misrepresents the woman along with her practice. Thus, we translate אשה בנות רוח אשרות as “a woman-master of a spirit of the departed.” Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor translate this as “woman, a possessor of a spirit.” Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs translate the phrase as “a woman who was mistress of necromancy.” This translation expresses the double construct in the Hebrew. Although the meaning of the construct may be ambiguous in Hebrew, Arthur Walker-Jones suggests that indicators built within the context provide the translator with possible ways of expressing the meaning. It also, at the same time, resists using the feminine English term “mistress” because among its many possible meanings stands a negative associative meaning which refers to a woman who has an extramarital sexual relationship with a man who, in return, provides her with financial support. Such a tainted term exhibits vulnerability in meaning which will misrepresent the identity of אשה בנות רוח אשרות as well as the nature of her practice. Translators have exercised what Ilona N. Rashkow calls “the authority of

74 Smith, Books of Samuel, 240.

75 See Waltke and O’Connor, Introduction, 150.

76 BDB, 15.

77 Walker-Jones, Hebrew for Biblical Interpretation, 77.

word choice.”79 So shall I. The proposed translation is informed by my own biases nurtured by my social location where such practitioners are referred to with reverence.

The woman-master of a spirit of the departed does not stand in isolation as shown in her identity: אָתָּה בְּעִלְתָּהּ אָוֹב. She is a combination of three Hebrew terms; she is a combination of the masculine and the feminine. To understand her function, we examine three verbs on intermediation: בָּשָׂם, עָלָּל, and רָאָה.

Verb בָּשָׂם (“to divine”) accompanied by the phrase “by a spirit of the departed” (1 Sam 28:8) allows the woman-master of a spirit of the departed to רָאָה (“see”) (vv. 12–13) Myh (“godly spirits”), which is not to be confused with מַשְׁמִים (“spirits of the deceased”), from Isa 19:3, ascending out of the earth (v. 12). wb-tl(b t#$) crosses the disanga of life and the beyond and sees another intermediary whom she refers to as מַעְלָה בְּעִילָתָהּ אָוֹב. Each one of these three verbs is connected to the three terms intermediaries: wb-tl(b t#$), wb), and Myh because there cannot be intermediaries without verbs of intermediation. In her crossing of the disanga, there is no negative connotation attached to any these terms. wb, which is built in the woman’s identity, is mentioned in association with the prominent departed prophetic figure, the departed disembodied Samuel, who does not mind being summoned by the woman-master of a spirit, a foreigner, “the other,” a practitioner of what is labeled “abominable acts of מַעְלָה.” We

now continue to examine the terms בַּעַל וּכְדַעַן in the rest of the prophetic literature and in the Writings.

בַּעַל and כְדַעַן appear together two more places: 2 Kgs 21:6 and 23:24). In the first two occurrences, בַּעַל (2 Kgs 21:6) and its plural form בַּעַלֹת (2 Kgs 23:24) carry a negative connotation. The KJV translates בַּעַל as “familiar spirits”, the RSV and NRSV as “mediums” (2 Kgs 21:6). In this instance, the three translations agree in representing בַּעַל as plural in English while the Hebrew term is singular. The singular is lost through translation. The plural form בַּעַלֹת appears in 2 Kgs 23:24 where all three translations translate it reflecting the plural. In 2 Kgs 21:6, Manasseh is reported to have committed four sins found on the list of prohibited practices uttered in Deuteronomy 18. One of these four sins is that Manasseh כְדַעַן זָאב תֵּשָּׁה (‘he made a spirit of the departed and knowing spirits’) (2 Kgs 21:6). KJV “dealt with familiar spirits and wizards,” RSV, NRSV “dealt with mediums and with wizards” (2 Kgs 21:6). A question emerges: what are these direct objects כְדַעַן וּבַעַל of verb הָעַשׂ (“made”)? This verb raises a question especially when translated and interpreted in light of the larger context of Josiah’s reform. This is found in 2 Kgs 23:24 where it is stated that בַּעַלֹת וּכְדַעַן along with teraphim, idols and all the abominations seen in Judah and in Jerusalem, Josiah בעלה (“burned”). KJV, “put away the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards,” RSV, NRSV “put away the mediums and the wizards” (23:24). The challenge is posed by the verb used in each instance. The three translations (KJV, RSV, NRSV)
avoid translating the term בּוֹה — verb piel perfect 3rd person masculine singular. They do not translate the verb at all. Their translation reflects the LXX ἐξερήσαν — a verb indicative aorist active 3rd person singular of ἐξαίρεσαι (“to remove, to drive away”) rather than reflecting the verb בּוֹה which is the term used in the Hebrew text. By altering the verb, the direct object also is affected by that change. The translated verb בּוֹה and that of its direct object יבּוֹה as we have them in KJV, RSV, and NRSV, unfortunately, do not reflect what is stated in the Hebrew text. The resulting translated version stands as a “new text” (to use Ilona N. Rashkow’s term) that differs significantly from the Hebrew text.80

As a result, the missed translation of the action בּוֹה produces a misrepresentation of both the action and the direct object of the action. The readers are left with a question about the nature of יבּוֹה. What are they? Scholars have wrestled with this question.

André Caquot and Philippe de Robert, for instance, maintain that “in the historical material,” בּוֹה / יבּוֹה are instruments of divination.81 They translate לִשָּׁה as “made” and בּוֹה as “burned.”82 This understanding impacts Caquot and de Robert’s translation of יבּוֹה which they translate as une femme experte en évocation “a woman expert in invocation” with a footnote stating that literally “propriétaire d’ un בּוֹה,” (instrument

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80 Ibid., 37.


82 Ibid.
d’ évocation) ‘owner of a בנים, instrument of invocation.’” In addition, they observe that the term is also literally translated as “maîtresse of a בנים, which at the same time means owner of such instrument and expert in its use.” Such an attempt to understand the woman of Endor in light of 2 Kgs 21:6 and 23:24 is an imposition and unhelpful because the two contexts differ significantly from each other. If Josiah actually burned instruments of divination, this study maintains that these instruments are not identical to the בנים of 1 Samuel 28. Nonetheless, these occurrences (2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24) reveal the existence of yet another divinatory practice missed through translation. The בנים of 2 Kgs 21:6 and וֹתֹבָה of 2 Kgs 23:24 must have been images that could be burned. Another scholar who attempts to understand the woman-master of the בנים in light of 2 Kgs 21:6 and 23:24 from a very different angle is Christophe L. Nihan. He draws on etymology and argues that there was a later scribal correction of the Hebrew vocalization in בנים / וֹתֹבָה intended to dissociate the biblical fathers from the dead ancestors invoked through necromancy. He states the following: “Apart from being the most plausible interpretation with regard to etymology, this is the only suggestion that agrees with all the occurrences of the term in the Old Testament. Even the apparent possibility of either erecting a בנים (2 Kgs 21:6) or destroying it (2 Kgs 23:24) is easy to explain, since

83 Ibid., 332, n 7
ancestors were generally worshipped through an image or a statue.”

Building an argument on such an etymological ground is speculative and unconvincing. There need not be a later scribal correction of the Hebrew vocalization in נְבֶל / נְבָלָא to demonstrate that the dead were invoked through divination. It is clear in 1 Samuel 28. Nihan is right, however, to read in 2 Kgs 21:6 the possibility of erecting נְבֶל. This study maintains that based on 2 Kgs 21:6, King Manasseh might have made an image referred to as נְבֶל which stood as a spiritual representation of dignified dead. Could Josiah have burned the mediums or were these נְבֵית נְבֶל made objects? According to this specific context of 2 Kgs 23:24, נְבֵית נְבֶל are made images, not human beings. Manasseh made נְבֶל and מֲנָדִי (2 Kgs 21:6); Josiah burned them (2 Kgs 23:24). The two verbs indicate the possibility of the נְבֶל and the מֲנָדִי to have been some made figurines. If so, נְבֶל and the מֲנָדִי can logically be translated as “a figurine of a spirit of the departed” and “figurines of knowing spirits.” The literary context, in both occurrences, negates such practices. The two terms carry both a negative connotation, as well as an associative negative meaning, which were assigned to them in Deuteronomy 18. The emotive meaning is assigned to them as well. Conquerors feel that it is right to eliminate such practices along with those who practice them.

85 Ibid., 31.

86 Kaiser and Garret, Archaeological Study Bible, 1055.
The last three occurrences are all confined to First Isaiah (Is 8:19; 19:3; 29:4). Some commentators interpret these references in light of 1 Sam 28:8–11, a practice seen as one of the “detestable practices of the nations.”87 “Desperate for answers about an uncertain future, people were attempting to contact the spirits of the dead, as Saul had done when he had succeeded through a medium, the Witch of Endor, in calling up the spirit of Samuel (1 Sam 28:8–11).”88 The KJV consistently translates the plural form חֵרְכִּים as “them that have familiar spirits” (8:19; 19:3) and the singular בָּשָׁם (in this case, however,) as “one that hath a familiar spirit” (29:4). The RSV translates it twice as “mediums” (8:19; 19:3) and once as “ghost” (29:4). The NRSV translates the plural form as “ghosts” (Is 8:19; 19:3) and the singular as “ghost” (29:4). The NRSV translates this same singular form as if it were in plural “ghosts” in legal material (Deut 18:11). In First Isaiah and in Deuteronomy, according to the NRSV, חֵרְכִּים are “ghosts” while translating the same term elsewhere eleven times as “mediums”: 1 Sam 28:3, 7 (twice), 9; Lev 19:31; 20:6; 20:27; 2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chr 33:6; 1 Chr 10:13. When is בָּשָׁם or חֵרְכִּים translated as “ghost (s)” and when is it “medium (s)”? When is it translated “spirit (s)”? When does it carry a negative connotation? When is it viewed in a positive light? In all three occurrences, the literary context the terms carry a negative connotation (בָּשָׁם occurs alone in Is 29:4). Isaiah 8:19 attests to the existence of other means through which people received instructions. It reads, “And when they say to you ‘Resort to the

87 Ibid., 277.

88 Ibid., 1068.
spirits of the departed or to the knowing spirits that peep and murmur, should not people resort to godly spirits on behalf of the living, to the deceased?” (8:19). Gene Tucker states: “The word of God is even not to be compared with what one learns through consultation of mediums and wizards. If because the Lord is silent, people consult ‘ghosts and the familiar spirits…their gods, the dead,’ then their words will not see the light of day (vv. 19–20).” The RSV agrees with the KJV in translating הָאֵל כָּל אֲדֻמָּם as “their God.” People are to consult their God; they should not consult the dead on behalf of the living. In 1 Samuel 28, both versions translate אלהים as gods (KJV) and god (RSV) (1 Samuel 28:13). Smith sees in this passage a clear distinction between אלים which he translates as “God” and the מְדָבָּר הָאֲדֻמָּם which he views as some type of idol. He states that “Thus in the familiar passage in Isaiah 8:19: and when they say: Seek the obot and the yionim who chirp and mutter, the contrast is drawn between these and God, and the most natural interpretation makes them some sort of idol.” The RSV agrees with the KJV in translating אלהים as “their God.” People are to consult their God; they should not consult the dead on behalf of the living. The NRSV, on the other hand, differs significantly from the KJV and RSV. According to the NRSV, people consulted מְדָבָּר (“ghosts”) and the

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90 Ibid.
familiar spirits.” Unlike the KJV and the RSV, the NRSV provides a context which suggests that these מֵהֶל (“ghosts” and “familiar spirits”) are the מִלְאך (“gods”), מֵהָל (“the dead”?) who were consulted on behalf of the living for teaching and for instruction. Susan Ackerman, for example maintains: “The dead were frequently revered as deities in the ancient Near East and in ancient Israel (1 Sam 28:13). The prophet ridicules this belief by deriding ghosts as ones who chirp and mutter.”

Isaiah 8:19 is topped with an appeal to uphold the teaching (vv. 16–18). This echoes the Torah. “Bind up the testimony, seal the teaching among my disciples. I will wait for the YHWH, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him. See, I and the children whom the LORD has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the LORD of hosts, who dwells on Mount Zion.” (NRSV). Susan Ackerman observes that this prophetic condemnation of “necromancy is secondarily connected with 8:16–18 through its focus on teaching (Heb. Torah).” Unfortunately, as already stated, the associative meaning assigned to the prohibited divinatory practices in Deuteronomy 18 negates the practices through foreignizing them, giving them a historical and social life, namely, a life that characterizes the nations, a life that is an abomination to YHWH. First Isaiah use of the pentateuchal language and a derisory language about divination accompanied by his vigor in negating this practice demonstrate the existence

91 Ackerman, “Isaiah,” 970.

92 Ibid.
of the practice during his time. The language shows that such practices are common
property of the ancient world.

Isaiah 19:3 is informative. It supports the existence of various means through
which people could obtain divine guidance. According to this particular passage, Isaiah
says that these various means will not work any longer. The passage reads “The spirit of
Egypt in its inward part shall be emptied out, and its counsel I shall destroy; they shall
resort to the idols, the spirits of the departed, and to the spirits of the departed and to the
knowing spirits” (19:3). The Hebrew vocabulary is לומדים. RSV translates it as
“sorcerers.”] In this passage, Prophet Isaiah is pronouncing judgment against the
Egyptians. רוחות המות (“the spirits of the departed”) and רוחותخرو (“the knowing spirits”)
along with the other means are simply going to be unavailable. Isaiah 19:1–15 is an
oracle against Egypt. In the late 8th century BCE, Egypt suffered from internal conflict up
to the time when Pharaoh Piankhi,93 an Ethiopian (Nubian) who ruled over Egypt and
formed the 25th dynasty in 715 BCE. Piankhi could be the hard master (v. 4) or probably
his successor Shabako and also later on in 670 BCE, Esarhaddon, the Assyrian king
conquered Egypt. Isaiah claims that it is foolish (vv. 11–14) for Piankhi, his successor
and all who formed a coalition against Assyria.94 The KJV translates רוחות המות as “them
that have familiar spirits,” the RSV as “mediums” and the NRSV as “ghosts” (19:3).

93 Also spelled Piankhy.

94 Ackerman, “Isaiah,” 982. See also Kaiser and Garret, Archaeological Study
Bible, 1088.
In the last occurrence,  בְּנֵי נֵפֶשׁ occurs alone. First Isaiah declares that Jerusalem will be brought low and that her voice will come from the ground like that of a בִּגון (“spirit of the departed”) (29:4). First Isaiah laughs at the Judah-Egypt coalition against Assyria and declares: “this strategy will result only in Judah’s destruction, as if the treaty had been made with the Canaanite god of death, Mot and his underworld domain, sheol.” This helps us to understand another class of gods that is different from that of 1 Samuel 28. The god in 1 Samuel 28 has a voice that is clear, distinct and is a being ready to be called upon for instruction and direction. The

95 Ackerman, “Isaiah,” 993.

of 1 Sam 28: 8 is not identical with Zu, a bird-god, who is thought to belong to the realm of the nether world…. “He who possesses wisdom, who dwells in the Deep […] went up to him, the matter that was in the heart [of] his father he told him.”\textsuperscript{97}

Moreover, in the Akkadian myths and epics, we read the following: “Nergal, the valiant hero, [hearkened to Ea], Forthwith he opened a hole in the earth. The spirit of Enkidu, like a wind-puff, issued forth from the nether world”.\textsuperscript{98} This demonstrates that the language of divination used in 1 Samuel 28 was a common one used in the larger world in which Israel shared. The \textit{bw} as described in Isaiah 29:4 and the deities dwelling in the netherworld described in the \textit{ANET} passages mentioned above are crucial in our understanding of divination by \textit{bw} in 1 Samuel 28. Bueken states that the woman’s expectation was different from what she sees. Instead of seeing a ghost, she sees a divine being, “divine in terms of her pagan religion.”\textsuperscript{99} Uriel Simon also sees a “pagan character” in this practice by stating that “Saul employs a euphemism in order to hide the pagan character of raising up the spirit of Samuel.”\textsuperscript{100}

The \textit{ANET} passages provide a larger picture of the deities dwelling in the netherworld. Some of these deities are captive and tormented while others are not. In conclusion, the Prophets reveal the undisputable existence of various divinatory practices among the Israelites and non-Israelites.

\textsuperscript{97} “The Myth of Zu,” \textit{ANET}, 111.

\textsuperscript{98} “Akkadian Myths and Epics” \textit{ANET}, 98.


\textsuperscript{100} Simon, “1 Samuel 28:3–25,” 163.
In the Writings, the term בְּנֵי appears by itself in 1 Chr 10:13 and in conjunction with בְּנֵי נִדְנֵי in 2 Chr 33:6. Some scholars have seen a correlation between the plural form of the root בָּי, namely, תְּנַבָּה (“fathers”) (1 Chr 23:24) and the defectively written plural form of בְּנֵי, that is, תְּנַבָּה (“spirits”). The root בְּנֵי found in 1 Chr 10:13 and 33:6 is definitely not related to the Hebrew word תְּנַבָּה (“fathers”) of 1 Chr 23:24. 1 Chronicles 23:24 deals with fathers’ houses and does not imply any connections between the two unrelated terms in this specific instance. Even in Deuteronomy 18, for instance, where the prohibition of such a practice is articulated, there can be no connection between the singular בָּי (Deut 18:11) and the plural תְּנַבָּה (18:8) which refers to “patrimony.” As a result, we conclude that in Chronicles, בְּנֵי (“spirit”) is not related to בָּי (“father”) and, therefore, cannot not be translated as “ancestor spirit” on the basis on such claim. 101 Johan Lust translates בְּנֵי as “an ancestor spirit” or as “one who facilitate the mediation.” 102 Josef Tropper, translates בְּנֵי as “ancestor spirit” for three reasons: the similarity of the plural form תְּנַבָּה (“fathers”) and תְּנַבָּה (“spirits”), both are sources of knowledge and inhabit the underworld; the connection he sees between בְּנֵי and the Ugaritic ʿilib, the בָּי (“father”) prayed to the בָּי (“spirit”) when faced by


crisis. Philip S. Johnston argues against J. Tropper and concludes that “יליב does not
derive from יליב and does not refer specifically to an ancestor spirit.” Others see the
link between ʼilib and יליב based on the similarity between יליב and the second syllable in
ilib and also on the context in which ʼilib occurs, the context of honoring the dead.
Johnston states that most scholars “suggest that ʼלבי was originally used in Israel of the
dead, but was later simplified to ʼלי and vocalized as יליב to conceal its origin. It also
occurs in the Aqhat epic where it highlights the responsibilities which include setting up a
stele of his ʼIlib. יליב occurs once in the book of Job and is translated as “bottles”
(KJV) “wineskins” (RSV), NRSV (Job 32:19) which some scholars relate to the context
of spirits. There is no biblical evidence showing a connection between יליב

103 Josef Tropper, *Nekromantie: Totenbefragung im Alten Orient und im Alten
Testament*, Alter Orient und Altes Testament 223 (Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker;


105 Ibid., 164–65.

106 See Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Joaquin Sanmartin, “Ugaritisch ʼilib
und hebräisch ʼ(w)b ‘Totengeist.’” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 6 (1974): 451, cited by Johnston,
*Shades of Sheol*, 165. For further discussion, see William F. Albright, *Yahweh and the
Gods of Canaan: A Historical Analysis of Two Contrasting Faiths*, Jordon Lectures 1965
(Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968); Cyril J. Gadd, *Ideas of Divine Rule in the Ancient
East* (London: Oxford University, 1948); and H. A. Hoffner, Jr., “יליב,” in *Theological
Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, edited by G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren,
translated by J. T. Willis, G. W. Bromiley, and D. E. Green, 15 vols. (Grand Rapids,

(“wineskins”) and בַּשָּׁח (“spirit”). In Job, Elihu expresses his feeling that he describes as “a belly full of words like a wineskin full of fermenting wine (v. 19).” The two occurrences, Job 32:19 and 1 Chr 23:24, however, stand independently in their respective literary context and they each do not relate to בַּשָּׁח (“spirits”). Other scholars maintain that בַּשָּׁח was originally an air bag which made a mute sound of a filled wineskin, thus connecting this understanding to the בַּשָּׁח in Job 32:19. This understanding echoes Abraham Cohen’s translation of בַּשָּׁח as “‘Consulter with a familiar spirit’—viz. a ventriloquist who makes sounds issue from his arm-pit.”\(^{108}\) Cohen is wrong in his understanding of the term ventriloquist. A ventriloquist makes sounds issue from his/her ventre “stomach or belly,” not arm-pit. There is no connection between בַּשָּׁח (“wineskins”) and בַּשָּׁח (“spirit”) nor is there any correlation between Job 32:19 and 1 Chr 23:24. 1 Chronicles 10:13–14 retells the story of Saul and the woman-master of a spirit. According to this narrator, “Saul died in his unfaithfulness because he acted unfaithfully with the YHWH; he did not keep the word of the LORD; and moreover, he resorted to a spirit of the departed for guidance” (10:13). בַּשָּׁח “for asking counsel of one who had a familiar spirit” (KJV) “he consulted a medium” RSV, NRSV (1 Chr 10:13). The KJV, RSV, and NRSV translations negate בַּשָּׁח (“a woman-master of a spirit”) who is not even mentioned here in 1 Chr 10:13. Here, all three translations create a new text with associative meaning reminiscent of Deuteronomy 18.

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In this case, the narrator retells the story and making it a new text different from that of 1 Samuel 28. While retelling the story, the narrator creates a different level of meaning associated with the woman of Endor’s practice referred to here as לָשׁוֹא דִּבְרַיָּהּ. This reading is problematic because the narrator omits the Hebrew phrase בֵּרֵה לָשׁוֹא (‘a woman-master of the spirit’) of 1 Sam 28:7 and uses instead the phrase לָשׁוֹא imported from the list of prohibited practices in Deuteronomy 18. Saul did not בֵּרֵה לָשׁוֹא in 1 Sam 28:7. He בָּרַאֲשׁוֹן לָשׁוֹא (“inquired of her”). The personal pronoun ‘her’ refers to the ‘woman-master of the spirit’ who then divines בֵּרֵה (‘by a spirit of the departed’) (v. 8). The use of this language of Deuteronomy 18 is intentional for it serves the purpose of negating the practice by association with the foreign, the other. In conclusion, while the Hebrew text of 1 Samuel 28 portrays the woman-master of a spirit and her action positively, the Hebrew text of 1 Chr 10:13 negates it by associating it with the voice uttered in Deuteronomy 18 imposing such a voice in his retelling of the story of 1 Samuel 28. Also according to 1 Samuel 28, Saul did not die because he had consulted a woman-master of the spirit for guidance as stated in 1 Chr 10:13. This is a wrong and a misleading interpretation of 1 Samuel 28. Leslie C. Allen’s commentary on 1 Chr 10:13 states that “The second sin occurs in the incident narrated by 1 Sam 28:6–14 consulting the witch of Endor, which is interpreted as a religious sin, as 1 Sam 28:3 implies (cf. 2 Chr 33:6, in the light of Lev 19:31; Deut 18:11).”109 The Chronicler omits the woman-

master of a spirit, but the KJV, RSV, and NRSV assume that she is there and they translate her. The narrator is unaware of the phenomenon of double voicing which is at work in Deuteronomy 18 and in his retelling. The vocabulary of divination that the narrator attempts to negate belongs to both the Israelites and other nations in the ancient world.

2 Chroniclers 33:6 retells the wrongdoings of King Manasseh who “caused his sons to pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, he perceived, he learned by divination, he made a כז “a spirit of the departed” and דפפ “figurines of knowing spirits” (2 Kgs 21:6). The term is translated as “a familiar spirit” KJV, “mediums” RSV, NRSV.

In conclusion, in the Torah כז and דפפ can logically be translated as (“spirit of the departed” and “knowing spirits”) because of the prepositional phrase כז (“in them”) (Lev 20:27). Each literary context where these two terms occur, in the Torah, they are attributed a negative connotation. In doing so, however, an informative voice is also heard in the background. It informs the reader of the very existence of these practices in the ancient world. This double voicing is heard clearly in the prophetic literature, which reveals the existence of the multiple ways to obtain divine guidance. One voice is trying to produce a monologue articulated in Deuteronomy 18 and attempts to carry it throughout the Hebrew Bible. Since language is heteroglossic by nature, the reader sees another voice unintended by the narrator. Such voice informs the reader that these divinatory practices are common property of the ancient world. The double voicing
continues through the prophetic literature where it finds its climax in 1 Samuel 28 where such voices co-exist in contrapunctual juxtaposition. The woman-master of a spirit and the spirit of the departed prominent prophet Samuel live in juxtaposition without condemning each other. Prophet Isaiah criticizes such practice (Is 8:19; 19:3; 29:4). King Manasseh made a figurine of a spirit of the departed and figurines of knowing spirits; Josiah burned them (2 Kgs 21:6; 23:24; 2 Chr 33:6).

This phrase also occurs only once in the Hebrew Bible and carries a negative connotation (Deut 18:11). This should literally be translated as “one who inquires by the spirits of the dead.” It is translated as “necromancer” KJV, RSV; “who seeks oracles from the dead” (NRSV). Nothing is reported about the manner in which the works. One thing remains undisputable is that throughout the BH, we hear different voices of different divinatory practices that involves various types of spirits. Some of those who died had some types of power. In one case, the bones of a dead had power to resurrect the dead. For instance, a man who was being buried (“was thrown into the grave of Elisha; as soon as the man touched the bones of Elisha, he came to life and stood on his feet” (2 Kgs 13:21). The narrative does not carry a negative connotation when Elisha’s bones have power to resurrect the dead man. Deuteronomy 18 attempts to create a monologic voice that continues to be resisted throughout the Hebrew Bible because the Hebrew Bible contains voices that sing contrapunctually.
Part III: A Bonus: מָכַסָּה and Its Function

This section of the chapter will examine the term מָכַסָּה and its function.

מָכַסָּה in the Torah

מָכַסָּה occurs four times in the Torah (Gen 41:8, 33, 39; Exod 7:11). The NJPS translates מָכַסָּה as “wise” four times (Gen 41:8, 39; Exod 7:11; Jer 50:35), as “wisdom” once (Gen 41:33) and as “sages” three times (Isaiah 19:11 x 2; Esther 1:13), as “sages” once (Isaiah 19:12). The NIV agrees with RSV and NRSV except once where מָכַסָּה is translated as “experts” (Esther 1:13). The NJB translates as “wise” four times (Gen 41:8, 33, 39; Esther 1:13); “sages” four times (Exod 7:11; Isaiah 19:11, 12; Jer 50:35); “wisest” once (Isaiah 19:11). מָכַסָּה is translated as (“wise men”) and are listed along with the מַרְכֵּר (“magicians”) of Egypt whom Pharaoh summoned to interpret his dream (Gen 41:8). It carries a neutral connotation. The מַרְכֵּר and the מָכַסָּה are to be understood as two distinct types of diviners.” Jeffers maintains that these two terms are “appositioned or a case of hendiadys.110 This assertion lacks textual evidence.

In the second occurrence, Joseph advises Pharaoh to look for a discerning and מָכַסָּה (“wise”) man (Gen 41:33). Joseph is the מָכַסָּה (“wise”) man whom Pharaoh selects (Gen 41:39). The “spirit of God is within him” (v.38); as a result, Pharaoh establishes him to rule over all the land of Egypt (v. 41). An identical example is found in the book of Daniel. King Nebuchadnezzar made Daniel chief prefect over the מַרְכֵּר (“wise men”).

110 Jeffers, Magic and Divination, 41.
of Babylon (2:48) which comprised the בָּבֶל ("magicians"), בַּשָּׁאָר ("enchanters"), בְּנֵר ("Chaldeans"), and מְרוּדָּר ("diviners") (5:11). Like Joseph who has the spirit of God in him, Daniel also has the spirit of the holy gods in him (5:11). Pharaoh summons the מִשְׁפָּטִים ("wise men") and the מְלוֹאֹת ("diviners") (Exodus 7:11). The narrator classifies these two types of diviners under one category: the מְלוֹאֹת מְלוֹאֹת ("the magicians of Egypt"). They performed the same miracle as did Aaron and Moses.

Similarly four Israelites, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, are reported to be ten times better than all the מְלוֹאֹת ("magicians") and the מְלוֹאֹת ("enchanters") in Babylon (Dan 1:20). The מְלוֹאֹת ("magicians") are mentioned along with the מְלוֹאֹת ("enchancers"), מְלוֹאֹת ("diviners") and the מְלוֹאֹת ("Chaldeans") summoned by King Nabuchadnezzar (Dan 2:2). Like the מְלוֹאֹת of Exodus 8:15 who are reported to have seen the work of God’s finger, the Chaldeans tell the king that only the gods can reveal the king’s dream (Dan 2:11), not the magician or enchanter or Chaldean (Dan 2:10).

Daniel asserts to the king that no מְלוֹאֹת ("wise men"), מְלוֹאֹת ("enchancers"), מְלוֹאֹת ("magicians"), and מְלוֹאֹת ("diviners") can reveal this mystery asked by the king (2:27). They were certainly unable to interpret the dream (Dan 4:4). In this case, language works to reduce two different types of diviners (מְלוֹאֹת ("wise men") and the מְלוֹאֹת ("diviners")) into one category— the מְלוֹאֹת מְלוֹאֹת ("magicians of Egypt")—and then characterize their practice as acts performed by secret arts (Exod 7:11, 22; 8:3, 14), while reporting that Aaron and Moses performed according to the YHWH’s command (7:10).
The "magicians" are reported to have finally realized that Moses and Aaron’s miracles were the work of God’s finger (8:15). This is a classic example of the manner in which language is used to distinguish the “self” from “other.” The narrator attributes the label “magician” to those who are perceived as different and to their religious practices. Gregory Nagy’s statement describes the prevalent practice among the Greeks and Romans who labeled others’ religious practitioners as “magicians.” They designated others’ religious practices as “magic.” Jeffers states that “and here the only activity attributed to them is magical…and here again we must equate wisdom and magic.” He uses language as an instrument to define, minimize, categorize and negate others’ divinatory practices. In conclusion, “wise men” and the “diviners”) are not to be categorized under the label (“the magicians of Egypt”). These are two distinct types of diviners and have no connection at all with the type of divinatory practice found in 1 Sam 28.

**in Prophetic Material**

occurs seven times in relation to divine knowledge. God gives Salomon great wisdom (1 Kgs 4:29) and Salomon’s wisdom is greater that the wisdom of all the

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112 Ibid.

113 Jeffers, Magic and Divination, 42.
people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt (v. 30). He is wiser than anyone else and his fame is heard of throughout all the neighboring nations (v. 31). He knows of trees, animals, birds, reptiles, fish, and he can speak of all of these (v. 33). People from every nation including kings’ representatives came to hear his wisdom (v. 34).

In this context, language functions as a tool used in constructing a structural design of knowledge. In this case, the source of knowledge is established, that is, God. The recipient of that knowledge is also identified as Solomon, the now established and legitimate instrument through whom the divine power is to be carried out. The wisdom of others is also constructed and portrayed as lesser than that of Solomon. Solomon becomes the center or the source of wisdom where all the nations come to quench their thirst for wisdom. M. E. Mills states that to Solomon is ascribed “the active power of the Deity working in and through him.”114 Jeffers concludes by asserting that “Wisdom is the working knowledge of the universe, that which makes one aware of the connection between the parts and the whole.”115

םֹדֶד occurs in Isa 3:3 where it is used as an adjective describing the אֲדֹנָי (“artificer”) KJV, “magician” (RSV), NRSV. The term כָּכָב itself is translated as “cunning” (KJV), “skillful,” (RSV), NRSV. כָּכָב along with the other experts listed are not portrayed in negative connotation. Among those listed are the mighty man, soldier, the judge, the prophet, diviner and elder, skillful magician and expert enchanter (3:2–3).

114 Cited in ibid., 41.
115 Ibid.
YHWH (‘is taking away’) from Jerusalem and Judah his complete support, which includes everything that one would need to survive, that is, the leaders, food, the water (3:1). All these different diviners will not be available to provide guidance for Jerusalem and Judah. They are not portrayed negatively. This is not the case when it comes to Egyptians’ and Babylonians’ *חכמה* as we shall see below.

*חכמה* occurs twice in the oracle concerning Egypt (Isa 19:11). In its first occurrence, it is translated as “wise” (v. 11a). It carries a neutral connotation. The term חכמה functions as an adjective describing the counselors of Pharaoh. His wise counselors give stupid counsel and claim “I am a son of the “wise” (KJV, RSV, “sages” (NRSV)” (Isa 19:11b). Although the term does not carry a negative connotation, the language used in this instance denigrates Egyptian חכמה. These חכמה (“wise”) do not have the capability to make known what YHWH has planned against Egypt (19:12). Similarly, Babylonians’ חכמה will be confused because a sword will be upon them, Jeremiah prophesies (Jer 50:35). The term is translated as “wise men” (KJV, RSV), “sages” (NRSV). Isaiah mentions two other types of Babylonian specialists the חכמה (“those who divide the heavens”) (Is 47:13 (RSV), “who study the heavens” (NRSV), “astrologers” (KJV), חכמה (“who gaze at the stars” (RSV, NRSV), “stargazers” (KJV). Although the term does not carry a negative connotation, in this case also the language used demonstrates power set out to totally destroy the people of Babylon and their support system which comprises her princes, חכמה, diviners,
warriors, horses and chariots, foreign troops in its midst, her treasures so that they may be plundered, a drought against her waters, that they may be dried up. The foreign troops will become women (Jer. 50:37). It is significant to note that Ancient Israel, Egypt and Babylon all had support system which included all the already mentioned diviners. The language used to characterize non-Israelite experts or diviners is defamatory. Foreigners and their practices are feminized, negated and subject to annihilation.

In Esth 1: 13, מִדְבָּרִים is translated as “wise men” (KJV), RSV “sages” (NRSV). In this context, the מִדְבָּרִים are experts who “know the time” and also versed in law. Jeffers suggests that these could have been astrologers. They assisted the king in judicial matters (v. 15). In this context, the narrator simply provides the information about the crisis in King Ahasuerus’ palace. A drunken King Ahasuerus commands his seven eunuchs to bring Queen Vashti to him, wearing her royal crown, in order to show her beauty to the peoples and officials. Queen Vashti refuses. It takes the king seven men, the מִדְבָּרִים, whom he summons in order to decide what should be done to one woman, Queen Vashti. The מִדְבָּרִים function as men who were versed in law and advisers to the king. There is no connection at all between the מִדְבָּרִים and the practice of the woman-master of a spirit in 1 Sam 28.

116 Ibid., 44.
A Bakhtinian Summary

We have seen in prior research that, while attention has been paid to the different literary contexts of the words of divination within the Hebrew Bible and scholars have noticed some conflicts in the terms of divination in the Hebrew Bible, scholars have for the most part attempted to find a way to bring the terms under one umbrella with one fairly negative connotation. Such efforts have, of course, failed. I suggest that this attempt to reconcile the differences in a negative manner are driven by a fundamentally Reformation / Counter-Reformation European Christian ideology. We can see this, clearly, in the work on the ancestor cult, funerary practices, and divination by both Brian Schmidt and Ann Jeffers. Even Elizabeth Block-Smith’s more refined work attempts to resolve the conflict through a dating / evolutionary paradigm, which I also think is highly problematic.

Thus, I maintain that this word study has placed us en route toward understanding the negative and positive responses to divination in the Hebrew Bible. The word study has revealed the manner in which the language of divination varies from one context to another within the Hebrew text itself. These changes include transitional move in vocabulary such as the case found in 1 Sam 9:9 “for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called as seer.” They include using a different vocabulary when the same practice is performed by a non-Israelite, such as the case of the elders of Median who went to Balaam with מְנִימֵשׁ in their hand (Num 22:7). This should be compared with Saul who says to his servant that they do not have מְנִים, a “present, gift” (1 Sam 9:7). These and many more instances reveal some negative attitude toward certain practices or
certain leaders in matter spiritual embedded within the Hebrew text itself. They are not, however, unified in their negativity.

We can now see that the terms of divination have a long literary and social history, even within the Hebrew text alone. We have a multitude of terms, each with specific designative, connotative, associative, and emotive meanings attached to them in various literary contexts. The Bible also associates some terms with other terms when it strings them together in abstract legal sentences, as it does, for example, in Deut 18:10-11 or in some narratives such as the various 2 Kings passages. Yet, that associative meaning may not be appropriately applied in another literary context of the Hebrew Bible. The same is true of the emotive content of these words. They may shift with context.

Bakhtin allows the different points of view within the Hebrew text, this inner-biblical dialogic tension, to stand without difficulty. The social history of divination is long and complex. Women and foreign elements were often suspected in the ancient Near Eastern worldview, a phenomenon that continues around the world, across cultures, to this very day. Women and aliens are easily blamed for things that go wrong. Cries of witchcraft are not far behind when we do not know the specific cause of some trauma that we are experiencing. Our examination of the Hebrew term Msq seems to indicate that this was true also in ancient Israel. Of all the vocabulary of divination in 1 Sam 28:3–25, the term Msq appears most frequently outside of 1 Samuel 28. It can be viewed as the means to divine in both positive ways and in negative ways. It is translated in extremely positive English terms (e.g., revelation, divination, inspired decisions, etc.) and also in extremely negative term (e.g. witchcraft). In most cases, the term holds a negative
connotation when associated with non-Israelites, for example, Canaanites, Philistines, Babylonians, and so forth. In such cases, the choice of words functions to define these groups as “other,” as well as to differentiate their religious beliefs from the Israelites. Robert B. Coote and Mary P. Coote rightly assert that “The history of scripture is a history of power, and of powerful organizations.” It seems that the verbs of intermediation function far more negatively when the act is viewed as of foreign origin; the practices become nothing short of abominable. is the most significant such prohibited practices. It is foreigners who seem to consult departed spirits, in particular, and the practice is prohibited in the legal and prophetic materials. Nonetheless, in 1 Sam 28:3–25, the performs her practice; she functions as one who divines through a departed spirit, and no one in the pericope blames her, shames her, or punishes her. Moreover, it is not an ordinary that she raises. Rather, she brings up Samuel, an . Her practice is portrayed most positively there, despite of what the Chronicler thought of it.

It is, I think, impossible to argue that all people in a given culture are suspicious of women and foreigners. Bakhtin argues that it is empires that seek to shut down the rich, dialogic nature of the utterance, the conversation, and the literary output of a culture. Thus, I maintain that elements existed in Israel that stood firmly against any authority that attempted to maintain a monologic voice at the cost of silencing other Israelites. No monologue won the day in regard to divination. Different groups struggled with which

divinatory practices were acceptable and which were not. In the end, no one either wanted to or was able to suppress all the other voices. As my literary reading will demonstrate, 1 Samuel 28 is very positive in regard to divination and the Chronicler reinterprets the very same passage negatively in 1 Chr 10:13. When the Hebrew Bible became relatively fixed, it canonized both voices. The text is meant to maintain a polyphony of voices on divination.

Later voices sought to mute certain voices in regard to divination. The extra-lingual level of interpretation has elevated the Chroniclers’ view of events and pushed deep into the ground the voice of 1 Samuel 28. English translations are particularly troublesome in this regard because they lack consistency in translating the vocabulary of divination as shown in the above word study. While several of the Hebrew terms have one consistent designative meaning, the English translations will vary the translation of a given word with terms that are highly negative in a connotative sense, preferring this to words that are better suited to their individual context. This laying of external ideology on the text is understandable given the European developments in regard to divination and witchcraft and the usage of such terms in biblical translation has now become part of the social history of these terms. Nonetheless, they have little to do with the subtleties of the Hebrew text, in its original social context. The Hebrew meaning(s) has / have been lost under this extra-biblical and post-biblical layer of meaning. My attempt here has been to strip this layer away to examine the complex designative, connotative, associative, and emotive meanings of these words in the original Hebrew at the time of, at least, the fixing of the text.
I suggest that the process of ancient colonization, both its threat and its eventual actuality, caused a process of identity formation in Israel that involved (and possibly had provoked) discussions, sometimes-contentious discussions, around the subject of divination. Nonetheless, over time all of these voices were given a place in Israelite literature. Only much later did ideology external to the Bible attempt to suppress through biblical interpretation and translation the voices in support of thaumaturgy and certain other divinatory practices. The Bible was eventually read as prohibiting all divination, which it does not. The result is that certain means of acquiring knowledge, authority, and power have been cut off—most especially in the hands of aliens and women. The attitude is: these two groups must be kept down; one true knowledge exists; it’s my way or the highway; the dialogic must succumb to the monologic. This ideology has had radically negative effects on African peoples. I seek here to resist it. I now move on to my cross-cultural / contextual (and postcolonially informed) literary reading of 1 Samuel 28, in light of this word study.
CHAPTER 5

THE LITERARY CONTEXT:
READING 1 SAMUEL 28 THROUGH
A FEMINIST MUSANGA CONTEXTUAL / CULTURAL LENS

In this chapter, I will attempt to bring the work of Chapters 3 and 4 together in order to exegete the 1 Samuel 28 pericope. My goals are several. First, I wish to read the text in a fashion that is responsible to the findings of my Hebrew word study.¹ Second, I read the text synchronically, without claims regarding the development of the text or the story’s historical accuracy. In this, it is based first in a narratological reading of the MT of 1 Samuel 28.² Third, I wish, in my reading, to remain cognizant of and challenge the patriarchal, racist, colonial-imperialist, Reformation and Counter-Reformation European ideologies that have been embedded in the vast majority of readings of this text. Lastly and most importantly, I wish to read the text through a feminist Musanga contextual / cross-cultural lens. I am aware that this will embed a different ideology in the text. I am

¹ All translations are mine in this chapter, except where otherwise noted.

² For my discussion of the major text critical issues of 1 Samuel, see Chapter 1, nn. 76–77, supra. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, n. 78, I will address the specific text critical problems in 1 Sam 28:3–25 in the footnotes of this chapter as they become relevant. I have also provided an English translation of the LXX in Appendix C of this dissertation.
only suggesting that such a reading will be far more advantageous to my people than the ones that the more common ideological lenses have provided. I begin.

The pericope opens in v. 3 with the narrator telling us that “Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned him and buried him with rites in Ramah, his village.” I translate words in a slightly unorthodox manner. First, I observe that Samuel’s burial (םָּבֶּקֶם) is consistent with the burials of other leaders, great and lesser, of Israel (e.g., Gen 50:13; Deut 10:6; Josh 24:30, 32, 33, Judg 2:9; 8:32, 10:2; 16:31). Yet, it is rare to see all Israel participating in these burials (see, e.g., 1 Kgs 14:18; 2 Chr 32:33). Thus, Samuel is quite special, equal to the great Hezekiah (2 Chr 32:33). Samuel is far greater than the other judges. It is probably that all the leaders of Israel were properly buried with all the appropriate rites and offering. Here, with all Israel participating, it is highly likely that Samuel was also so buried. The specific mention of honoring Hezekiah in his burial in 2 Chr 32:33 is implied here in the very presence of all of Israel. In fact, we do not see this verb used in a case of improper burial. Jer 16:6 informs us, instead, that under colonization: “Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them; there shall be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them.” The failure of the specific actions of lamentation is coupled, in this verse, with burying. I, therefore, maintain that the root שָׁבַקֶם means a burial with proper rites. Because of this particular literary context, it is especially important to make that apparent in the

3 The MT has “in Ramah and in his city,” which is omitted in many manuscripts. I follow suit.

4 Moses is also buried properly, but no one remembers where he was buried (Deut 34:6).
translation. It would mean that Samuel is resting at peace in the netherworld and is not an angry spirit. The biblical narrator often informs us that a king “slept with his ancestors” (יהב...תלוי) at death (e.g. David, 1 Kgs 2:10; Solomon 2 Chr 9:31; Jeroboam, 1 Kgs 14:20; Rehoboam, 1 Kgs 14:31; 2 Chr 12:16; Asa, 1 Kgs 15:24; Omri, Ahab, 1 Kgs 22:40; 1 Kgs 16:28; Jehoshapat, 1 Kgs 22:50). This is present only for the kings. Consequently, it seems clear that other important leaders of Israel, who received proper burial, also rested in peace.

Second in regard to my translation decisions, יֵלֶח may mean according to BDB a fortified place of any size, a city, a rural town, and a dependent town, among other meanings.5 The KJV, RSV, and NRSV use “city.” I maintain, however, that “village” is the better term here from both the perspective of ancient Israel and the Basanga people.

What is particularly interesting is that we already know that Samuel died, was lamented, and buried with rites in his house in Ramah from 25:1. The mention of Samuel’s death there is sudden. Samuel has not been mentioned since 19:24. We know nothing of the circumstances of his death. We do know, however, that Samuel’s status as former judge, seer, and prophet, brings all of Israel to his funeral to grieve. The retelling of this information in 1 Sam 28:3 alerts us to a shift in the narrative. It also may foreshadow coming events that have to do with death.6

5 BDB, 796.

6 Keith Bodner states of this: “There certainly is some literary currency in the repetition of Samuel’s death notice here in chap. 28 that coincides with the reader (belatedly) being informed that at some previous time Saul expelled witches and warlocks: the flashback becomes an instrument of foreshadowing.” Keith Bodner, I
That larger issues of death and departed spirits are at issue in this pericope is made apparent immediately because the narrator tells us on the heels of Samuel’s death (v. 3a), that “Saul had forbidden recourse to spirits of the departed (בֵּית נַפְלָיָה) and knowing spirits (יִדְעֹן נַפְלָיָה) in the nation.” I follow, in part, the translation of the NJPS. I like that this version maintains that בֵּית נַפְלָיָה and יִדְעֹן נַפְלָיָה refers to spirits and not those who call them to arise during divination. I do not, however, find that use of “ghosts” and “familiar spirits” in the translation equally helpful for the reasons stated in my word study. These words have a long social history that is quite negative. I believe that the NJPS uses “familiar spirit” in the sense of a “knowing, wise” spirit who is “acquainted with secrets of the unseen world” rather than as an “intimate acquaintance of a soothsayer.” Nonetheless and simply put, these English terms have had negative connotative, emotive, and associative meanings for centuries. I prefer, as a result, “spirits of the departed” and “knowing spirits,” respectively. These alternative terms are both in excellent alignment

Samuel: A Narrative Commentary, Hebrew Bible Monographs 19 (Sheffield Phoenix Press 2008), 292;

7 In accord with the idea that this refers to the spirits themselves and the person or process of raising them is Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg, 1 and 2 Samuel, trans. John S. Bowden, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 217.

8 BDB, 396.

9 Some scholars have argued that that the word בֵּית נַפְלָיָה originates in the word “ancestor” (בֵית), and that when summoning departed spirits one is actually summoning an ancestral figure. See, e.g., J. Lust, “On Wizards and Prophets” (VTSup 26; Leiden: Brill, 1974):133–42; see also J. Tropper, Nekromantie, 312–16 who translates בֵּית נַפְלָיָה as “ancestor spirit.” For detailed analysis, see the material at Chapter 4, nn. 105–6, supra. We think that there is merit in this argument. BDB The Hebrew word בֵּית נַפְלָיָה is also
with the Hebrew meaning and hold no automatic pejorative attachments. Now, obviously, Saul cannot cause spirits to “turn out,” “turn aside,” “depart” (hiphil of רוח).

Thus, I suggest that we might use “forbidden recourse to” as does the NJPS. This rendering allows us to maintain consistency in the translations of the spirits involved, as the KJV, RSV, and NRSV do not do. The literary material of v. 3b has, therefore, brought us to the world of the spirits, unlike 1 Sam 25:1.

Why has Saul forbidden recourse to the spirits? Saul seems readily influenced by spirits. First, we learn that Saul can respond a good spirit from God (רוח אלוהים) that leads him and others to prophesy, as we see in the incidents of 1 Sam 10:2–8 and 19:20–24 (cf. 11:5–7). Then, when Yahweh / God casts an “evil spirit” (רוח רע) upon Saul, Saul seems nothing short of possessed by it, as can happen in the neighboring ancient Near Eastern cultures and in the Basanga culture. He is tormented (16:4); he raves (18:10); and he attempts to pin David, who is playing music to soothe Saul, to a wall with his spear (18:10). Only David’s music can seem to release Saul from this spirit (16:23). Such a spirit from Yahweh, רוח, whether good or bad, is not a spirit of the departed, an ברוח. It does not inspire, protect, or haunt Saul. Rather, it seems to control him. This seems much more in the nature of internal possession than external influence. Thus, Saul

signifies a “skin-bottle.” We disagree with Graeme Auld’s suggestion, however, that an ברוח is both a spirit of the departed and a physical instrument used in the process of raising the departed. Graeme Auld (2003: 228).

BDB, 693.
seems to have the gift of being able to take hold of YHWH and prophecy like the Mari female prophetess that channeled the Mari god for the king. Why, then would Saul be interested in forbidding recourse to an בנים and "בנוני"? I suggest that Saul is not a regular diviner with a full range of the divinatory gifts. He has been given specific gifts by YHWH to possess only his נ성을. Saul is, therefore, suspicious of other spirits. Of particular interest is that YHWH’s positive spirit has left Saul in 16:14, and he can now only hear an evil spirit. Moreover, Saul cannot seem to accept the loss of his kingship. He continues to attempt to retain it. I, therefore, argue that Saul is out of touch with any positive aspects of the spiritual world, and somewhat out of touch with the natural one. This evil spirit of YHWH masks Saul’s ability to hear any other word from YHWH and is fueling Saul’s ongoing denial of his pending loss. In this spiritual condition, Saul forbids recourse to diviners who can communicate with spirits of the departed and knowing spirits. It may not be, as many interpreters argue, that Saul is in lockstep with the sentiments of Deut 18:10 and Lev 19:31; 20:6, 27. Saul is not Josiah, making Deuteronomistic reforms (2 Kgs 23:24); nor is he the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel, who cast aspersions on many forms of divination (Isa 8:18; Ezek 21:21). He only wants to know how to keep his kingship, and Israel out of the hands of the Philistines, as we are about to see.

I also observe here along with Barbara Green that the narrator seems quite neutral on this point. Green states:

Though we can make the connection to Deut. 18:15–22 and perhaps approve this ‘zeal for YHWH’ on Saul’s part, the narrator is surprisingly noncommittal on the topic of this double link to paralegal religion. That is, the narrator neither praises Saul for having attempted to banish the
mediums and wizard nor signals overt disapproval when the king backs off from the reform, driven by his own desperation.\textsuperscript{11}

We agree that this is peculiar and important to what is happening in this pericope. The narrator’s point of view is not what one might expect in regard to a verse such as this.

In v. 4, we learn from the narrator that another battle between Israel and the Philistines is about to take place. The Philistines have mustered and encamped at Shunem (v. 4a), demonstrating their advance, and the Israelites have done the same at Gilboa (v. 4b). Saul is not, however, acting as a great general-king. He is, instead, deeply afraid (הרות), “trembling to his very core” (ראה את רעתו) (v. 5). Many have said that to be courageous, one does not have to be without fear. Courage is better defined by a willingness to proceed in spite of such fear. That Saul is afraid is, therefore, not in and of itself problematic. He has reason to fear their superior war technology (1 Sam 13:19–21).\textsuperscript{12} What is problematic is that he seems to be terrified to his inner core, to the seat of his courage.\textsuperscript{13} He is panicking. Consequently, he is seeking information from YHWH that will help to steady him and bolster his courage (v. 6).

Saul attempts to use divination to get these answers. They do not come, in Saul’s mind, on the דבון of YHWH. Thus, Saul uses some very common means of inquiring

\textsuperscript{11} Green, \textit{How are the Mighty Fallen}, 426.

\textsuperscript{12} Bodner states of this: “There is no specific reason stated as to why Saul is inquiring, or indeed, what he is asking. The context of battle with the Philistines reminds the reader about the technological upper band that they enjoy with respect to Israel (see 13.19–21). Yet in chap. 13, Saul is never the object of the verb ‘fear’. Saul has his faults, but he never succumbs to fear until after he is rejected by Samuel.” Bodner, \textit{1 Samuel}, 292.

\textsuperscript{13} See “בב” / “בל”, \textit{BDB}, 523–24, s.v. 2, 10.
(לא) of the divine. This word is one of the key terms of divination, and finds its Akkadian cognate in šā ḫalu, a word used in connection with divining by spirits. We recall that the Old Assyrian letter discussed in my Chapter 3 (TCL 4 5, lines 4–7) reads in relevant part: “Here we asked the female oracle givers (šā’lātum), the female diviners (bāriātum) and the spirits (etemmi): Assur repeatedly upbraids you…” 14 In Deuteronomy 18:11, however, one must not לאו.

We might also notice that the word לא is of great importance in the story of Samuel’s birth. At the beginning of the book of Samuel, Hannah is in crisis because of her barrenness (1 Sam 1:2–7). She prays (hiphil of לפל) (1 Sam 1:10, 12, 26, 27) and she vows a vow (רָדָה נְדָה) (1 Sam 1:11). The narrator reports that her voice (קרל) was not heard (הָאֵת) (1 Sam 1:13a). Apparently, something is a bit odd because Eli, the priest, thinks that she is drunk (1 Sam 1:13b–14). It is possible that she might have been in an ecstatic state. After explaining her situation to him, however, she finds her answer when Eli says to her, “Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant your petition (לא) that you have petitioned (לא) to him” (1 Sam 1:17). We observe immediately that this prayer was a type of asking or inquiring. It is not a simple prayer. Thus, I suggest that it is a luzanzo prayer that has a divinatory aspect to it. Of course, she bears a son and calls his name (למהלך) Samuel (למהלך which means literally “the name of God”) because “I have petitioned (לא) him from the LORD” (1 Sam 1:20b). When she returns

14 Finkel, “Necromancy,” 1, his translation.
to Eli to fulfill her vow, she reports that her petition (בִּשָּׁמַיָּה) that she had petitioned (בְּנַפְשָׁה) of YHWH has been granted to her (1 Sam 1:27). I maintain that 1 Samuel 28 is tied tightly with 1 Samuel 1 and that they help to explain each other. Here, we see that Samuel’s prologue was also divination, as was mine. This is no ordinary prayer, it is a divinatory prayer during which Hannah may be ecstatic. When Eli acknowledges that, she has peace with is an associative wordplay on the word for petition or inquiry.

Although Samuel’s name literally means “the name of God,” Hannah explains that an associative meaning is part of her naming decision. It is a wordplay on the petitioning. So, indeed, Samuel’s prologue was divination, to which his name indirectly alludes.

In returning to 1 Samuel 28, I also cannot help but notice the additional wordplay on בֹּשָׁם with Saul’s name (יִשָּׁמָע). Samuel has an inquiring essence it seems. These associative meanings suggest something beneath the surface. We might suspect that Saul’s inquiring of YHWH will not work until it somehow involves Samuel. We learn immediately that, in fact, YHWH is not interested in answering him in spite of Saul efforts via divinatory dreams, the urim, and prophets. One can only imagine how hard

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15 Bodner also notices the wordplay and states: “Saul asks of the LORD…and the wordplay should be noted: Saul’s name means ‘asked’, but he asks of the LORD who does not answer. Indeed, unanswered questions follow Saul throughout his career…. One also recalls the divine silent treatment of chap. 14. At least Saul had the service of the Elide priests there. Now, Saul inquires of the Urim, and surely it would have helped Saul’s cause had he not exterminated all the priests at Nob. No wonder such inquiry is proving fruitless. Like chap. 3, the word of the LORD is rare in these days.” Bodner, 1 Samuel, 293; citing Kenneth M. Craig, Jr., “Rhetorical Aspects of Questions Answered with Silence in 1 Sam 14:37 and 28:6,” Catholic Biblical Quarterly 56, no. 2 (1994): 221–39 in regard to the unanswered questions that plague Saul.
this is on Saul when he once had the רוח of God in him and could prophecy in ecstatic frenzy himself. His depression and desperation must be great.

In this condition, he asks his servants to find him another way. He asks of them:

“Seek out for me a woman-master of a spirit of the departed, so that I may go to her and I may inquire (דעת) by her!” (v. 7a). I have already discussed in my word study of Chapter 4 the import of בֵּיתלֶּה and its prior mistranslations. By way of reminder and to amplify my prior statements, this woman has power and authority over spirits of the departed (בֵּיתלֶּה), who come in both positive and negative states of mind, according to the worldview of the ancient Near East. She is not married to such a spirit. She is not a “mistress” of such a spirit. The difficulty with the patriarchal aspects of certain languages is that the feminine form of a word can have a lesser meaning than its masculine form. We see this in English, where a “governor” is one who governs, for example, as the executive head of a governmental division or as the head of a large estate. A “governess,” on the other hand, provides for the care and tutoring of children. As a result, female heads of states in the United States are called “Governor.” A “master” is lord over an estate, a slave-owner, a husband, and so forth: a man of some power, status, and authority. A “mistress” is, on the other hand, a wife of the master (although rarely now), or the second sexual partner of a married man to whom he is not married, a “kept woman,” the “other woman” (more commonly). We have this same effect in the Hebrew, where בֵּיתל has been translated as “owner,” “lord,” “ruler,” “citizen,” “inhabitant,” or
“husband;” whereas בָּשָׁלַח has been translated as “mistress” or “necromancer.” Both words have negative connotative and associative meanings in English. When the woman of Endor is labeled a “ghost-wife” (who calls up and sees an “erect man”!), “spirit wife,” a “mistress of a spirit,” and so forth, she becomes both minimized and sexualized.

This woman is a ruler of spirits; she can command spirits. Saul does not want one more losing divinatory process on his hands. He does not need a weak and ineffective

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16 BDB, 127.

17 Ibid., 128.


19 Theresa Angert-Quilter and Lynne Wall, “The ‘Spirit Wife’ at Endor,” Journal for the Study of the Old Testament 92 (2001): 55–72, esp. 60. This view is followed by Barbara Green, How are the Mighty Fallen?: A Dialogic Study of King Saul in 1 Samuel, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 365 (London and New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 419 n. 8. Green says there: “Readers will appreciate the difficulty of translating the noun that denotes the woman’s role. ‘Medium’ is misleading and ‘witch’ seems irretrievably pejorative. The neologism ‘spirit wife’, analogous with midwife, suggesting one who brings spirits into the world, is suggested by Angert-Quilter and Wall.” Ibid. I appreciate the sentiment expressed here, but do not believe that anyone naturally and automatically connects “spirit wife” with “midwife.” The social history of spirit and wife are too long and negative or minimized to be used in a positive manner. “Spirit midwife” might have been better, although this translation still does not see the connection between Hannah and the woman of Endor. See nn. 30–36, supra.

diviner. No, he wants real help! He wants action! These are desperate times for him. He wants to inquire / consult / seek of (דָּרָשׁ) through her.\textsuperscript{21} Saul uses verbs typically used when one is seeking for a person with the ability to provide divine guidance. These verbs include בּוּךְ (“to seek”), אָל (“to go”), and verb דָּרָשׁ (“to inquire”). Saul commands his servants to אַשֶּׁר בָּנֵלָה אֲבָאֹבּ so that he may אָל (“go”) to her and דָּרָשׁ (“inquire”) of her (v. 7). This language is reminiscent of that used in 1 Sam 9:1–9, esp. v. 9. This is not the first time that Saul is in a situation that requires his servants’ assistance. Both the 1 Sam 9:1–9 and 1 Sam 28:7 narratives involve servants who know of an anonymous expert—אֶדְמוֹנָה אֲשֶׁר אֲלָדֹה (“a man of God” in 9:6; a אֲלָדֹה אֲבָאֹבּ here in 28:7—to whom they turn in a time of crisis. Saul’s servant tells him in the earlier episode אֶדְמוֹנָה אֲשֶׁר אֲלָדֹה (“there is a man of God”) and advises Saul to go to the man for guidance (9:6). Similarly, Saul’s servants respond to Saul’s request in 28:7b, אֶדְמוֹנָה בָּנֵלָה אֲפָאֹבּ (“there is a אֲפָאֹבּ at Endor) (28:7). The narrator reports in the earlier episode that, in the former time when someone went “to inquire of God” (דָּרָשׁ אֲלָדֹה) one would say, “Come, let us go to the seer for the one who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer” (9:9). The anonymous local אֲלָדֹה אֲשֶׁר אֶדְמוֹנָה “man of God” of 1 Sam 9:6 is referred to first as אֲלָדֹה “seer,” then as אֲלָדֹה אֲשֶׁר אֶדְמוֹנָה “prophet” (v. 9), and still later on, is identified as Samuel (v. 14). These same verbs, אָל

\textsuperscript{21} BDB, 205.
and נאם, are used by Saul in 1 Sam 28:7. In 1 Samuel, נאם occurs only twice (9:9; 28:7) and carries both times a positive “consultative or advisory connotation” and is preceded by a verb of motion לכו. Both narratives culminate in finding an expert in divine guidance. We can, therefore, understand that the anonymous woman הנשים functions as a seer to whom Saul turns for guidance in a crisis. The parallels between the two sections of 1 Samuel cause us in reading 1 Samuel 28 to recall 1 Samuel 9 and understand: 1) that the latter request is very serious, 2) Samuel may somehow be involved again, and 3) the woman has important divinatory powers that are not separate from YHWH. Later, we will learn that, indeed, the הנשים functions as an effective mediator through whom Samuel’s spirit speaks. Thus, Saul’s words are quite intentional and powerful. He needs a master of the spirits of the departed, who can raise up a spirit, who will have secret, divine knowledge that he does not have and cannot seem to get through the usual channels.

Saul’s interest is not only in the spirit, but also more importantly in the information from YHWH that the spirit has. One has to read vv. 6–7a together. Getting the answer from YHWH is still important. Hence, while I disagree with Christopher L. Nihan in regard to certain aspects of his translation, I very much agree with him when he argues: “Supernatural knowledge conferred to the הנשים that Saul asks the necromancer to

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23 Ibid., 294
raise (v. 8) is supposed to provide the answer formerly withheld by YHWH.”24 Nihan sees the connection between the spirit and YHWH. Walter Brueggemann, on the other hand, seems to miss this point. He has said of 1 Samuel 28:

This scene is filled pathos and anguish. Its vibrant narrative details have the potential of seducing us in our interpretation. The matter of summoning ghosts is an act sure to fascinate the religiously curious. A theological interpretation, however, must hold to a steady discipline against such fascination. The narrative has no real interest in the summoning of spirits or in the role or capacity of the woman. The speech of Samuel keeps the narrative thoroughly and insistently Yahwistic. It is Yahweh and Samuel with whom Saul must come to terms. The narrative invites reflection on the vocation of royal power in a context where God's singular power will not be mocked. To diffuse the narrative into a pluralism in which other powers have force or significance is to misread the story and diminish its voice for our own demanding religious situation. The narrative is a reflection on how hard and dangerous is the single voice to which Saul failed to give heed.25

I agree that the voice of YHWH is of utmost importance, which I will discuss more in a moment. Brueggemann, however, separates that voice from the woman of Endor and the spirit of Samuel that she brings forth. This is an error borne in patriarchy and ancient European Christian ideology that even quite liberal biblical theologians cannot seem to move beyond.

Both Peter Miscall and Keith Bodner have observed:

the first notice of Samuel’s death (25.1) precedes an episode where David hears about his future from a prudent woman. Now the second time there is a notice about Samuel’s death, Saul will hear a message about his future by

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means of medium. As Peter Miscall…summarizes, “Saul's dealings with a knowledgeable woman are to have a radically different outcome from David’s.”

This is no accident. These women are important in connection with Samuel’s death and in contrasting Saul and David’s future. The woman of Endor is, therefore, not a plaything; she is not wedded to some angry, demonic spirit; and she is not to be so easily dismissed as Brueggemann and others do. She is the instrument through which Samuel appears and through which Saul finally can hear the voice of YHWH. It, therefore, makes far better sense to call this woman a “woman-master of a spirit of the departed.”

Saul’s servants once again take him seriously because they are quick to respond, saying “Behold, there is a woman-master of a spirit of the departed at Endor.” If, as many assert, Saul has exiled or killed all those who can divine through spirits of the departed or knowing spirits, why can his servants name this woman and her location so quickly?

Hans Wilhelm Hertzberg suggests that the existence of expelled diviners is an “an open secret that reached right into court circles.” It is at least that. It is apparent that Saul’s efforts have either been half-hearted or less than effective. Many interpret Saul as weak and ineffective. Two factors may, however, indicate that Saul may have been half-hearted in his efforts. First, the connection of this narrative back to 1 Sam 9:1–9 suggests that Saul was at times in need of diviners and expected his servants to be ready to bring the right one to him on a moment’s notice. Second, Saul is not fond of following the so-


27 Hertzberg, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 218 n. e.
called rules, particularly when it comes to genocidal acts. He did not, for instance, complete the extermination of the Amalekites and all attached to them (1 Sam 15:1–34). YHWH ordered Saul to “smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have; do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (v. 3; cf. 18) Saul, it seems, is not too enthusiastic about the job. First, Saul warns the Kenites so that they do not become “collateral damage” (v. 6). Second, while he does kill the population (v. 8b), he keeps King Agag alive and keeps the best part of the livestock as booty, instead of destroying it under the ban as ordered (v. 8a, 9). Saul claims that this is for a separate sacrifice (v. 15) and was done at the instigation of the people (v. 21), but YHWH is not buying it (vv. 22–24). Saul will lose his crown.

Reading this episode from a postcolonial perspective, one must notice that Saul did not rejoice in the genocide. He did it imperfectly. It is true that he only spared the king and the best livestock, and he tried to cover his tracks in several ways. Saul is not some great anti-colonial hero. Nonetheless, the whole narrative reeks of Saul’s conflict over doing this. He just will not complete the job. From God’s, Samuel’s, and the narrator’s perspective, Saul is simply disobedient, rebellious, stubborn, and deserving of losing the kingdom (1 Sam 15:19, 23). From Saul’s perspective, he may well be asking himself why this has to be his task. Samuel reports that Saul thinks that he is “little in his own eyes” (1 Sam 15:17). Saul has no confidence, no bravado, and no taste for the hunt. The characters lay the blame on Saul, and God repents of giving Saul the kingdom (1
Sam 15:11; 35b); Samuel says that YHWH need not repent (1 Sam 15:29), but YHWH himself (1 Sam 15:11a) and the narrator (1 Sam 15:35b) report that YHWH did so.\(^\text{28}\)

Now, much has been made of 1 Sam 15:22–23, where Samuel is scolding Saul and states: רגמ (v. 23). This may establish that Saul’s efforts to divine later are sinful. That is not, however, what Samuel reports later in 1 Samuel 28. Further, Samuel’s prologue is divination and he begins his career as a seer, as a diviner, and, as we already know, the distinction between the seer and the prophet has been much overwrought. Finally, I have already argued in Chapter 4 that to translate כנפ as “witchcraft” as does the KJV or simply as “divination” as do the RSV and NRSV is problematic. This verb does seem to have only one designative meaning “divination.” Yet, within this designative meaning, it is applied both positively (e.g., Prov 16:10; cf. Mic 3:6) and negatively (Deut 18:10; Ezek 13:6). Thus, it has a full range of connotative and emotive meanings. The problem is not divination per se. Rather, it is divining in ways that are not supportive to YHWH’s interests. Thus, foreign divination is highly suspect (e.g., Deut 18:10). Female divination is highly suspect (e.g., Deut 18:10–11).

\(^{28}\) Green states: “Thought it is distressing to modern sensibilities to hang the whole issue of obedience to God on such a matter of genocide, the DH seems clear about the seriousness of the episode.” Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 431. I would say that distressing is putting it mildly from the perspective on one from the Congo where millions of people died under colonization. I have to question why God did not know better in this pericope, and why is not he to blame? I am aware that Israel, constantly under the threat or reality of colonization, would like to see itself and its God as strong and powerful. Nonetheless, I must challenge the biblical depiction of the genocidal God, and, in so doing, lay some blame beyond God. I believe that Saul is Israel, seeing itself as so little and having so little bravado. Israel cannot blame its God, so it must blame itself. Whether or not I am right about this, Saul just does not follow YHWH’s commands, and, when we are confronted by a genocidal God, this is a very good thing. A little civil disobedience goes a long way.
Words that do not serve YHWH’s interests or that represent him incorrectly are also highly suspect (e.g., Zech 10:2). I think Ezek 13:6–9 makes clear what type of divination is a sin and cuts one off from the people:

They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie; they say, ‘Says YHWH,’ when YHWH has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfill their word. Have you not seen a delusive vision, and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Says YHWH,’ although I have not spoken?”

Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Because you have uttered delusions and seen lies, therefore behold, I am against you, says the Lord YHWH. My hand will be against the prophets who see delusive visions and who give lying divinations; they shall not be in the council of my people, nor be enrolled in the register of the house of Israel, nor shall they enter the land of Israel; and you shall know that I am the Lord YHWH.

No one could argue and does argue from this that YHWH stands against prophecy! The same is going on in regards to divination. Thus, I argue that it is best to translate 1 Samuel 15:23 as:

For rebellion is no less a sin than unfaithful divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.

This keeps the connotative meaning of the word in this literary context absolutely clear. It also then challenges us to investigate whether the divination used in 1 Samuel 28 served YHWH’s interests or not.

Verse 8a reveals to us, through the narrator, that Saul disguised (hithpael of רַמֵּץ) himself by putting on other garments, which we assume means attire that is not suited to royalty. I think it is important at the start to note several wordplays operating here. First, I note a pun with רַמֵּץ, meaning “a (shrewd) device, plot.”

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29 BDB, 344.
possible associative connection in the Hebrew. Saul’s disguise is part of a shrewd plot.

Second, Pamela Tamarkin Reis observes a homonymous pun between the words for “garment” (דגב) and “deceive” / “treachery” (דגב). This is emphasized by the fact that the men travel by night to the woman (v. 8b). Consequently, we know that Saul intends to deceive someone through his disguise / plot. Commentators have speculated on whom Saul wishes to deceive: the Philistines, Saul’s own men, the woman of Endor, from himself. We must wait to determine the answer to that question.

The fact that it is night does more than help Saul’s disguise and contribute to the sense of drama and treachery. Keith Bodner remarks:

Over the course of his career, one recalls that Saul often does things under the cover of darkness; here, the temporal setting symbolizes a lack of spiritual perception, just like the nearly blind Eli in chaps. 3 and 4.

I think this is an excellent insight. We should also recall that witchcraft and sorcery were


31 See, e.g., Ralph Klein, 1 Samuel, Word Bible Commentary 10 (Waco, Tx.: Word Books, 1983), 271. If Endor is several miles northeast of Shunem, as many scholars assert, then Saul has to cross Philistine lines to reach Endor. In this instance, he certainly would need to disguise himself just to reach his location. Bodner, 1 Samuel, 294. Yet, the sense of deception is palpable in the narrative, so I do not think that this is the only reason for Saul’s disguise.


34 See, e.g., Green, How are the Mighty Fallen, 427–28.

35 Bodner, 1 Samuel, 295.
usually covert activities. Doing the same divinatory techniques in public, “in the light of
day,” caused them to fall outside the classification of witchcraft. Thus, we again have to
wait and see what is to take place. Tension is building literarily: we do not yet know
precisely what Saul is up to and what this woman-master of spirits will do in response.

We soon discover what Saul wants of the woman. He begs of her: “Please divine
Msq for me by a spirit of the departed (bw) and bring up (hiphil of hl) for me
whom I shall tell you!” (v. 8b) The Akkadian cognate to hl is elū, which we have seen
in positive thaumaturgy contexts within the ancient Near East. Thus, from v. 6 to v. 8, we
have two Hebrew words whose Akkadian cognates are related to thaumaturgy without
any association to witchcraft or evil in any way. Yet, we know that these words, in the
Hebrew, can have both positive and negative literary contexts and connotations. Thus, we
have to look closely at what is happening here. 36

The woman has cause to be suspicious of this man and his request. She knows the
law. She knows what King Saul has done. Hence, she says to the disguised Saul, “Surely!
You yourself know what Saul has done, how he has cut off (hiphil of trk) access to
spirits of the departed (bw) and knowing spirits (nd) in the nation” (v. 9a). There is
irony here. The woman is using Saul’s law to impede his progress. Rules do not seem to
sit well with Saul, whether he is their maker or subject to them. Additionally, the verb
bw has a double meaning. In the qal it may mean to cut off or down a person or thing;

36 Bodner says of this “Face to face with the witch in Endor, Saul begins this
nefarious interview.” Bodner, 1 Samuel, 295. Although this makes for wonderful drama,
it is hardly accurate.
it can also mean to cut a covenant. Thus, it has both destructive and constructive
designative meanings. In the *hiphil*, it is only attested in the destructive sense.

Nonetheless, behind Saul’s act of cutting off access to various spirits may be the idea of a
covention. Somehow, Saul thought that this action would be in keeping with the covention
and please YHWH. Maybe that would have been effective had he done it completely, but
once again he cannot eradicate all access to spirits of the departed and knowing spirits.
He cannot complete a genocidal task. 1 Samuel 15 reveals that all is lost when God is
followed incompletely.

The woman continues to express her suspicions in v. 9b. She wants to know why
this man is “setting a trap for my life to bring about my death.” In v. 9, we have learned
two important things about the woman: she is knowledgeable; and she is a law-abiding
individual. She knows the law. She intends to keep the law. This stranger will not
entrap her. Law enforcement uses a sting operation to allow those with evil intention to
perform the criminal act in a situation where they can observe it. This woman, when
given the opportunity to do a guilty act demonstrates that she has no guilty intention. She
cannot fall into the trap.

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37 BDB, 504.


39 F. Rachel Magdalene, *On the Scales of Righteousness: Neo-Babylonian Trial
Law and the Book of Job*, Brown Judaic Studies 348 (Providence, R.I.: Brown Judaic
Saul, however, needs her. Thus, he swears to her by YHWH, in v.10, that “no punishment will befall you for this advice (רבד).”  

I chose “advice” here because it is one of the appropriate designative meaning of רבד and fits particularly well with the positive consultative or advisory connotative meaning of רבד in 1 Sam 28:7. The woman then asks: “Whom shall I bring up for you?” (v. 11a). This is all quite perplexing! From Saul’s perspective and ours, he certainly has the power to protect her from harm. Yet, the woman cannot know that—even though she is intelligent and knowledgeable.

Saul, however, swears by YHWH, and one can usually trust such an oath. It certainly is saying that the man is a follower of YHWH, and may imply that his request will not be contrary to YHWH’s interests. Moreover, she must have some sense that the man before her has some influence in royal circles if he can protect her. Commentators have often suggested that she immediately trusts Saul, which is demonstrated through her question regarding whom she will raise for this man.  

Yet, I am not so sure. I think that her query is part of her process of determining whether this oath is valid (false oaths rare and unwise, but not unheard of) and the man actually has the power to do what he swears he will do. Saul answers her question: “Bring up Samuel for me!” (v. 11b). Any man who can request such an בנים to appear at his beckoning, must have some power and influence! Samuel did, after all, appoint King Saul and was his advisor until 1 Sam

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41 See, e.g., Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 428.

42 In accord, Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 219.
15:35. Furthermore, all of Israel was at Samuel’s funeral, including, I surmise, King Saul and the woman of Endor. She understands something about power. Consequently, she now believes that she can trust him.

The narrator does not give us any information about the process of raising Samuel. It does not seem like the woman performs an elaborate ritual as is described in the thaumaturgy manuals of Mesopotamia. That process can take days because the ointment that the thaumaturgist must smear on their face so that they can see and hear the spirit of the departed is days in the making. Here, however, while the night is still with them, “the woman saw Samuel.” She did not raise Samuel. She did not engage in any prolonged ritual to empower her to see or hear Samuel. Rather, it is almost immediate. She sees Samuel. This woman is a seer. She may also be what the Basanga call a *kilûmbu*, the “one who tells the meaning” or “one who explains,” the diviner who is possessed by a spirit in order to communicate. Bruce K. Waltke and M. O’Connor translate אשה בְּנֵלָראָם as a “woman, a possessor of a spirit.”43 I think they are on to something. It is, I believe, the best way to explain the immediacy of her seeing Samuel. Saul asks, and the spirit is there. Moreover, the woman of Endor is surprised to see Samuel. It is not as though she spent any time contemplating his raising or doing a long ritual in furtherance of that goal. The woman-master of a spirit calls out with a loud voice (v. 12a)! I choose “call out,” instead of “cry out,” for the verb והָלָם because I do not believe that she is actually frightened, in need, or out of control in any way. If she is a

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*kilûmbu*, she knows her gift. I suspect that she is just a bit startled by the power and speed of the process, which would be expected if one were calling forth such a mighty and authoritative spirit.

I believe that the connection of this pericope to 1 Samuel 1 gives us another indicator that the woman of Endor channels Samuel. In order to explain this I must return first to the work of François Kabasele Lumbala. Lumbala’s method, it might be remembered from my Chapter 1, involves a process of disordering the system of organized knowledge constructed by the colonizer. He does this by means of applying new theological concepts rooted in “African cultural ideas of society and self.”

Lumbala’s work responded to the colonizing system of order by articulating his “theological order.” His own worldviews, customs, systems of knowledge, and etc., shape his approach. It is both is Christocentric and rooted in local rituals. For the purpose of this study, the significance of Lumbala’s work is in the way he applies his native concept of the human body, as well as the way he applies his native concept of ancestors to Christ in liturgical theology. Lumbala understands the body as an “expression of God”; it is “a mediator of God’s life”; “a visible sign of those who are community…. A human being is entirely in a fingernail, a hair, a flake of skin.”

Through the body, the human and divine “converge in a particular place, in a particular moment, in a particular

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46 Ibid., 3.
community.” Christ is viewed as an ancestor.⁴⁷ Lumbala’s native concepts of human body and the ancestors are significant constructs in the formulation of my conceptual framework. Now, in his feminist reading of 1 Sam 28:3–25, David Jobling sees the “structural necessity” of both Hannah and the woman of Endor, stating:

They both point us to the lost memory of egalitarian Israel. Hannah does it by acting to reestablish judgeship through Samuel and by celebrating egalitarian Israel in her song (2:4–8). The medium does it by controlling access to Samuel and hence to the past for which he stands. In relation to the fundamental transition from judgeship to kingship, both are epochal figures.”⁴⁸

I agree with him, but I first want to take that insight down to the level of the body, the female body. The woman of Endor’s action has a structural significance in the larger context of 1 Samuel, which opens with Hannah and her empty womb. God opens her womb for Samuel. Hannah’s womb carries Samuel. In the Basanga culture, women divine through their wombs. I, therefore, suggest that the woman of Endor continues Samuel’s existence through her womb. It is from there that the departed spirit of Samuel speaks, not a skull, not a bowl, but from the very core, the womb of the woman of Endor. The bodies of both Hannah and the woman of Endor are employed by God and Samuel for Samuel’s very existence and influence. It is in the womb of these two women that the female body is an “expression of God”; “a mediator of God’s life”; “a visible sign of


those who are community…. Samuel is ancestor to us all, given life and prophetic word through these women.

Moreover, Jobling points to another facet of this. These two women are together the important hyphen that connects the “multiple durées”—past-present-future—of African postcolonialism as expressed in the work of Achille Mbembe.49 This is certainly true of Samuel’s existence: Hannah gives him life; the woman of Endor gives him his final word after his death. Jobling points out that this is also true in respect to Israel’s existence. 50 All of this contributes to my view that a Deuteronomic or prophetic editor relocated the woman of Endor material in order to weaken its import to the narrative of 1 Samuel.

The woman of Endor turns to Saul, now knowing who he is (v. 12b). I do not find this to be a perplexity, as do many commentators. 51 The verse does not need any emendation.52 Just as her sight of Samuel is nearly instantaneous, much information has been passed as quickly. A kilîmbu does not necessarily have to contemplate at length to


50 Jobling, 1 Samuel, 307–308.

51 Bodner is the most transparent about this: “I find it utterly baffling how the woman perceives Samuel the prophet, and then immediately is able to identify Saul.” Bodner, 1 Samuel, 296. See also, e.g., Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 428-29; Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 219.

52 Many have suggested a variety of emendations. See, e.g., McCarter, 1 Samuel, 481. Antony Campbell says in frustration of this that none of the textual emendations help the situation and it must remain a mystery. Anthony Campbell, 1 Samuel, Forms of Old Testament Literature 7 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 282. I suggest that, if one knows how such things work, it is no mystery at all; thus, no emendations are necessary.
know a very great deal. She knows she has Samuel’s spirit. She knows the man before her is King Saul, the man who has instituted laws against her, and that he tried to deceive (piel of רמיה) her with this non-royal dress. While aware of her possibly precarious situation due to the imbalance of power here, she is, nonetheless, angry. He toyed with her. He did not think she would know. In that, he belittled her gift, the very gift that he needs so much that he was willing to stake his life in his oath. She feels used and abused. Saul has a way of underestimating the knowledge of seer-prophets, as also exhibited in 1 Sam 15:13–23.

Again, we find a wordplay in service here. Samuel is from רמה. It was / is his village both in life and in death. The name of the village means “height” from the root רור. The Hebrew root meaning “to deceive,” “to beguile,” or “to deal treacherously” with” is רמה. Samuel, who comes from the netherworld via רמה, discloses Saul’s רמה to the woman. Saul’s attempt to deceive the woman through his adornment of deceiving garments fails because of Samuel’s disclosure. The two wordplays (רמא / ברש and רמא / רמא) now meet. I, therefore, believe that Saul first intends to deceive the woman of Endor in accord with Pamela Reis.53

King Saul says to the woman, with the greatest of irony, “Be not afraid!” (v. 13a). Talk about projection! Saul is only standing before this woman because he is shaken to the core by the Philistines and has no idea what to do. We have no indication here that the woman is afraid. Rather, she is angry. Saul is thinking that the woman is now waiting for

53 See n. 28, supra.
the legal and literal ax to fall and she needs reassurance. Standing in her shoes, however, one knows for certain that Saul has the power to stay that ax. She has no reason to fear. This is Saul’s issue. He is afraid.

His need to know what she knows is, however, urgent. He wants to get right to the point. Hence, he asks: “What do you see? (v. 13a). She responds that she sees an אֲלָלַי לִיוֹן arising from the ground (v. 13b). I do not take the spirit’s rising from the ground literally but more figuratively. Spirits are said to arise from the netherworld out the ground, or a hole in the ground, throughout the ancient Near East. This is known, among the Basanga, as kalunga nyembo. This is, therefore, the best way for the woman of Endor to describe to Saul what she sees. What she sees as a seer, as a kilûmbu, however, is actually in her mind’s eye.54 What she sees is that Samuel is an אֲלָלַי לִיוֹן, which is different from an ordinary אֲלָל.55 As I have indicated in my Chapter 3, an אֲלָלַי לִיוֹן, according to Tromp’s work on Ugaritic texts, is a title given to a spirit of the departed that has special knowledge. Samuel is surely that. I think, however, that he is still more than that. He is more than a לָדוֹן (a “knowing spirit”). He is a “godly spirit,” because he was once a man of God (1 Sam 9:6–10), and now he is of the world of God. He is, indeed, a mukishi or a bamfumu, “a godly spirit,” who can speak through this woman.

Saul wants details! He asks the woman: “What is his form?” (v. 14a). She answers that she sees an old man, who is wrapped in a robe—a garment of distinction—arising.

54 Hence I disagree with those commentators who suggest that the woman only sees and Saul only hears. See, e.g., Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 429.

55 In accord, Hertzberg, I & 2 Samuel, 217.
Once again, I cannot overlook the irony of this. Saul has shed his kingly garments for others that will disguise his rank. Samuel, however, even in death, bears his prestigious garments proudly. Saul has desired the kingship so much so that he denies what he heard in 1 Samuel 15, that is, he has lost the kingdom. Yet, he has never been comfortable with kingship. He cannot carry out his divinely appointed tasks. He sheds those garments, not only to deceive the woman, but also to be what he sees himself as actually being—little, fearful, non-royal, a regular guy. Saul is not David, who lusts for and plots after the role of king after his anointing by Samuel. Saul had the kingship handed to him in similar fashion, but he has never had a good idea as to what to do with it. Thus, he relied on Samuel; he still relies on Samuel. Green acknowledges this when she discusses Saul’s removal of his kingly garments:

What strikes me in his role is that, by removing his accustomed garb, Saul adopts the guise of a ‘not king’, the very role to which God has been persuading him presumably, though it has registered with Saul as silence. It is surely the role Samuel had urged upon him at the end of the Amalekite episode (ch. 15) and will do again shortly. For whom is the disguise? Notably, from himself, though it may also provide him an opportunity to rehearse imaginatively for the gesture we will see him make at the moment of his death. So, Saul takes the role he has been resisting so assiduously to acknowledge and goes to listen to his old prophet. Saul’s disguise is actually his unkingly self, now the one most able to hear what he needs to learn.56

56 Green, *How Are the Mighty Fallen*, 427–28. Robert Alter has also noticed Saul’s self-divestiture: “his disguise also is the penultimate instance of the motif of royal divestment. As we have seen, clothing is associated with Saul’s kingship—the torn or cut garment is the tearing of his kingship, and among the ecstacies surrounding Samuel, Saul stripped himself naked. Now, in an unwitting symbolic gesture, he divests himself of his royal garments before going to learn of his own impending death.” Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), 173.
In this sense, the disguise is both a disguise from himself and not a disguise from anyone. It is a statement of Saul’s truth, from which he has been running. He is not a king in his heart of hearts. As a result, when he hears from the woman that this אָנָח has the form of old man wrapped in a robe, Saul knows, too, that it is Samuel (v. 14b). He knows also that he is in the presence of something holy (v. 14b). Thus, he bows down to the ground and prostates himself. Yes, this is no ordinary בָּנָא, who is like an etemmi, in that the spirit has lost its human appearance to the diviner. Instead, Samuel retains in death his appearance in life. In this, he is much more like a mītu, a spirit who is more readily approached and has no negativity associated with it. Samuel is also no ordinary רְדָנִי, with some special knowledge. Samuel is more than all of those Akkadian or Hebrew terms for spirits. He has taken on a godliness that Saul did not see when Samuel was living. Hence, Saul falls to the ground in obeisance.

It is Samuel’s turn to speak now. In v. 15a, Samuel addresses Saul, I suggest through the mouth of the woman of Endor, speaking in Samuel’s first person. Samuel demands to know: “Why did you disturb me by bringing me up?” I observe that Samuel is distressed—disturbed and perturbed—but not with the woman of Endor. It is critical to understand that Samuel has, indeed, appeared and is speaking through the woman of Endor. He has responded to Saul’s request, using this woman and her gift.57 Samuel lays no reproach upon this woman. He is upset with Saul because Saul has disturbed him by

57 Hertzberg says of this, “There is no indication that anyone either earlier or later regarded the apparition of Samuel as a fraudulent fiction perpetrated by the woman. Both the earlier account and the deuteronomistic complier are convinced that Samuel was really present.” Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 220–21
bringing him up. What is clear from this is that, as I suggested earlier, Samuel is not a haunting spirit. He has a peaceful spirit in the netherworld. He does not want to be on the earth.

At this reproach, Saul offers a lengthy explanation as to why he has need of Samuel:

I am in terrible straits. The Philistines are waging war against me, and God has turned away from me and answers me no more, either by the hand of prophets or by dreams; I summoned you to make known to me what I should do. (v. 15b)

Saul has summons Samuel to inform him as to the best course of action. Samuel knows and can relate this to Saul. He is a knowing spirit. Nonetheless, we should observe the fact that, here, Saul refers to YHWH as God. Eleven times the divine is referred to as YHWH in the pericope (vv. 6 x2, 10 x2, 16, 17 x2, 18 x2, 19 x2). Only here, after Saul knows that he stands before Samuel, now an א annoyed, does any character refer to the divine in that way. I believe that this emphasizes the closeness of Samuel to YHWH and confirms the appropriateness of the translation of א when it refers to Samuel as “godly spirit.”

Additionally, Saul states something of great import here, different from what the narrator stated in v. 6: as Saul has turned away or forbidden recourse (hiphil of סנור) to spirits in v. 3, God has turned away (qal of סנור) from Saul. It is not simply that YHWH is silent and does not answer. Rather, YHWH has rejected / ejected Saul. Saul’s move against those who seek recourse to spirits did nothing to secure his place in Israel’s future before YHWH.
In spite of Saul’s plea, Samuel is not interested in solving Saul’s problem for him. What Samuel knows, and what Saul has never accepted, is God’s judgment in 1 Sam 15:26–28. Samuel has no need to explain things anew to Saul. In v. 16, he, therefore, tells Saul that inquiring (לָאִשָּׁה) of him has been a waste of time and effort when he already should understand that YHWH has turned away from (turned on) him and become his adversary. Samuel reiterates the divine decision of 1 Sam 15:27–28, to Saul in vv 17–18, with one addition: “YHWH has torn (לָבֶז) the kingdom out of your hand and has given it to your companion David” (v. 17). In 1 Sam 15:28, the person who would inherit the kingdom from among Saul’s fellows was unstated. Now, Samuel makes it explicit. It is his nemesis, David. Yet another wordplay is in use in vv. 15b and 17. In v. 15b, Saul tells Samuel that he summoned (לָאִשָּׁה) Samuel to reveal to him what he should do. Samuel’s response is that YHWH has torn (לָבֶז) the kingdom from his hand, using a

58 Verse 16 contains a text critical issue. At the end of verse 16, the MT reads יָרָה ונשָׁה (become your enemy—NRSV). The LXX suggests καὶ γέγομεν μετὰ τοῦ πλησίου σοῦ (taken part with thy neighbor—LXE).

59 Thenius argues that since the word לָאִשָּׁה (to your neighbor) appears in verse 17 alluding to 15:28, it is preferable to read with the LXX and render the MT לָאִשָּׁה יָרָה וּנָשָׁה (become your neighbor’s). Wellhausen notes that the LXX takes יָרָה לָאִשָּׁה as if it were an abbreviation which it developed into יָרָה (לָאִשָּׁה) בְּלַו and prefers to keep the lectio difficilior. For further discussion, see Dominique Barthélemy, Critique Textuelle de l’Ancien Testament: Rapport final du Comité pour l’Analyse Textuelle de l’Ancien Testament, OBO 50 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 1982), 137–328. The MT apparatus suggests that לָאִשָּׁה be rendered לָאִשָּׁה and for further discussion, see Barthélemy, idem. The present study will follow the MT in v. 16. In regard to v. 17, we will follow the suggestion in the apparatus to render לָאִשָּׁה (to him) read לָאִשָּׁה (to you).

60 Thus, I reject Beucken’s argument that Samuel refuses to be consulted 1978 5 and am in accord with Green 430 n. 24 and Reis 1997 11.
homonym. In v. 18, Samuel once again castigates Saul for not listening (שמע) to the voice (קול) of YHWH (as in 1 Sam 15:19), and, because he did not listen and “make felt his burning anger against Amalek, YHWH is offering this word to you this day.” Saul seeks helpful advise (דבר) from the woman of Endor in v. 10, only to get a disastrous word (דבר) from YHWH via Samuel, who remains the voice of God to Saul, in v. 18. As Samuel rises up, Saul goes down.

Unfortunately, Saul will take many with him. Verse 19 is in poetic form and relates the calamity that will befall Saul, his heirs, and all Israel.

YHWH will give over, additionally, Israel
with you into the hand of the Philistines.
And tomorrow, you and your sons [will be] with me.
Moreover, all the camp of Israel, YHWH will give over into the hand of the Philistines.

This has a particularly interesting and unusual tri-parte parallel structure:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>YHWH will give over.</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>And tomorrow,</th>
<th>B’’</th>
<th>Moreover,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>additionally,</td>
<td>B’</td>
<td>you and your sons [will be]</td>
<td>C’’</td>
<td>all the camp of Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>C’</td>
<td>with you</td>
<td>D’</td>
<td>with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>E’</td>
<td>into the hand of the Philistines</td>
<td>E’’</td>
<td>into the hand of the Philistines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This structure emphasizes the relationship between the catastrophe that will befall Saul and his sons and that of Israel. Elements A, B, C, D, and E are the first half of an imperfect inclusio. The second half comprises elements A’’, B’’, C’’, and E’’, where element D is not mirrored and element A’’ follows B’’ and C’’, in a semi-chiastic
structure. These two sets of elements relate the disaster that Israel is about to suffer in the battle with the Philistines. In the center of this framing inclusio, we observe elements B’, C’, and D’, wherein lies the fate of Saul and his sons. They are to die and be with Samuel. Some would remove either the first of last set of elements as a text critical error, but we believe that the structure, while unusual, is not impossible. The Philistines will cause the deaths of Saul and his sons. Samuel’s final prophecy is ruin.

Saul, at hearing this news, falls prostrate on the ground (v. 20a). He is even more terrified than before due to the words (רַבַּד) of Samuel. While once Saul was on the ground to honor Samuel, he is now on the ground because he has been laid out by the horrific news. He is also, according to the narrator, weak from fasting: “there was no strength in him for he had not eaten any bread all day and all night” (v. 20b). Why is Saul fasting? Is this an act meant to facilitate YHWH’s answer? Does it harken back to Hannah’s fasting (1 Sam 1:15–16)? Is it reflective of the end of the kingship as a banquet once celebrated it beginning (1 Sam 9:22–24)? It may be all of these things in such a rich and important narrative.

We have not heard from the woman of Endor all the while Samuel was speaking to Saul. She, although the very instrument of conversation, has been in the silent background. With Samuel’s words finished, she is now fore-grounded once again (v. 21). She is able to come to Saul (v. 21a) as he and his companions once came to her. Moreover, even though her formal divination session is over, yet she sees (v. 21a). She sees Saul that is on the floor and terribly troubled, completely dismayed. She reaches out to him, saying:
Surely, your maidservant has listened to your voice; I have taken my life in my hand, and I have listened to your words that you have spoken to me. Now, please, you should listen to the voice of your maidservant…. (vv. 21b–22a).

This offer is part, I think, of restoring Saul’s dignity to him. Yet, I also hear the echoes of voices again as I walk this path through 1 Samuel. The importance of speaking with one’s voice and listening to the voices of others is made repeatedly manifest in 1 Samuel. The word “voice” is repeated often in 1 Samuel 15 (vv. 1, 14 x2, 19, 20, 22, 24) and 1 Samuel 28 (vv. 12, 18, 21, 22, 23). The word “listen” is also oft repeated (1 Sam 15:1, 4, 14, 19, 10, 22 x2, 24; 1 Sam 28:18, 21 x2, 22, 23). The woman of Endor is a woman who uses her voice and listens to the voices of others. She calls out with a loud voice. She hears the voice of Samuel to channel him to Saul with her voice. She now asserts that she has listened to Saul’s words (דיבור שירים), placed (מי#&) her very life in her hand to do so. The association of (mi#$ with (מי#&) cannot be missed. We are also reminded here that Eli cannot hear (לי#$) the voice (לטוח) of Hannah (1 Sam 1:13a), while the woman of Endor hears the voices of both Saul and Samuel. Who does or does not listen to whom is a recurring theme in 1 Samuel. The woman of Endor is one of those who listens. She trusted that Saul was not trying to entrap her. She trusted his oath. She trusted him not to let that ax fall. She listened; she reflected; she obeyed. The woman of Endor now pleads with Saul to listen to her voice. She, not Samuel, will give him a bit of advice now. It is not earthshaking advice; it is rather nurturing advice. She wants him to eat some food that

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she will set (מְאֹד) before him in order to strengthen him for what lies ahead (v. 22).\(^{62}\)

This is quite ironic in light of the widow who nourishes Elijah in 1 Kgs 17. She prepares a meal for a “man of God.” Yet, in 1 Samuel 28, it is Samuel not Saul who is the “the man of God.” Saul is not deserving of such; yet, the woman of Endor gives him succor.

Saul, unlike the woman of Endor, is not a good listener. He has failed to listen to the voice of YHWH. What makes her think that he will now listen the voice of a woman, even a divining woman? True to form, Saul does not listen. He refuses her advice and her food (v. 23a). This time, however, the cause may not be stubbornness or rebelliousness as Samuel suggested in his poetry 1 Sam 15:22–23. Saul may have the lost appetite of severe depression. Nevertheless, the woman and Saul’s servants know that he must eat while he remains alive. He needs the strength to face what is to come. They almost forced him to eat (v. 23ab). Only with such intense urging are they able to break through (ָמָלע) to him.\(^{63}\) It takes an imperative mood and strong verb to reach him. I also observe that this verb, in the context of Gen 38:29, maybe translated as “to break, or burst out, from womb.”\(^{64}\) He then listened to their voices (v. 23ba). Thus, we see that the woman of Endor is acting as a mother in her nurturance of him, bringing him out of the darkness of...

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\(^{62}\) I am nothing less than stunned by the suggestion of Reis who argues that the woman of Endor is a witch and has cast a spell over biblical interpreters! Reis, “Eating the Blood,” 3–4. She maintains that the woman is anything but kind, and the shared meal is in the nature of an illegal mantic sacrifice to the dead, which binds the woman and the king together and drives Saul to suicide. Ibid. She wishes to get back at Saul for what he has done in v. 3b. Ibid., 14. While we agree that the meal of the fattened calf has roots in sacrificial rites, Israel clearly had legal funerary rituals.

\(^{63}\) BDB, 829.

\(^{64}\) BDB, 829, s.v. ??.
his denial to the light of awareness, and risking her life in the process. But it is still more than that. It is also part of her wisdom. As Barbara Green states eloquently:

At the level of simple kindness, we have seen nothing like it in the whole narrative. That is not an adequate explanation for her deed, but it is noteworthy that even if only a gracious gesture, it is just about unique. I see it, additionally, as a grace in a deeper sense. Amid various explanations offered, it seems best to me to consider the woman as a wisdom figure, who, through she does not preach at length, has supplicated those in need of her care and prepared a meal for those who listen to her. To feed and strengthen the king is her contribution. Wisdom, as God’s tangible emissary and ancient intimate, consort and advisor of kings, has tendered to the man before her a word he can finally obey.”

This is a highly moving passage, filled with pathos.

With this compelling encouragement, he was able to rise (ךֵּוָה) and sat (שָּׁב) upon the bench (שָׁבָּל) (v. 23bb). Commentators have again used this to sexualize the relationship between Saul and the woman of Endor. They argue that her several reference to herself as his handmaiden suggest that she is in a sexual or conspiratorial relationship with him. They translate שָּׁבָּל as “bed,” rather than “couch” or “bench.” Archaeology finds suggest that only the very wealthy had beds as moderns do. Most slept on mats on the floor. Thus, שָּׁבָּל is much more likely to be a couch or bench in the modern sense. The translator’s choice of “bed” is, therefore, anachronistic and inscribes a sexual meaning that is not in the text. Of course, the word שָּׁבָּל may mean concubine, but it

65 Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 433.

66 See, e.g., Reis who suggests the verb בָּא (“to come in,” “come.” “to go in,” “go”) in v. 21 reflects here its sexual designative meaning (BDB, 97, s.v. 1. d, e) and that the woman of Endor seeks to seduce Saul! Reis, “Eating the Blood,” 13. We suggest that the verbs of departure in vv. 22 and 27 clearly mitigate against that possibility.
has many meanings without explicit designative or more subtle connotative sexual meanings, such as a maid-servant, a slave belonging to a woman, a female menial servant, and most importantly for our purposes word spoken as a token of humility in an address to a person with higher status. Commentators are so busy reading sex into this scene that they miss that Saul is now seated upon a bench in a woman’s house in common attire, instead of being seated upon his throne in royal raiment. The kingship is finished; it is only a matter of time now before Saul dies.

I return, then, to the question: Was this נשים faithful or unfaithful? Did it reveal YHWH’s true word or a false word? Did the woman have a maleficent intention? Was it done in a deceitful manner? Did she falsely accuse anyone before YHWH? Was anyone harmed? Did it actually constitute נשים, the Hebrew cognate of the Akkadian kišpū— witchcraft? I contend that the woman was entirely faithful; she revealed the true words of Samuel and, thus, YHWH; she had only good intentions; she did this in an entirely open and honest manner; she accused no one falsely before YHWH; and no one was harmed. Samuel, Saul, Saul’s servants, and the narrator all accept what she has done. No one casts aspersions onto her, no negative repercussions fall upon her. The result? Saul accepted a truth spoken by YHWH through Samuel that he had refused to accept previously. This is not נשים, it is, indeed, wisdom.

Repeatedly, commentators dismiss, sexualize, and finally demonize the woman of Endor. They are wrong about her. This is a woman of integrity. She can easily meet Job on that count. The text reveals that the woman of Endor is a law-abiding, intelligent,
knowledgeable, trusting, straightforward, attentive, humble, wise, and compassionate woman.  

68 She is not evil.  

69 She is not unfaithful to YHWH in her divining. Instead, she brings the word of YHWH to Saul in a way that he can finally hear. And when her king is on the floor in despair, she is ready to slaughter a calf and make unleavened bread that he may face his death (v. 24).  

70 I simply do not see the witchcraft in any of this.

What I do see is a great deal of white, European, male anxiety about their own sinful nature, women, persons of color, and divine and divinatory powers. Commentators say such things as:

Without a doubt, this chapter as a whole is directed against Saul, and it seems in his fate a well-deserved punishment. It is equally certain that his recourse to the “witch of Endor” is regarded as new proof of the fact of his rejection and thus justification for his rejection.  

That is the Chronicler’s view (1 Chr 10:13), not the view of Dtr. He was the first to express this anxiety. The rabbis in canonizing 1 Samuel 28 as it stands and 1 Chr 10:13, let the polyphony of Dtr and the Hebrew Bible as a whole stand. The Bible contains not one lone voice.

To conclude, any use of the word “witch” in regard to the woman of Endor is slanderous. She has been horribly violated through mistranslation. This also violates the

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68 In accord Angert-Quilter and Wall, “Spirit Wife,” 62, 71; Green, How Are the Mighty Fallen, 433 n. 28.

69 See again the note immediately above.

70 See also Gen 18.

71 Hertzberg, 1 & 2 Samuel, 220.
Hebrew text and whatever anti-imperial sentiments the Bible does express. All of this has had disastrous consequences in Africa.
### CHAPTER SIX

1 SAMUEL 28 AT THE DISANGA:
THREE INCULTURATED TRANSLATIONS
FOR THE AFRICAN CHURCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My English Translation from MT</th>
<th>My French Translation from MT</th>
<th>My Kisanga Translation from MT</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Now Samuel had died and all Israel mourned him, and buried him with rite in Ramah, his village. Saul had forbidden recourse to spirits of the departed and knowing spirits in the nation.</td>
<td>3 Samuel était mort; tout Israël l'avait pleuré, et on l'avait enterré rituellement à Rama, son village. Saül avait interdit le recours aux esprits de ceux qui sont dans l’au-delà et aux esprits connaisseurs dans la nation.</td>
<td>3 Samuel wafwile, ne Israel yense wamudidile, ne kumujika mwaila mbusa Ku Rama, muji wandi. Saul wakenye kuipusha bakishi ne bashayuka mu kyalu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Philistines mustered, and came and encamped at Shunen; Saul mustered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa</td>
<td>4 Les Philistins se rassemblèrent, et vinrent et campèrent à Sunem; Saül rassembla tout Israël, et ils campèrent à Guilboa.</td>
<td>4 Bena Filistia bekongele, ne baishile ne bashikatile mu Shunem; Saul wakongele Israel yense, ne ba shikatile ku Gilboa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 When Saul saw the Philistines’ camp, he was afraid, and he trembled to his very core.</td>
<td>5 À la vue du camp des Philistins, il eut peur, et il trembla avec tout son être.</td>
<td>5 Lwamwene Saul nkambi ya bena Filistia, watinine, ne watutumine ne bumuntu bwandi bonso.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 When Saul searched out the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.</td>
<td>6 Saül consulta l’Éternel, l’Éternel ne lui répondit point, ni par des songes, ni par l'urim, ni par les prophètes.</td>
<td>6 Saul waipwishe Kamana, Kamana kenshi wamulondolweke, mu kiloto, nangwa mu Urim, nangwa na baprofeta.</td>
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367
Now, Saul said to his servants:
“Seek out for me a woman-master of a spirit of the deceased, so that I may go to her and I may inquire by her.”
His servants said to him:
“Behold, there is a woman-master of a spirit of the departed, at En-dor.”

Saul disguised himself and put on other garments, and he went; he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night.
He said: "Please, divine for me by a spirit of the departed, and bring up for me whom I shall tell you!"

The woman said to him:
“Surely, you yourself know what Saul has done, how he has cut off access to spirits of the departed and knowing spirits in the nation. Why then are you setting a trap for my life to bring about my death?”

But Saul swore to her by the LORD saying: “As the LORD lives, no punishment

Saul wialamwine ne wavwadile bisandi bingi, Waile ; aye pamo ne bantu babidi. Bafikile kwi ao mwanamukaji bufuku. Ne kulaka amba: “Ngipwisheko kwi mukishi ne ummangije ye nsa kukubula!”

The woman said to him:
“Certes, tu connais toi-même ce que Saül a fait, comment il a supprimé tout accès aux esprits de ceux qui sont dans l’au-delà et aux esprits connaisseurs dans la nation. Pourquoi donc tends-tu un piège à ma vie pour causer ma mort? ”

Mwanamukaji amba: “Kine, obe mwine wayuka byaubile Saul, byo akenye kuipusha bakishi ne bashayuka mu kyal. Mwanda ka kuteya mu bumi bwami ne kunsakila lufu?”

But Saul swore to her by the LORD saying: “As the LORD lives, no punishment

Saul wialamwine ne wavwadile bisandi bingi, Waile ; aye pamo ne bantu babidi. Bafikile kwi ao mwanamukaji bufuku. Ne kulaka amba: “Ngipwisheko kwi mukishi ne ummangije ye nsa kukubula!”

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But Saul swore to her by the LORD saying: “As the LORD lives, no punishment
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<th>English</th>
<th>French</th>
<th>Swahili</th>
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<tr>
<td>The woman saw Samuel, and she called out with a loud voice; and the woman said to Saul: “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!”</td>
<td>La femme vit Samuel, et elle poussant un grand cri; et la femme dit à Saül: “Pourquoi m'as-tu déçue? Tu es Saül!”</td>
<td>Mwanamukaji wamwene Samuel, ne waitile na diwi dikata; ne mwanamukaji walakile Saul: “Wankosela mwanda ka? Wi Saul!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He said to her: “What is his form?” She said: “An old man is coming up; and he is wrapped in a robe.” Then Saul knew that it was Samuel, he bowed with his face to the ground and prostrated himself.</td>
<td>Il lui dit: “Quelle est sa forme?” Elle dit: “C'est un vieillard qui monte; et il est enveloppé d'un manteau.” Saül comprit que c'était Samuel, il s'inclina le visage contre terre et se prosterna.</td>
<td>Wamwipwishe amba: “Umweka bye?” Aye amba: “I mununu umanga; ne mukumbakanye mu munkukumba.” Saul wayukile amba wadi Samuel, wafukeme mpala panshi ne kupopwela.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Swahili</td>
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<td>“And why do you inquire of me when the LORD has turned away from you and has become your adversary?”</td>
<td>“Pourquoi donc me demandes-tu lorsque l’Éternel s’est retiré de toi et qu’il est devenu ton adversaire?”</td>
<td>“Wangipusha mwanda ka panu pa kuvundamina Kamana kadi dino mulwani obe?”</td>
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<td>“The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by my hand: the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and has given it to your companion, to David.”</td>
<td>“l’Éternel t’a fait juste comme il a parlé par ma main: l’Éternel a arraché la royauté de ta main et l’a donnée à ton ami, à David.”</td>
<td>“Kamana wauba byonka byo alakile mu maboko ami: Kamana wakonsomona bulopwe ku maboko obe ne kwibupana kwi mukwenu, kwi Dawid.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because you did not listen to the voice of the LORD and did not make felt his burning anger against Amalek, thus, the LORD has done this thing to you this day.”</td>
<td>“Parce que tu n’as point écouté la voix de l’Éternel et tu n’as point fait sentir l’ardeur de sa colère contre Amalek, ainsi, l’Éternel t’a traité aujourd’hui.”</td>
<td>“Mwanda obe kenshi watelekele diwi dya Kamana ne kabidi kenshi wamwekeje bukadi bwandi kwi Amalek, ko kulenga, Kamana wakubila ino myanda lelo.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The LORD has given over Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines. And tomorrow, you and your sons will be with me. Moreover, the LORD will give over all the camp”</td>
<td>“L’Ancien a livré Israël et toi entre les mains des Philistins. Et demain, toi et tes fils serez avec moi. En plus, l’Éternel livrera tout le camp”</td>
<td>“Kamana wapana Israel pamo nobe mu maboko a bena Filistia. Ne kensha obe ne bana bope mukekala nami. Kabidi Kamana wapana ne dibumba.”</td>
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of Israel into the hand of the Phillistines.”

d’Israël entre la main des Phillistins.
dya Israel mu kuboko a bena Filistia.

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<tr>
<th>20</th>
<th>Immediately Saul fell prostrate full length on the ground because he was very much afraid of Samuel’s words. Moreover, there was no strength in him for he had not eaten any food all day and all night.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Aussitôt Saül tomba à terre de tout son long parce qu’il avait très peur des paroles de Samuel. En plus, il n’y avait pas de force en lui car il n’avait mangé aucune nourriture tout le jour et toute la nuit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Ponka apo Saul waponene panshi nkwaba-nkwaba pantu watinin lwine mawi a Samuel. Kabidi, kenshi wakidina bulobo, pantu kenshi wadile bidjo kate konso ne bufuku.</td>
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<tr>
<th>21</th>
<th>The woman came to Saul and saw that he was very dismayed, she said to him: “Surely, your maidservant has listened to your voice; I have taken my life in my hand and I have listen to your words which you have said to me.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>La femme vint auprès de Saül et vu qu’il été très troublé, elle lui dit: “Certes, ta servante a écouté ta voix; j’ai placé ma vie dans ma main, j’ai écouté aux paroles que tu m’as dites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mwanamukaji waishile kwi Saul ne wamwene amba wapopomenwe lwine, wamulakile amba: “Kine, mwingidi-kaji obe wateleka diwi dyobe, napana bumi bwami ne kuteleka mawi obe o wandaka;</td>
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<tr>
<th>22</th>
<th>Now, please, you should listen to the voice of your maidservant, let me set a morsel of bread before you. Eat, and then strength will be in you when you go on your way.”</th>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Maintenant, je t’en prie, écoutes la voix de ta servante, et laisse-moi mettre devant toi un morceau de pain. Manges, et la force sera en toi lorsque tu te mets en route.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Ne dino kanshi teleka obe nobe diwi dya mwingidi-kaji obe: nsa kubika mu kyeni kyobe kibese kya mukate. Dya ne bulobo bwiya mube pa kwenda mu dishinda.”</td>
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<tr>
<th>23</th>
<th>Saul refused and said, “I will not eat.” His servants and also woman forced him; he listened to their voice, he arose and sat on the bench.</th>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mais il refusa, et dit: Je ne mangerai point. Ses serviteurs et la femme aussi le forcèrent; et il écouta leur voix, il se leva de terre, et s’assit sur le banc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Saul wakene amba: “kenshi ndye.” Ino lwamukakatije bengidiji bandi ne mwanamukaji; watelekele diwi dyabo, watalukile ne kushikata pa kichi.</td>
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<td>膝膝</td>
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<tr>
<td>24 The woman had a fatted calf in the house. She hastened and slaughtered it. She took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread.</td>
<td>24 La femme avait un veau gras dans la maison. Elle se hâta et le tua. Elle prit de la farine, la pétrit et en cuisit des pains sans levain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 She brought the food before Saul and before his servants. They ate and they rose, and went away that night.</td>
<td>25 Elle mit la nourriture devant Saül et devant ses serviteurs. Ils mangèrent et ils se levèrent, ils partirent la nuit même.</td>
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CHAPTER 7

MEETING AT THE DISANGA OF DIVINATION: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The poet Amadou Koumba in his poem “Les morts ne sont pas morts”¹ advises us that the voices of the dead are many:

Listen more often
To the things than to the beings,
The voice of fire is heard
Listen to the voice in the water…
Listen in the wind
The sobbing bush:
It’s the breath of ancestors.

He is right: the voices of the dead are many, and they speak through many vehicles. One of these is the Hebrew Bible. Our ancient ancestors continue to speak through this text—and they are not one. The Bible does not represent one voice as a monologue but, instead, a community of voices in dialogue with their surrounding cultures and with each other. The polyphony that results is palpable to those who will allow the Bible to sound fully. In regard to divination, no pericope so clearly presents this polyphony than does 1 Samuel 28. We see in v. 3b the view that not everyone in Israel

¹ Birago Diop, Les Contes d’ Amadou Koumba (Dakar: Editions Présence Africaine, 1961), 173-75 (my translation). All the poetry in this chapter is from this poem. See my Appendix D for the full poem in the original French and my full English translation.
supported thaumaturgy. We see in the woman of Endor a sympathetic portrait of a thaumaturgist. The Deuternomic History, in its final form, is not of one mind in regard to divination, particularly thaumaturgy. The vocabulary of divination in 1 Samuel reveals multiple voices, which constitute together a polyvalent ideological context.

Saul represents in this pericope the dialogic voices of our Israelite ancestors. The narrator reveals to us that Saul has attempted to be a characteristic Deuteronomic thinker, much like Josiah, in forbidding the use of the divinatory practice of consulting with either the spirits of the departed or knowing spirits within Israel. Nonetheless, he is not Josiah, and he cannot eliminate all those who consult such spirits. In his struggles, Saul has sought to use, where available, certain communication channels to Yahweh that are clearly acceptable to all religious factions: incubation, the urim, and prophetic voices. Yet, Yahweh does not speak to him now through those channels as he faces the overwhelming Philistine forces. Yahweh is silent. To provoke a word, Saul considers the use of other divinatory means, which he knows are still available. In this, he must acknowledge that his efforts to subdue the dialogic voices in ancient Israel regarding divination have been futile. Although this may seem to some as part of his general weakness or ineptitude, I suggest that this is a positive aspect of his kingship. He remains a king and does not become an emperor or dictator because he cannot—maybe will not—suppress completely the dialogic ideology with respect to divinatory practice. As Saul refuses to effect total genocide and the ban against the Amalekites, as he refuses to use one of the key strategies of empire, he cannot enforce a rule against the full range of divinatory techniques that might silence some of his people and God himself. His efforts
have, therefore, been apparently half-hearted. He knows that those who consult with spirits of the departed and knowing spirits still practice; he just does not know where they are because they have gone underground in the face of his edict. In his unwillingness to hear, he forbade some divinatory practices. The difficulty is that he not only cut off such experts from the land, he also cut himself off from God and the people. Now that he is ready to hear what he has been unwilling to hear since chapter 15, he uses the full range of communication techniques of his people to hear the word of God.

It is a humble and secluded woman to whom he turns in order to hear in the very seat of his being, the seat of his courage, instead of simply quaking there. She is no witch. She has no maleficent intention or goal. She seeks no one’s harm. Rather, she lives according to Saul’s edict. She knows the law and does not intend to break it. Yet, his man swears to protect her from harm, and somehow she comes to trust him. We do not know why precisely. We can only imagine that his urgent oath of protection and his request to bring up Samuel convince her that, in the end, good will come of this. Immediately, Samuel appears, and, when he appears, she realizes that this is no ordinary spirit of the departed or knowing spirit. Rather, it is a godly spirit and, something about him or from him, some secret to which we readers have not been made a part, reveals that she has Saul himself before her. The woman-master’s loud calling reveals the reality of the power unbalance embedded in the fabric of her society and made manifest in her life. Her kind under empire is destined to annihilation. This cry also reveals something else. We know the goodness in her heart when she challenges her king regarding his deception. She indeed took her life in her hand: once to call up the spirit of Samuel; and once again to
take on her king. This reminds us of the wise woman of Tekoa standing before King David in 2 Sam 14:2-22, whom no one calls a witch.

There is no question that, in the text, this woman has the power to raise Samuel, and does so at Saul’s behest. The compliance of the spirit of Seer-Prophet Samuel to the invocation by the woman-master of a spirit reveals a striking reality, namely, the existence of another legitimate way of obtaining divine guidance. Samuel responds to her and arises out of the earth where the spirits of the departed live within the worldview of the ancient Near East into her womb and speaks through her mouth. This narrative is diametrically opposed to the negative connotation ascribed to such actions (the verb $\text{Msq}$ and the means by which she divines an $\text{bw}$) in Deut 18:10-11. Samuel, thus, confirms the woman of Endor’s power and authority. He is, however, perturbed because his peace has been disturbed. With whom is he distressed? Not the woman who raised him. Rather, it is Saul who requested that he be raised. Samuel knows who is to blame here for the disruption.

In fact, no one blames the woman in any way. Saul says he will protect her. Samuel responds to her. No one, not even the narrator, shames or blames her in this pericope. Only the Chronicler places biblical blame in regard to this pericope in 1 Chr 10:13, where he writes that Saul died because he used thaumaturgy. That is not the view of the authors/editors of 1 Samuel 28. Still later commentators are deeply distressed by the fact that Samuel is apparently subject to the woman’s power and can be raised in fact, and that she suffers no consequence. Thus, the pericope has been repeatedly read in a way that shames and blames both the woman of Endor and Saul. Scholars accused her of
seeing a demon. The woman is a witch. She is also sexualized. She is a temptress, a seductress, a co-conspirator, and a witch. Saul deserved his demise because he sought her advice. This is not in the Hebrew of 1 Samuel. The woman of Endor sees and hears no demon; rather, she saw, from my perspective, a *bamfumu* or *bakishi*—indeed she saw *Samuel*. The use of scare quotes around her label by so many recent commentators, including so-called feminist commentators, making her into the “*witch* of Endor” instead of the *witch of Endor*, does nothing to free her from these ancient but undeserved bonds. It only adds *scare* upon “scare.”

This, additionally, minimizes the importance of women in 1 Samuel generally. The language of divination and the divining power of women hold the entire book together. At its beginning stands a woman, Hannah, whose *lusanzo* divinatory prayer is heard and the baby boy Samuel, who will become a great seer-prophet, comes into the world through her womb. Toward the end of the book (where it once stood between chapters 30 and 31), stands the woman-master of a spirit from whose *ventre* the spirit of Samuel speaks. She has the ability to summon Samuel’s spirit. This reveals the existence of an interaction between the natural and the supernatural, the material and the spiritual, prophecy and divination, male and female, God and the people. There is a space, a *disanga*, a type of intersection, in 1 Samuel that is a site where multiple voices are heard, and many of them are female and powerful. 1 Samuel 28 highlights a clear intersection wherein both polyphony and interdependence are at the core.

Moreover, we learn here again that thaumaturgy is not witchcraft *per se* in the worldview of the larger ancient Near East. Some voices in ancient Israel, represented by
Deut 18:10-11, for instance, considered the practice to be idolatrous, polluting, and requiring death. Yet, other voices were not equally convinced. They believed in the power of thaumaturgy to raise even Seer-Prophet Samuel to speak again the word of Yahweh. The ancient rabbis in canonizing this text gave authority to both sets of voices.

Let me return for a moment to the scare upon scare and what we really fear. Modern westerns, it seems to me, fear the departed. Death is now considered to be a failure of modern science and a separation from life. Genesis is read in a way that allows us to feel both distinct from the earth and master over it. 1 Samuel is read similarly. We call the woman, who can cross the *disanga* between life and the beyond, between the human and the other, between king and subject, between disempowerment and power, between fear and service, a witch. In so doing, we deny our connection to all that is. From an African perspective, we deceive ourselves and this denial does not help us.

Those who are dead are never gone
They are in the shade that lights up
And in the shade that thickens,…
They are in the tree that shivers
They are in the wood that groans,…
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd….  
The dead are not dead.
Those who are dead are never gone….

We have used biblical law to argue that the dead are dead and must remain so. They are not around us. They are not in our environment. We cannot hear them. They cannot advise us. We are the individual masters of our destiny. There is no village here, living or dead. We offer up the repressive monologic voice to protect ourselves from death, from life, from faith, from hope, and from the deepest level of our covenant with
God. But from an African perspective, this monologue is not real and the denial at its core does not help us.

The breath of the dead ancestors.  
Who are not gone,  
Who are not underground,  
Who are not dead…  
He repeats every day the pact  
The big pact that binds,  
That binds our destiny to the law;  
To the acts of stronger breaths,  
The destiny of our dead who are not dead;  
The lord pact that binds us to the acts  
Of breaths that are dying.  
In the riverbed and the bank of a river,  
In many breaths that dwell  
In the rock that groans, and the grass that cry…

The woman of Endor is, from a Musanga perspective, made of a stronger breath than western moderns.

And in the water that flows and in the water that sleeps,  
Stronger breaths who took  
The breath of the dead who are not dead,  
The dead who are not gone,  
The dead who are no longer underground.

Our environment holds the breath of all whom (and that) once lived. The woman of Endor remembers and re-members that breath. She raises it, embodies it, to communicate God’s will to Saul when he is finally ready to hear. She harnesses the breath of the deceased Samuel to confront Saul with his deception of not only her, but of himself, and then comforts and strengthens Saul who must go to face his death and the defeat of his people. Can there be, I ask, a better advisor than that? Where is the evil intent? Where is the idolatry? Where is the blasphemy? It is not here; there is only the breath of Samuel.
Translators, standing outside of the language and outside of the culture of the text, struggle to capture the vocabulary of divination and find themselves inclined to favor one set of choir of voices over all others. Thus, the term Msq suffers through translation. In its positive contents it means “faithful divination.” In its negative contexts it means “unfaithful divination.” Moreover, the larger context of 1 Samuel in general shows more than one alternative exists to obtain knowledge or divine guidance. While alive, Samuel functioned as a seer, a diviner, and a prophet, and his spirit can be summoned after his death. 1 Samuel does not show any tension between a seer, diviner, and prophet, whether male or female. Thus, we have lost Samuel through translation. The woman of Endor has been violated through translation. But even more than these, we have lost our way of life through translation. It has been defined, categorized, and denigrated through translation. And we have, finally, lost the voice of God through translation. We need to return to the Hebrew of the text where Samuel and the woman of Endor call us all to:

Listen more often
To the things than the beings...

Or maybe I should say,

Listen more often
To the things of life and the beings of the afterworld
Than simply to the humans that surround us.

I wish I could conclude by saying that, in the Hebrew Bible, conquest theology always fails. It does not. Much work on the Exodus story has revealed that. Conquest theology does not fail entirely here either. Samuel conveys that Saul lost Yahweh’s favor and must die because he refused to comply with Yahweh’s genocidal wishes. This cannot be easily brushed aside as some commentators have done. I think, however, we can resist this
ancient understanding of God by lifting up Saul and the woman of Endor for the ways in which they both resisted empire. Saul was not perfect in this, but he paid a dear price, the ultimate price, for the resistance he did offer. These two characters are important from a postcolonial point of view. I, therefore, suggest that Dtr does not stand for *Dominateur*, nor DH for the *Domination History*. The Deuteronomist permitted—maybe even orchestrated—Deut 18:10-11’s voice, Samuel’s voice, Saul’s voice, and the woman of Endor’s voice, all to sing their sometimes interdependent and sometimes contrapunctual lines. It is a song that, according to Bakhtin, resists empire. From a Musanga, feminist, post-colonial perspective, I must say that the woman of Endor has been maligned and violated consistently and undeservedly in translation and interpretation. I, therefore, end by saying:

We need to listen more often
To the text than to the beings....
EPILOGUE

LESSONS LEARNED AT THE DISANGA

The Bible is a book that contains an ancient wisdom. It was brought to Africa in
the 16th century; 1 it was brought to a place where the Old Testament could be readily
accepted because of the many commonalities that seem to exist between the ancient
wiseoms of Western Asia and Africa. 2 The Bible is a book that finds an easy home

1 See my Prologue, n. 5, supra.

2 A number of early studies focused on these similarities, including: the essays in
K. A. Dickson and P. Elingworth, eds., Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs (London:
Lutherworth, 1969); Samuel G. Kibicho, “The Interaction of the Traditional Kikuyu
Concept of God with the Biblical Concept,” Cahiers des Religiones Africaines 2 (1968):
223–37; John S. Mbiti, “Christian Eschatology in Relation to Evangelization of Tribal
Africa” (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1963); idem, New Testament Eschatology in
an African Background: A Study of the Encounter between New Testament Theology and
African Traditional Concepts (Oxford and London: Oxford University Press, 1971);
Boniface Anthony Osuji, “The Hebrew and Igbo Concept of Religion and Sin Compared
in the Light of Biblical and Rabbinic Material: An Anthropo-Ethnological Study” (Th.D.
diss., Pontifical Urban University, 1967); Raphael Patai, “Hebrew Installation Rites: A
Contribution to the Study of Ancient Near Eastern-African Culture Contact,” Hebrew
Union College Annual 20 (1947): 143–225; idem, “The Ritual Approach to Hebrew-
African Culture Contact,” Jewish Social Studies 24 (1962): 86–96; Prince E. S.
of Theology 2, no. 3 (1962): 1–11; Joseph John Williams, Hebrewism of West Africa:
From Nile to Niger with the Jews (London: George Allen and Unwin; New York: Lincoln
Macvech/Dial Press, 1930). Erich Isaac, however, refutes this type of comparative
method because, he argues, ancient Israel and contemporary Africa are far apart in both
time and space. See Erich Isaac, “Relations between the Hebrew Bible and Africa,”
Jewish Social Studies 26 (1964): 95. I continue to believe, however, that similarities in
among the people of Africa. Unfortunately, Christian European patriarchal, colonial-imperialist translation and interpretation has distorted it over the centuries, and, thus, some of the shared wisdom of Africa and Western Asia has been masked through the translation process, particularly to ordinary readers of the text.

The laity has a right to read the text as it was canonized. Elizabeth Moore argues that, now, ordinary readers must “prove that their insights are somehow ‘biblical.’” In putting it thusly, Moore implies that the western academy controls how we read the text. What this means for Africa is that the academy has attempted to replace the colonial-imperial missionary project in telling Africa how to read the Bible. The readings of the European church are no longer the most significant of all interpretations. Instead, the aspects of the two cultures exist and that the method remains valuable. While some of this early work seems somewhat outdated now, all of it was a critical step in African hermeneutics. See further, n. 4, infra.


David Tuesday Adamo argues that the comparative studies conducted during the early period of African biblical hermeneutics were under the influence of the western model and were geared toward demonstrating the value of studying African native religion and culture and their significance in understanding the Bible. David Tuesday Adamo, “The Historical Development in Biblical Interpretation in Africa,” Old Testament Essay 16 (2003): 12. Such comparative studies were referred to as praeparatio evangelica. Ibid. African biblical scholars were faced with a situation where Eurocentric reading of the Bible dominated, but they took the situation as a starting point. Ibid. Cf. Maarman Sam Tshehla, “Translation and the Vernacular Bible in the Debate between My ‘Traditional’ and Academic Worldviews,” in Orality, Literacy, and Colonialism in South Africa, ed. Jonathan A. Draper (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 171–87.
American and European biblical academy rules how we must interpret the text.  

5 George W. (Tink) Tinker asserts in this regard: “nineteenth-century German imperialism, along with the prominence of German exegetical research continuing into the twentieth century, gave rise to conquest exegesis that has influenced most if not all Euro-American scholarship.”  

6 This has served to distance the text from ordinary readers in Africa.  

7 My hope in this project has been to subvert conquest exegesis and bring this small section of the text back to African people.

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5 As Justin S. Ukpong rightly asserted: “Biblical scholarship in Africa today is therefore to some extent a child of these modern methods of Western biblical scholarship.” Justin S. Ukpong “Developments in Biblical Interpretation in Africa: Historical and Hermeneutical Directions,” Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 108 (2000): 7. He classifies the historical development of biblical hermeneutics in Africa into two sections. First, scholars followed a la lettre the sanctioned biblical interpretive tradition, namely, the historical, form, redaction, and textual critical methods. Ibid. Secondly, scholars followed a newly African cultural hermeneutics. Ibid., 7-8. This new development comprises different perspectives: African comparative perspective, evaluative perspective, African-in-the-Bible perspective, the Bible as power perspective, bibliographical perspective, and contextual-reading with the ordinary people perspective. Ibid., 8.


I do not, however, accomplish this solely through translation. I do this also by recognizing what I believe ought to be, if it is not already, a foundational principle of biblical interpretation in Africa: biblical interpretation has critical points of contact with the divinatory practices of the past—and present. In his article “From the Bible as Bola to Biblical Interpretation as Marabi: Tlhaping Transactions with the Bible,” Gerald O. West reports that, when John Campbell brought the biblical text to Dithakong (“Lattakoo”) in 1813, one of the old men of the Tlhaping people, who may have been a diviner or doctor because he had “dice” (bola?) around his neck, was suspicious of the Bible. He was apprehensive, according to West, because the diviner “assumes that the missionaries book(s) are their equivalent of his ‘dice.’” Later Robert Moffat also had contact with the same people. He said of his encounter: “My books puzzled them…. They asked if they were my ‘Bola,’ prognosticating dice.” They saw the text as another means by which to divine. The wise persons of this tribe threw bones; the missionaries used a book. In discussing this phenomenon, West indicates that more work should be done on “the Bible as bola.” He concludes by stating: “We may throw our bones differently, but that does


9 Ibid., 48.


11 West, “Bible as Bola,” 55.
not mean the interpretations of some of them are more ‘biblical’ than those of (African) others.” In the footnote to this comment, he adds:

This formulation is more insightful than I had imagined, for…Jonathan Z. Smith has argued that “the relationship between canon and hermeneute is perhaps best illustrated by practices of divination: the genius of the diviner lies in matching the relatively fixed ‘canon’ of divinatory objects to the clients particular situation.”

Dube also speaks of the Bible in terms of divination. In discussing the many readings of Ruth, she asserts:

These readers attest that Ruth, like any other text, is a mine or mosaic of social relations, where readers can take their pick…. These social relations are magnetic, drawing many readers precisely because they see and relate these social relations to their own social relationships. The book of Ruth, in other words, divines its readers, confirming or confronting their experiences and offering alternatives.

West, Smith, and Dube are all pointing to a vital aspect of biblical interpretation, especially in the African context. The Bible is, in Dube’s words, “a divining set” and reading it “is an ethical art that entails the production of knowledge. It requires substantial understanding of social relationship and that one attends to the

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12 Ibid., 55.


interdependence of all relationships."\textsuperscript{15} The Bible meets divination at a \textit{disanga}. There is no unbridgeable chasm here. To deny that \textit{disanga} is to distance and degrade those cultures that both read the Bible and practice divination.

This brings me to what I have learned from this project. I apply, each and every day, a fixed canon of religious texts, the Bible, written in an alien tongue, translated into another alien tongue, to the real life situations of my predominantly African American Texan parishioners and all others with whom I come in contact. I read the Bible with them in a way that reveals the will of God, brings answers to people and helps them make difficult decisions, casts out demons, confronts evil, brings comfort to the suffering and courage to the anxious, heals the many wounds that life brings whether via supernatural or natural forces, and always, always hears the voices of our long gone ancestors of both Africa and Israel. I divine.

I have my mother’s gift, after all. I am the \textit{il-elle} of my parents, standing in the \textit{disanga} of male and female, of Africa and the West, of theory and praxis, of the church and the academy, of the past, present, and future, and of the Bible and divination. My parents can now truly rest in peace, because I am theirs. I divine.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 184.
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APPENDIX A

A CATALOGUE OF נדב AND RELATED VOCABULARY OF DIVINATION IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

1. נדב and נדב
1.1. נדב and נדב in the Torah

LEVITICUS 19:31

KJV Regard not them that have familiar spirits, neither seek after wizards, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

RSV Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

NRSV Do not turn to mediums or wizards; do not seek them out, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

LEVITICUS 20:6

KJV And the soul that turneth after such as have familiar spirits, and after wizards, to go a whoring after them, I will even set my face against that soul, and will cut him off from among his people.

RSV If a person turns to mediums and wizards, playing the harlot after them, I will set my face against that person, and will cut him off from among his people.

NRSV If any turn to mediums and wizards, prostituting themselves to them, I will set my face against them, and will cut them off from the people.
LEVITICUS 20:27

A man also or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death: they shall stone them with stones: their blood shall be upon them.

RSV A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be upon them.

NRSV A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned to death, their blood is upon them.

DEUTERONOMY 18:11

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

RSV or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

NRSV … one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead.

1.2. ידועי and ידוענים in the Prophetic Material

1 SAMUEL 28:3

Now Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And Saul had put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land.

RSV Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. And Saul had put the mediums and the wizards out of the land.

NRSV Now Samuel had died, and all Israel had mourned for him and buried him in Ramah, his own city. Saul had expelled the mediums and the wizards from the land.

1 ידועי does not appear in 1 Chr 10:13 and 23:24.
1 Samuel 28:9

KJV And the woman said unto him, Behold, thou knowest what Saul hath done, how he hath cut off those that have familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land: wherefore then layest thou a snare for my life, to cause me to die?

RSV The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?”

NRSV The woman said to him, “Surely you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off the mediums and the wizards from the land. Why then are you laying a snare for my life to bring about my death?”

2 Kings 21:6

KJV And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV And he burned his son as an offering, and practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

2 Kings 23:24

KJV Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

RSV Moreover Josiah put away the mediums and the wizards and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that
he might establish the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

NRSV  Moreover Josiah put away the mediums, wizards, teraphim, idols, and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, so that he established the words of the law that were written in the book that the priest Hilkiah had found in the house of the LORD.

ISAIAH 8:19

KJV And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?

RSV And when they say to you, “Consult the mediums and the wizards who chirp and mutter,” should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living?

NRSV Now if people say to you, “Consult the ghosts and the familiar spirits that chirp and mutter; should not a people consult their gods, the dead on behalf of the living,

ISAIAH 19:3

KJV And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst thereof; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek to the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards.

RSV and the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their plans; and they will consult the idols and the sorcerers, and the mediums and the wizards;

NRSV the spirit of the Egyptians within them will be emptied out, and I will confound their plans; they will consult the idols and the spirits of the dead and the ghosts and the familiar spirits;
1.3. ינשָׁא in the Prophetic Material

1 Samuel 28:7

Then said Saul unto his servants, Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and enquire of her. And his servants said to him, Behold, there is a woman that hath a familiar spirit at Endor.

RSV  Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.” And his servants said to him, “Behold, there is a medium at Endor.”

NRSV  Then Saul said to his servants, “Seek out for me a woman who is a medium, so that I may go to her and inquire of her.” His servants said to him, “There is a medium at Endor.”

1 Samuel 28:8

And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.

RSV  So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments, and went, he and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.”

NRSV  So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, “Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you.”
ISAIAH 29:4

And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

KJV And thou shalt be brought down, and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be, as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust.

RSV Then deep from the earth you shall speak, from low in the dust your words shall come; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

NRSV Then deep from the earth you shall speak, from low in the dust your words shall come; your voice shall come from the ground like the voice of a ghost, and your speech shall whisper out of the dust.

1.4. בנствие ל formulaire in the Writings

2 CHRONICLES 33:6

And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

KJV And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV And he burned his sons as an offering in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV He made his son pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

1.5. בָּשֶׁר in the Writings

JOB 32:19

Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

KJV Behold, my belly is as wine which hath no vent; it is ready to burst like new bottles.
RSV Behold, my heart is like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst.

NRSV My heart is indeed like wine that has no vent; like new wineskins, it is ready to burst.

1 CHRONICLES 10:13

KJV So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, even against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it;

RSV So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD, and also consulted a medium, seeking guidance,

NRSV So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD; moreover, he had consulted a medium, seeking guidance,

1 CHRONICLES 23:24

KJV These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward.

RSV These were the sons of Levi by their fathers’ houses, the heads of fathers’ houses as they were registered according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward who were to do the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

NRSV These were the sons of Levi by their ancestral houses, the heads of families as they were enrolled according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward who were to do the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

2.

2.1 in the Torah

NUMBERS 22:7

A-7
And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came unto Balaam, and spake unto him the words of Balak.

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak’s message.

So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak’s message.

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!

For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘What has God wrought!’

Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘See what God has done!’

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer.

Balaam also the son of Beor, the soothsayer, did the children of Israel slay with the sword among them that were slain by them.

2.2. בָּלָא in the Prophetic Material
RSV  Balaam also, the son of Beor, the soothsayer, the people of Israel killed with the sword among the rest of their slain.

NRSV  Along with the rest of those they put to death, the Israelites also put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination.

1 SAMUEL 6:2

KJV  And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the LORD? tell us wherewith we shall send it to his place.

RSV  And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us with what we shall send it to its place.”

NRSV  Then the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners and said, “What shall we do with the ark of the LORD? Tell us what we should send with it to its place.”

1 SAMUEL 15:23

KJV  For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

RSV  “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”

NRSV  “For rebellion is no less a sin than divination, and stubbornness is like iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has also rejected you from being king.”

1 SAMUEL 28:8

KJV  And Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment, and he went, and two men with him, and they came to the woman by night: and he said, I pray thee, divine unto me by the familiar spirit, and bring me him up, whom I shall name unto thee.
So Saul disguised himself and put on other garments, and went, he and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said, “Divine for me by a spirit, and bring up for me whomever I shall name to you.”

So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes and went there, he and two men with him. They came to the woman by night. And he said, “Consult a spirit for me, and bring up for me the one whom I name to you.”

And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings, and used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

The mighty man, and the man of war, the judge, and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient,

the mighty man and the soldier, the judge and the prophet, the diviner and the elder,

… warrior and soldier, judge and prophet, diviner and elder …

That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish;

who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns wise men back, and makes their knowledge foolish;
...who frustrates the omens of liars, and makes fools of diviners; who turns back the wise, and makes their knowledge foolish;

JEREMIAH 14:14

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

And the LORD said to me: “The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.”

And the LORD said to me: The prophets are prophesying lies in my name; I did not send them, nor did I command them or speak to them. They are prophesying to you a lying vision, worthless divination, and the deceit of their own minds.

Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, who are saying to you, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’

You, therefore, must not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.
For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams which they dream,

For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let the prophets and the diviners who are among you deceive you, and do not listen to the dreams that they dream,

For there shall be no more any vain vision nor flattering divination within the house of Israel.

For there shall be no more any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

For there shall no longer be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

They have seen vanity and lying divination, saying, The LORD saith: and the LORD hath not sent them: and they have made others to hope that they would confirm the word.

They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie; they say, ‘Says the LORD,’ when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfil their word.

They have envisioned falsehood and lying divination; they say, “Says the LORD,” when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they wait for the fulfillment of their word!

They have spoken falsehood and divined a lie; they say, ‘Says the LORD,’ when the LORD has not sent them, and yet they expect him to fulfil their word.

Have ye not seen a vain vision, and have ye not spoken a lying divination, whereas ye say, The LORD saith it; albeit I have not spoken?

“Have you not seen a delusive vision, and uttered a lying divination, whenever you have said, ‘Says the LORD,’ although I have not spoken?”

Have you not seen a false vision or uttered a lying divination, when you have said, “Says the LORD,” even though I did not speak?
EZEKIEL 13:9

And mine hand shall be upon the prophets that see vanity, and that divine lies: they shall not be in the assembly of my people, neither shall they be written in the writing of the house of Israel, neither shall they enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord GOD.

EZEKIEL 13:23

Therefore ye shall see no more vanity, nor divine divinations: for I will deliver my people out of your hand: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

EZEKIEL 21:26

For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.
NRSV  For the king of Babylon stands at the parting of the way, at the fork in the two roads, to use divination; he shakes the arrows, he consults the teraphim, he inspects the liver.

EZEKIEL 21:27  

KJV  At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mount, and to build a fort.

RSV  Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to open the mouth with a cry, to lift up the voice with shouting, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up mounds, to build siege towers.

NRSV  Into his right hand comes the lot for Jerusalem, to set battering rams, to call out for slaughter, for raising the battle cry, to set battering rams against the gates, to cast up ramps, to build siege towers.

EZEKIEL 21:28  

KJV  And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.

RSV  But to them it will seem like a false divination; they have sworn solemn oaths; but he brings their guilt to remembrance, that they may be captured.

NRSV  But to them it will seem like a false divination; they have sworn solemn oaths; but he brings their guilt to remembrance, bringing about their capture.

EZEKIEL 22:28  

KJV  And her prophets have daubed them with untempered morter, seeing vanity, and divining lies unto them, saying, Thus saith the Lord GOD, when the LORD hath not spoken.

RSV  And her prophets have daubed for them with whitewash, seeing false visions and divining lies for them, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,’ when the LORD has not spoken.
NRSV  Its prophets have smeared whitewash on their behalf, seeing false visions and
divining lies for them, saying, “Thus says the Lord GOD,” when the LORD has not spoken.

MICAH 3:6

KJV Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be
dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and
the day shall be dark over them.

RSV Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without
divination. The sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them;

NRSV Therefore it shall be night to you, without vision, and darkness to you, without
revelation. The sun shall go down upon the prophets, and the day shall be black over them;

MICAH 3:7

KJV Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all
cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.

RSV the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover
their lips, for there is no answer from God.

NRSV the seers shall be disgraced, and the diviners put to shame; they shall all cover
their lips, for there is no answer from God.

MICAH 3:11

KJV The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the
prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the
LORD among us? none evil can come upon us.

RSV Its heads give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine
for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, “Is not the LORD in the midst of us?
No evil shall come upon us.”

NRSV Its rulers give judgment for a bribe, its priests teach for a price, its prophets give
oracles for money; yet they lean upon the LORD and say, “Surely the LORD is with us!
No harm shall come upon us.”
Zech 10:2

KJV For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

RSV For the teraphim utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; the dreamers tell false dreams, and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they are afflicted for want of a shepherd.

NRSV For the teraphim utter nonsense, and the diviners see lies; the dreamers tell false dreams, and give empty consolation. Therefore the people wander like sheep; they suffer for lack of a shepherd.

Proverbs 16:10

KJV A divine sentence is in the lips of the king: his mouth transgresseth not in judgment.

RSV Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment.

NRSV Inspired decisions are on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment.

Gen 30:27

KJV And Laban said unto him, I pray thee, if I have found favour in thine eyes, tarry: for I have learned by experience that the LORD hath blessed me for thy sake.

RSV But Laban said to him, “If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you;”

NRSV But Laban said to him, “If you will allow me to say so, I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you;”

A-16
GENESIS 44:5

KJV Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth? ye have done evil in so doing.

RSV "Is it not from this that my lord drinks, and by this that he divines? You have done wrong in so doing.'"

NRSV "Is it not from this that my lord drinks? Does he not indeed use it for divination? You have done wrong in doing this.'"

GENESIS 44:15

KJV And Joseph said unto them, What deed is this that ye have done? wot ye not that such a man as I can certainly divine?

RSV Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that such a man as I can indeed divine?”

NRSV Joseph said to them, “What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?”

LEVITICUS 19:26

KJV Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

RSV “You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft.”

NRSV You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft.

NUMBERS 23:23

KJV Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought!
RSV For there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘What has God wrought!’

NRSV Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, no divination against Israel; now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, ‘See what God has done!’

DEUTERONOMY 18:10

KJV There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

RSV There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

NRSV No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

3.2. נַחֲמָה in the Prophetic Material

1 KINGS 20:33

KJV Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

RSV Now the men were watching for an omen, and they quickly took it up from him and said, “Yes, your brother Benhadad.” Then he said, “Go and bring him.” Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

NRSV Now the men were watching for an omen; they quickly took it up from him and said, “Yes, Ben-hadad is your brother.” Then he said, “Go and bring him.” So Ben-hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot.

2 KINGS 17:17

KJV And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.
RSV  And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings, and used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV  They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

2 KINGS 21:6

KJV  And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV  And he burned his son as an offering, and practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV  He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

3.3. ונה in the Writings

2 CHRONICLES 33:6

KJV  And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV  And he burned his sons as an offering in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV  He made his son pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.
4. [מָנוֹר] in the Torah

**Leviticus 19:26**

KJV: Ye shall not eat any thing with the blood: neither shall ye use enchantment, nor observe times.

RSV: “You shall not eat any flesh with the blood in it. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft.”

NRSV: You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice augury or witchcraft.

**Deuteronomy 18:10**

KJV: There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

RSV: There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

NRSV: No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer . . ..

**Deuteronomy 18:14**

KJV: For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

RSV: For these nations, which you are about to dispossess, give heed to soothsayers and to diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not allowed you so to do.

NRSV: Although these nations that you are about to dispossess do give heed to soothsayers and diviners, as for you, the LORD your God does not permit you to do so.
4.2. in Prophetic Material

2 KINGS 21:6

And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV  And he burned his son as an offering, and practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

JUDGES 9:37

And Gaal spake again and said, See there come people down by the middle of the land, and another company come along by the plain of Meonenim.

RSV  Gaal spoke again and said, “Look, men are coming down from the center of the land, and one company is coming from the direction of the Diviners’ Oak.”

NRSV  Gaal spoke again and said, “Look, people are coming down from Tabbur-erez, and one company is coming from the direction of Elon-meonenim.”

ISAIAH 2:6

Therefore thou hast forsaken thy people the house of Jacob, because they be replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers.

RSV  For thou hast rejected thy people, the house of Jacob, because they are full of diviners from the east and of soothsayers like the Philistines, and they strike hands with foreigners.

NRSV  For you have forsaken the ways of your people, O house of Jacob. Indeed they are full of diviners from the east and of soothsayers like the Philistines, and they clasp hands with foreigners.
ISAIAH 57:3

KJV  But draw near hither, ye sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore.

RSV  But you, draw near hither, sons of the sorceress, offspring of the adulterer and the harlot.

NRSV  But as for you, come here, you children of a sorceress, you offspring of an adulterer and a whore.

JEREMIAH 27:9

KJV  Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

RSV  So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’

NRSV  You, therefore, must not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’

MICAH 5:11

KJV  And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more soothsayers:

RSV  and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more soothsayers;

NRSV  and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more soothsayers;

5. בָּֽאָשֶׁר

5.1. בָּֽאָשֶׁר in the Torah
EXODUS 7:11

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

RSV Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts.

NRSV Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts.

EXODUS 22:17

Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.

RSV “You shall not permit a sorceress to live.”

NRSV You shall not permit a female sorcerer to live.

DEUTERONOMY 18:10

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

RSV There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

NRSV No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,

5.2. לָשׁוּן in the Prophetic Material

2 KINGS 9:22

And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?
RSV   And when Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” He answered, “What peace can there be, so long as the harlotries and the sorceries of your mother Jezebel are so many?”

NRSV   When Joram saw Jehu, he said, “Is it peace, Jehu?” He answered, “What peace can there be, so long as the many whoredoms and sorceries of your mother Jezebel continue?”

ISAIAH 47:9

ISAIAH 47:12

KJV   Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

RSV   Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror.

NRSV   Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror.

JEREMIAH 27:9
KJV  Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your
dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye
shall not serve the king of Babylon:

RSV  So do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers,
or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king of Babylon.’

NRSV  You, therefore, must not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers,
your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who are saying to you, ‘You shall not serve the king
of Babylon.’

MICAH 5:11  

KJV  And I will cut off witchcrafts out of thine hand; and thou shalt have no more
soothsayers:

RSV  and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more
soothsayers;

NRSV  and I will cut off sorceries from your hand, and you shall have no more
soothsayers;

NAHUM 3:4  

KJV  Because of the multitude of the whoredoms of the wellfavoured harlot, the
mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through
her witchcrafts.

RSV  And all for the countless harlotries of the harlot, graceful and of deadly charms,
who betrays nations with her harlotries, and peoples with her charms.

NRSV  Because of the countless debaucheries of the prostitute, gracefully alluring,
mistress of sorcery, who enslaves nations through her debaucheries, and peoples through
her sorcery … .

MALACHI 3:5  

KJV  And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the
sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that
oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the
stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.

RSV  “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against the
sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who
oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who thrust
aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.”

NRSV  Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against
the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who
oppress the hired workers in their wages, the widow and the orphan, against those who
thrust aside the alien, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts.

5.3. הָלָּכָה in the Writings

DANIEL 2:2

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the
sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood
before the king.

RSV  Then the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and
the Chaldeans be summoned, to tell the king his dreams. So they came in and stood
before the king.

NRSV  So the king commanded that the magicians, the enchanters, the sorcerers, and the
Chaldeans be summoned to tell the king his dreams. When they came in and stood before
the king,

6. מְעַבְּרִי בָּנֹרְבוֹת בָּאָם

6.1. מְעַבְּרִי בָּנֹרְבוֹת בָּאָם in the Torah

DEUTERONOMY 18:10

There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter
to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter,
or a witch,

RSV  There shall not be found among you any one who burns his son or his daughter as
an offering, any one who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer,
NRSV  No one shall be found among you who makes a son or daughter pass through fire, or who practices divination, or is a soothsayer, or an augur, or a sorcerer….

6.2. מְעַבְּדוּ בְּעָרוֹבָּם בְּאָלָם in the Prophetic Material

2 KINGS 16:3

KJV  But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

RSV  but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even burned his son as an offering, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

NRSV  but he walked in the way of the kings of Israel. He even made his son pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel.

2 KINGS 17:17

KJV  And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

RSV  And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings, and used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV  They made their sons and their daughters pass through fire; they used divination and augury; and they sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

2 KINGS 21:6

KJV  And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.
RSV  And he burned his son as an offering, and practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

NRSV  He made his son pass through fire; he practiced soothsaying and augury, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger.

2 KINGS 23:10

KJV  And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

RSV  And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the sons of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.

NRSV  He defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so that no one would make a son or a daughter pass through fire as an offering to Molech.

7. הָרְבֵּר הֶבֶר
7.1. הָרְבֵּר הֶבֶר in the Torah

DEUTERONOMY 18:11

KJV  Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

RSV  or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

NRSV  or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead.

7.2. הָרְבֵּר הֶבֶר in the Prophetic Material

ISAIAH 47:9

KJV  But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.
RSV  These two things shall come to you in a moment, in one day; the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.

NRSV  both these things shall come upon you in a moment, in one day: the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries and the great power of your enchantments.

ISAIAH 47:12  

RSV  Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror.

NRSV  Stand fast in your enchantments and your many sorceries, with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror.

7.3.  תַּאֲוִים  in the Writings

PSALM 58:6  

KJV  Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

RSV  so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.

NRSV  so that it does not hear the voice of charmers or of the cunning enchanter.

8.  נָּשָּׁאָל  אָבָּבִּיֲנֵי

8.1.  נָּשָּׁאָל  אָבָּבִּיֲנֵי  in the Hebrew Bible

DEUTERONOMY 18:11  

KJV  Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

RSV  or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

A-29
or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead.

9. רוח אל-הממות
9.1. רוח אל-הממות in the Hebrew Bible

DEUTERONOMY 18:11

Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

RSV or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

NRSV or one who casts spells, or who consults ghosts or spirits, or who seeks oracles from the dead.

10. חבּו
10.1. חבּו in the Torah

GENESIS 41:8

And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

RSV So in the morning his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men; and Pharaoh told them his dream, but there was none who could interpret it to Pharaoh.

NRSV In the morning his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh.

GENESIS 41:33

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.
RSV  Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

NRSV  Now therefore let Pharaoh select a man who is discerning and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

GENESIS 41:39

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

RSV  So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is none so discreet and wise as you are;”

NRSV  So Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has shown you all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you.”

EXODUS 7:11

Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments.

RSV  Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts.

NRSV  Then Pharaoh summoned the wise men and the sorcerers; and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same by their secret arts.

10.2. המקרא in the Prophetic Material

1 KINGS 5:9

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

RSV  And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and largeness of mind like the sand on the seashore,
NRSV  God gave Solomon very great wisdom, discernment, and breadth of understanding as vast as the sand on the seashore,

1 KINGS 5:10

And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

RSV  so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

NRSV  so that Solomon’s wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

1 KINGS 5:11

For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

KJV  For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

RSV  For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the nations round about.

NRSV  He was wiser than anyone else, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, children of Mahol; his fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations.

1 KINGS 5:14

And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

KJV  And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

RSV  And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

NRSV  People came from all the nations to hear the wisdom of Solomon; they came from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

ISAIAH 3:3

And the makers of evil devices are instructed by it; so is all who speak wickedness.
The captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator.

The captain of fifty and the man of rank, the counselor and the skilful magician and the expert in charms.

captain of fifty and dignitary, counselor and skillful magician and expert enchanter.

Surely the princes of Zoan are fools, the counsel of the wise counsellors of Pharaoh is become brutish: how say ye unto Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings?

The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, “I am a son of the wise, a son of ancient kings”?

The princes of Zoan are utterly foolish; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give stupid counsel. How can you say to Pharaoh, “I am one of the sages, a descendant of ancient kings”?

Where are they? where are thy wise men? and let them tell thee now, and let them know what the LORD of hosts hath purposed upon Egypt.

Where then are your wise men? Let them tell you and make known what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.

Where now are your sages? Let them tell you and make known what the LORD of hosts has planned against Egypt.

A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men.
RSV  "A sword upon the Chaldeans, says the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes and her wise men!"

NRSV  A sword against the Chaldeans, says the LORD, and against the inhabitants of Babylon, and against her officials and her sages!

10.3. הָבֶּן in the Writings

ESTHER 1:13

KJV  Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king’s manner toward all that knew law and judgment: …)

RSV  Then the king said to the wise men who knew the times—for this was the king’s procedure toward all who were versed in law and judgment,

NRSV  Then the king consulted the sages who knew the laws (for this was the king’s procedure toward all who were versed in law and custom …)
APPENDIX B

1. The Negativity Embedded in the Vocabulary of Divination as Portrayed in LSG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Translation of the LSG</th>
<th>The LSG</th>
<th>My Kisanga Translation of the LSG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Samuel had died; and all Israel had mourned for him, and buried him in Rama, his own city. Saul had expelled from the country those who invoked the dead and those who predicted the future.</td>
<td>3 Samuel était mort; tout Israël l'avait pleuré, et on l'avait enterré à Rama, dans sa ville. Saül avait ôté du pays ceux qui évoquaient les morts et ceux qui prédisaient l'avenir.</td>
<td>3Samuel wafwile, ne Israel yense wamudidile ne kumujika ku Rama mu muji wandi. Saul wafumije kala bakuita bafu ne badimbi-dimbi mu kyang.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Philistines assembled, and came and encamped at Shunem; Saul gathered all Israel, and they encamped at Gilboa.</td>
<td>4 Les Philistins se rassemblèrent, et vinrent camper à Shunem ; Saül rassembla tout Israël, et ils campèrent à Guilboa.</td>
<td>4Bena Filistia bekongele, baile ne kushimika nkambi ku Shunem; Saul wakongele Israel yense ne kushimika nkambi ku Gilboa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 At seeing the camp of the Philistines, Saul was seized by fear, and a violent quake took a hold of his heart.</td>
<td>5 À la vue du camp des Philistins, Saül fut saisi de crainte, et un violent tremblement s'empara de son cœur.</td>
<td>5Lwamwene Saul nkambi ya bena Filistia, watinine, ne mutima wandi watatumine lwine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Saul consulted the LORD; and the LORD did not answer him, not by dreams, or by Urim, or by prophets.</td>
<td>6 Saül consulta l'Éternel ; et l'Éternel ne lui répondit point, ni par des songes, ni par l'urim, ni par les prophètes.</td>
<td>6Saul waipwishe Kamana; ino Kamana kenshi wamulondolweke, mu kiloto, mu Urim, nangwa na baprofeta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Shona</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 And Saul said to his servants: Seek out for me a woman who invokes the dead, and I will go to consult her. His servants said to him: Look, at Endor there is a woman who invokes the dead.</td>
<td>Et Saül dit à ses serviteurs : Cherchez-moi une femme qui évoque les morts, et j'irai la consulter. Ses serviteurs lui dirent : Voici, à En-Dor il y a une femme qui évoque les morts.</td>
<td>Pano Saul wakambije bantu bandi amba : Nsakilei mwanamukaji wita bafu, ngeye-konkepuse. Bantu bandi bamulondolweke amba : Tala, kudi mwanamukaji umo wita Bafu ku Endor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and went with two men. They arrived to the woman by night. Saul said to her: Predict the future for me by invoking a dead, and bring up for me whom I tell you.</td>
<td>Alors Saül se déguisa et prit d'autres vêtements, et il partit avec deux hommes. Ils arrivèrent de nuit chez la femme. Saül lui dit : Prédisc-moi l'avenir en évoquant un mort, et fais-moi monter celui que je te dirai.</td>
<td>Saul wavwadile bisandi bingi, waile aye pamo ne bantu babidi. Bafikile kwi ao mwanamukaji bufuku ne kulaka amba : Mbupe na kuita mufu, ne ummangije ye nsa kukubula.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 The woman said to him: Look, you know what Saul has done, how he has cut off from the country those who invoked the dead and those who predict the future. Why then are you laying a trap for my life to cause me to die?</td>
<td>La femme lui répondit: Voici, tu sais ce que Saül a fait, comment il a retranché du pays ceux qui évoquent les morts et ceux qui prédissent l'avenir. Pourquoi donc tends-tu un piège à ma vie pour me faire mourir?</td>
<td>Mwanamukaji wamulondolweke amba : Tala, Obe mwine wayuka byaubile Saul, byo afumije mu kyallo beta bafu ne badimbi-dimbi. Mwanda ka usaka kunteya ne kungipaija?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 But Saul swore to her by the LORD, saying: The LORD is alive! Nothing bad shall come upon you for that.</td>
<td>Saül lui jura par l'Éternel, en disant: L'Éternel est vivant! il ne t'arrivera point de mal pour cela.</td>
<td>Pano Saul wamutipile mwi Kamana, amba: Ne Kamana yenka! kutupu kikakufikila</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 The woman said: Whom do you want me to bring up for you? He answered: Bring up Samuel for me.</td>
<td>La femme dit: Qui veux-tu que je te fasse monter? Et il répondit: Fais-moi monter Samuel.</td>
<td>Mwanamukaji waipwishe amba: Nkumangije ani? Aye amba: Mnangije Samuel!</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>When the woman saw Samuel, she shouted with a loud voice, and said to Saul: Why have you lied to me? You are Saul!</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>The king said to her: Do not fear; what do you see? The woman said to Saul: I see a god coming up out of the earth.</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>He said to her: What is his appearance? She replied: It is an old man who is coming up and he is wrapped in a coat.&quot; Saul understood that it was Samuel, and he bowed with his face to the ground and bent himself over in sign of adoration.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Samuel said to Saul: Why have you disturbed me by causing me to come up? Saul answered: I am in great distress: the Philistines are warring against me, and God has withdrawn from me; he has not answered me either by prophets or by dreams. And I have called so that you make known to me what I must do.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Samuel said: Why then do you consult me, since the LORD has withdrawn from you and has become your enemy</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>The LORD is treating you just as I had announced it to you on his behalf; the LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hands, and given it to another, to David.</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>You did not obey the voice of the LORD, and did not make Amalek feel his fierce wrath: this is why the LORD is treating you in this manner today.</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>And the LORD will give Israel along with you into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow, you and your sons, you shall be with me, and the LORD will give the camp of Israel into the hands of the Philistines.</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground, and Samuel’s words filled him with fear; moreover, he did not have strength, for he had not taken any food all day and all night.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21 The woman came to Saul, and seeing that he was terrified, she said to him: Look, your maidservant has listened to your voice; I have exposed my life, in obeying the words that you have said to me.

21 La femme vint auprès de Saül, et le voyant très effrayé, elle lui dit: Voici, ta servante a écouté ta voix; j'ai exposé ma vie, en obéissant aux paroles que tu m'as dites.

21Lwafwenene mwanamukaji kwi Saul, ne kumona amba wapopomenwe lwine, wamulakile amba: “Mona, ami mwingidi-kaji obe nateleka diwi dyobe; napana bumi bwami, ne kuteleka mawi obe o wandaka.

22 Listen now, you also, to the voice of your servant; and let me offer you a morsel of bread, in order that you may eat to have strength and go on your way.

22 Écoutes maintenant, toi aussi, la voix de ta servant; et laisse-moi t'offrir un morceau de pain, afin que tu manges pour avoir la force de te mettre en route.

22Ne dino kanshi, teleka obe nobe, diwi dya mwingidi-kaji obe; nsa kubika mu kyeni kyobe kibese kya mukate,udye umone bulobo pa kwenda mu dishinda.

23 But he refused, and said: I will not eat. His servants and the woman also, urged him, and he listened to their orders. He got up from the ground, and sat on the bed.

23 Mais il refusa, et dit: Je ne mangerai point. Ses serviteurs et la femme aussi, le pressèrent, et il se rendit à leurs instances. Il se leva de terre, et s'assit sur le lit.


24 The woman had a fatted calf, which she quickly slaughtered; and she took flour, kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread.

24 La femme avait chez elle un veau gras, qu'elle s'ha de tuer; et elle prit de la farine, la pétrit, et en cuisit des pains sans levain.

24Ao mwanamukaji wadi na mwana wa nombe munune, wamwipaile lubilo-lubilolo; wapokele bukula, wibukatabenye, nekusoka mikate ya kubulwa kitutumujo

25 She put them before Saul and his servants. And they ate. Then, they rose and went away the same night.


25Wibifweneje mu kyeni kya Saul ne kya bantu bandi. Badile ne kuya bonka abo bufuku.
2. The Negativity Embedded in the Vocabulary of Divination in Kisanga

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My Translation of the Kisanga</th>
<th>My French Translation of Kisanga</th>
<th>The Current Kisanga</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Samuel had died, and all Israel mourned him and buried him in Ramah, his village. Saul had already removed those who were possessed by evil spirits and those who practiced fetishism from the nation.</td>
<td>3 Samuel était mort, tout Israël l'avait pleuré, et on l'avait enterré à Rama, son village. Saül avait déjà ôté du pays ceux qui étaient possédés par des mauvais esprits et les féticheurs</td>
<td>3 Samuel wafwile, ne Israel yense wamudidile ne kumujika ku Rama mu muji wandi. Saül wafumije kala bilumbu ne bañaanga mu kyalo.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The Philistines assembled, and went and built a camp in Shunen; Saul gathered all Israel and built a camp at Gilboa.</td>
<td>4 Les Philistins se rassemblèrent, et allèrent et construisirent un camp à Sunem; Saül rassembla tout Israël et ils construisirent un camp à Guilboa.</td>
<td>4 Bena Filistia bekongele, baile ne kushimika nkambi ku Shunem; Saül wakongele Israel yense ne kushimika nkambi ku Gilboa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 When Saul saw the Philistines’ camp, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly.</td>
<td>5 Lorsque Saül vit le camp des Philistins, il fut saisi de peur, et son cœur trembla fortement.</td>
<td>5 Lwamwene Saul nkambi ya bena Filistia, watinine, ne mutima wandi watutumine lwine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Saul had inquired of the LORD, but She-He did not answer him, not by dream, or by counting the Urim, or by prophets.</td>
<td>6 Saül consulta l’Éternel, but et Elle-Il ne lui répondit point ni par songe, ni par compter l’urim, ni par les prophètes.</td>
<td>6 Saül waipwishe Kamana, ino kenshi wamulondo lwike mu kiloto, na bubale bwa Urim nangwa na baprofeta.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Now, Saul said to his people: “Seek out for me a woman possessed by an evil spirit, so that I may go there to inquire!” His people replied to him: “Certainly, there is a</td>
<td>7 Et Saül ordonna à ses gens: “Cherchez-moi une femme possédée par un mauvais esprit, afin que j’y aille la consulter!” Ses gens lui dirent: “Certainement, il y a une</td>
<td>7 Pano Saul wakambije bantu bandi amba : “Nsakilei mwanamukaji kilumbu, ngaeko nkepushe!” Bantu bandi bmulondo weke amba : “Kine, kudi mwanamukaji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>French</td>
<td>Bemba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woman possessed by an evil spirit at Endor.”</td>
<td>femme possédée par un mauvais esprit à En-Dor.</td>
<td>umo kilumbu Ku Endor.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8Saul put on other clothes, and he and two persons with him went. They arrived at that woman’s place by night and he said: “Consult me [by an evil spirit] and show me a person whom I shall tell you!”</td>
<td>8 Alors Saül mit d'autres vêtements, et il partit avec deux personnes. Ils arrivèrent de nuit chez la femme et il dit: Consultes-moi [par un mauvais esprit] et montres-moi la personne que je te dirai.</td>
<td>8Saul wawwadile bisandi bingi, waile aye pamo ne bantu babidi. Bafikile kwi ao mwanamukaji bufuku ne kulaka amba: “Mbukenye umwekeje muntu ye nsakukubula!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9The woman replied, “Woe! You yourself know what Saul has done, how he has removed those who were possessed by evil spirits and the fetishists from the land. You, why do you want to kill me?”</td>
<td>9 La femme lui répondit: “malheur! Toi, tu connais toi-même ce que Saül a fait, comment il a expulsé du pays ceux qui été possédés par des mauvais esprits et les féticheurs. Toi, pourquoi donc veux-tu me tuer?”</td>
<td>9Mwanamukaji wamulondolweke amba: “mawe! Obe mwine wayuka byaubile Saul, byo afumije bilumbu ne ba링anga mu kyalo. Obe, mwanda ka usaka kungipaya?”</td>
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<td>10Now, Saul swore to her by the LORD saying: “As the LORD lives, nothing will happen to you for this case.”</td>
<td>10 Saül lui jura par l’Éternel en disant: “Par la vie de l’Éternel, rien ne t'arrivera à cet affaire.”</td>
<td>10Pano Saul wamutipile mwi Kamana amba: “Ne Kamana yenka, kutupu kikakufikila mu aimyanda.”</td>
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<td>12When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out with a loud voice. She said to Saul: “Why have you lied to me? You are Saul!”</td>
<td>12 Lorsque la femme vit Samuel, elle poussa un grand cri. Elle dit à Saül: “Pourquoi m'as-tu trompée? Tu es Saül !”</td>
<td>12 Mwanamukaji lo amwene Samuel, waelele muyowa mukata. Walakile Saul: “Wambepela mwanda ka? Wi Saul!”</td>
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13 The king answered her: “Fear not; what do you see?” The woman said: “I see one ghost coming out of the ground.”

13 Le roi lui répondit: N’aies pas peur; que vois-tu? La femme dit: “je vois un fantôme qui monte de la terre.”

13 Mulopwe wamulondolweke amb: “Ke kutina; wamona ka?” Mwanamukaji amb: “Namona mufu umo utamba mu mushidi.”

14 He asked her: “What is his appearance?” She said: “It is an old man coming out; he is wrapped in a robe.” Immediately Saul knew that it was Samuel, he bowed with his face to the ground clapping.

14 Il lui demanda: “Quelle est son apparence?” Elle dit: C’est un vieillard qui monte il est enveloppé d’un manteau.” Immédiatement Saül comprit que c’était Samuel, il s’inclina le visage contre terre et se prosterna.


15 Samuel asked Saul: “Why did you annoy me and by bringing me up?” Saul replied: “I am in great distress: the Philistines are waging war against me, and God has left me, and answers me no more, either by prophets or by dream; that is why I called you to tell me what to do.”

15 Samuel demanda à Saül: “Pourquoi m'as-tu troublé, en me faisant monter?” Saül répondit: “Je suis dans une grande détresse: les Philistins me font la guerre, et Dieu s'est retiré de moi, il ne m'a répondu ni par les prophètes ni par songe ; C’est pourquoi je t'ai appelé pour que tu me dises quoi faire. ”

15 Samuel waipwishe Saul amb: “I mwanda ka wankambakanya ne kumangija?” Saul amba: “Napelelwa lwine: bena Filistia balwa nami, ne Lesa wanshiya, kenshi ukinondolokela mu baprofeta nangwa mu kiloto; kyo kyo nakwitila amba umbule kya kuba.”
16 Samuel replied: “Why then do you ask me? The LORD has left you, and now he has become your enemy.

16 Samuel répondit: “Pourquoi donc m’interroges-tu? L’Éternel s’est retiré de toi, et maintenant il est devenu ton ennemi.


17 The LORD has done to you just as he spoke by me: The LORD has torn the kingdom out of your hand and given it to your friend, to David.

17 L’Éternel t’a fait comme je te l’avais annoncé de sa part : L’Éternel a arraché la royauté d’entre tes mains et l’a donnée à ton ami, à David.

17Kamana wauba byonka byo alakile mwi ami: Kamana wakonsomona bulopwe ku makasa obe ne kwibupana kwi mukwenu, kwi Dawid

18 Because you did not listen to the voice of The LORD and did not execute his fierce wrath against Amelek, therefore, The LORD has done this thing to you today.”

18 Parce que tu n’as point écouté la voix de l’Éternel et tu n’as point exécuté l’ardeur de sa colère contre Amalek, L’Éternel t’a fait cette chose aujourd’hui.

18Mwanda obe kenshi watelekele diwi dya Kamana nangwa kubila Amalek bukadi bwandi bukata, ko kulenga Kamana wakubila ayo myanda lelo.

19 The LORD has given Israel and you into the hands of the Philistines. Tomorrow you and your children will follow me. The LORD will also give all of Israel into the hands of the Phillistines.”

19 L’Éternel a livré Israël et toi entre les mains des Philistins. Demain toi et tes fils me suiverez; L’Éternel a livré aussi tout Israël entre les mains des Philistins. ”

19Kamana wapana ne Israel pamo nobe mu maboko a bena Filistia. Kensa obe ne bana bobe mukanondela; Kamana wapana ne dibumba dya Israel nadyo mu maboko a bena Filistia.”

20 Immediately Saul fell full length on the ground because he was very afraid of Samuel’s words; he had no strength for he had not eaten all day and all night

20 Aussitôt Saül tomba à terre de toute sa hauteur, parce qu’il avait peur des paroles de Samuel; il manquait de force, car il n’avait rien mangé tout le jour et toute la nuit.

20Ponka apo Saul waponene panshi nkwaba-nkwaba, pantu watinine lwine mawi a Samuel; kenshi wakidina bulobo, pantu kenshi wadile kate konso ne bufuku.
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<td>21</td>
<td>When the woman approached Saul and saw that he was so weak, she said, “Look, I, your womanservant, have listened to your voice, I have given up my life and have listened to your words which you have said to me;</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Now therefore you also listen to the voice of your womanservant: let me set a morsel of bread before you, that you may eat, in order that you may have strength to go on the way.</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Saul refused and said: “I will not eat.” But when his people together with the woman forced him, he listened to their voice, he got up and sat on the bed.</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>That woman had a fat calf young cow in the house. She killed it hurriedly, she took flour, kneaded it and baked unleavened bread.</td>
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<td>25 She put them before Saul and his people, they ate and went away that same night.</td>
<td>25 Elle les mit devant Saül et devant ses serviteurs, ils mangèrent puis and partirent la nuit même.</td>
<td>25 Wibifeneje mu kyeni kya Saul ne kya bantu bandi, badile ne kuya bonka abo bufuku.</td>
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<td>My Translation of the LXX</td>
<td>LXX</td>
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<td><strong>3And Samuel died and all Israel mourned for him,</strong> and they bury him in Armathaim his city, and Saul had cast off those who had in them divining spirits and the knowers from the land.</td>
<td>³καὶ Σάμουὴλ ἀπέθανεν καὶ ἐκόψαντο αὐτὸν πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ καὶ θάπτουσιν αὐτὸν ἐν Ἀρμαθαίμ ἐν πόλει αὐτοῦ καὶ Σαοῦλ περιείλεν τοὺς ἐγγαστριμύθους καὶ τοὺς γνώστας ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς</td>
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<td><strong>4And the foreigners gather themselves and come and encamp in Soman and Saul gathers together all Israel, and they encamp in Gelbue.</strong></td>
<td>⁴καὶ συναθροίζονται οἱ ἀλλοφύλοι καὶ ἔρχονται καὶ παρεμβάλλουσιν εἰς Σωμαν καὶ συναθροίζει Σαοῦλ πάντα ἀνδρὰ Ἰσραηλ καὶ παρεμβάλλουσιν εἰς Γέλβουε</td>
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<td><strong>5Saul saw the army of the Foreigners, he feared and his heart was greatly alarmed.</strong></td>
<td>⁵καὶ εἶδεν Σαοῦλ τὴν παρεμβολὴν τῶν ἀλλοφύλων καὶ ἔφοβθη καὶ ἔξεστὶ ἡ καρδία αὐτοῦ σφόδρα</td>
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<td><strong>6And Saul inquired of the Lord and the Lord answered him not by dreams, nor by clear [signs], nor by prophets.</strong></td>
<td>⁶καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν Σαοῦλ διὰ κυρίου καὶ οὐκ ἀπεκρίθη αὐτῷ κύριος ἐν τοῖς ἐνυπνίοις καὶ ἐν τοῖς ὁθλοῖς καὶ ἐν τοῖς προφήταις</td>
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<td><strong>7And Saul said to his servants: Seek for me a woman who has in her a divining spirit and I will go to her, and inquire of her [seek in her] and his servants said to him: Behold, [there is] a woman who has in her a divining spirit at Aendor.</strong></td>
<td>⁷καὶ εἶπεν Σαοῦλ τοῖς παισίν αὐτοῦ ζητήσατε μοι γυναῖκα ἐγγαστριμύθου καὶ πορεύσομαι πρὸς αὐτὴν καὶ ζητήσω ἐν αὐτῇ καὶ εἴπαν οἱ παῖδες αὐτοῦ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἵδον γυνὴ ἐγγαστριμύθου καὶ ἐν Αενδώρ</td>
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<td><strong>8And Saul concealed himself and put on different garments and he goes, and two men with him, and they come to the woman by night and he said to her, “Divine</strong></td>
<td>⁸καὶ συνεκαλύψατο Σαοῦλ καὶ περιεβάλετο ἰμάτια ἑτερα καὶ πορεύεται αὐτὸς καὶ δύο ἄνδρες μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἔρχονται πρὸς τὴν γυναῖκα νυκτὸς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ μάντευσαι</td>
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[prophesy] to me, by [in] the divining spirit within thee, and bring up to me him whom I will tell you.

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<th>9And the woman said to him: Look now, you certainly know what Saul has done, how he utterly destroyed those who had in them divining spirits, and the knowers from the land, and why do you ensnare my soul to kill it?</th>
<th>9καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνὴ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἵδοι δὴ σὺ οἶδας ὅσα ἐποίησεν Σαοῦλ ὡς ἐξωλέθρευσεν τοὺς ἐγγαστριμῶθους καὶ τοὺς γνώστας ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἤνα τὶ σὺ παγιδεύεις τὴν ψυχήν μου θανατώσαι αὐτὴν</th>
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<td>10And Saul swore to her saying: As the Lord lives, no unrighteousness will happen to you on this matter.</td>
<td>10καὶ ὁμοσεν αὐτῇ Σαοῦλ λέγων ζῇ κύριος εἰ ἀπαντήσεται σοι ἀδικία ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ</td>
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<td>11And the woman said: Whom should I bring up to you? And he said: Bring me up Samuel.</td>
<td>11καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνὴ τίνα ἄναγάγω σοι καὶ εἶπεν τὸν Σαμουὴλ ἄναγάγε μοι</td>
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<td>12And the woman saw Samuel, and she shouted with a loud voice and the woman said to Saul: Why have you deceived me? You are Saul.</td>
<td>12καὶ εἶδεν ἡ γυνὴ τὸν Σαμουὴλ καὶ ἀνεβόησεν φωνὴ μεγάλῃ καὶ εἶπεν ἡ γυνὴ πρὸς Σαοῦλ ἵνα τὸ παρελογίσω με καὶ σὺ εἰ Σαοῦλ</td>
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<td>13And the king said to her: Fear not. Tell [me] whom you have seen. And she said to him: I saw gods ascending out of the earth.</td>
<td>13καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ ὁ βασιλεὺς μὴ φοβοῦ εἰπὸν τίνα ἐόρακας καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ Θεοῦς ἐόρακα ἀναβαίνοντας ἐκ τῆς γῆς</td>
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<td>14And he said to her, “What have you learned? And she said to him: A standing man ascending out of the earth and clothed with a mantle. And Saul knew that this was Samuel and he bent forward his face to the earth and worshipped him.</td>
<td>14καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῇ τῇ ἐγνως καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ἄνδρα ὁδρίου ἀναβαίνοντα ἐκ τῆς γῆς καὶ οὗτος διπλοίδα ἀναβεβλημένος καὶ ἤγνω Σαοῦλ ὅτι Σαμουὴλ οὗτος καὶ ἐκψυχεν ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ προσεκύνησεν αὐτῷ</td>
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<td>15And Samuel said: Why have you annoyed me by bringing me up? And Saul said:</td>
<td>15καὶ εἶπεν Σαμουὴλ ἤνα τὶ παρηνώχησας μοι ἀναβήναι με καὶ εἶπεν Σαοῦλ</td>
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I am exceedingly oppressed, and the foreigners wage war in [against] me and God has withdrawn from me, and has not listened to me either by the hand of the prophets or by dreams, and now I have called you to make known to me what I shall do.

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<th>Greek Text</th>
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<td>θλιβομαι σφόδρα και οἱ ἀλλοφυλοὶ πολεμοῦσιν ἐν ἐμοί καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐφέστηκεν ἀπ’ ἐμοὶ καὶ οὐκ ἐπικήκοεν μοι ἦτι καὶ ἐν χειρὶ τῶν προφητῶν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐνυπνίοις καὶ νῦν κέκληκα σε γνωρίσασι μοι τί ποιήσω</td>
<td>And Samuel said: Why are you asking me when the Lord has withdrawn from you and has become with your neighbor?</td>
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<td>καὶ εἶπεν Σαμοῦη ἵνα τί ἐπερωτᾶς με καὶ κύριος ἐφέστηκεν ἀπὸ σοῦ καὶ γέγονεν μετὰ τοῦ πλησίου σου</td>
<td>16 And Samuel said: Why are you asking me when the Lord has withdrawn from you and has become with your neighbor?</td>
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<td>καὶ πεποίηκεν κύριος σοι καθὼς ἐλάλησεν ἐν χειρὶ μου καὶ διαρρήξει κύριος τὴν βασιλείαν σου ἐκ χειρὸς σου καὶ ὅσει αὐτὴν τῷ πλησίον σου τῷ Δαυίδ</td>
<td>17 And the Lord has done to you as he spoke by my hand, and the Lord will tear your kingdom out of your hand, and will give it to your neighbor, to David.</td>
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<td>διότι οὐκ ἦκουσας φωνῆς κυρίου καὶ οὐκ ἐποίησας θυμὸν ὄργης αὐτοῦ ἐν Ἁμαλεκ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ ῥῆμα ἐποίησαν κύριος σοι τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ταύτη</td>
<td>18 because you did not hear the voice of the Lord, and did not effect his fierce anger against Amalek; on account of this thing, the Lord has done [this thing] to you this day.</td>
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<td>καὶ παραδώσει κύριος τὸν Ἰσραὴλ μετὰ σοῦ εἰς χεῖρας ἀλλοφύλων καὶ αὕριον σὺ καὶ οἱ υἱοὶ σου μετὰ σου πεσοῦνται καὶ τὴν παρεμβολὴν Ἰσραὴλ δώσει κύριος εἰς χεῖρας ἀλλοφύλων</td>
<td>19 And the Lord will hand over Israel with you into the hands of the foreigners, and tomorrow you and your sons with you will fall and the army of Israel, the Lord will give over into the hands of the foreigners.</td>
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<td>καὶ ἐσπευσαν Σαουλ καὶ ἐσπευσαν ἐστηκώς ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν καὶ ἐφοβήθη ὀφθάλμα απὸ τῶν λόγων Σαμοῦη καὶ ἰσχύς ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἦν ἐτί</td>
<td>20 And Saul hurried and fell full length upon the earth, and he was greatly afraid because of the words of Samuel and there was no strength in him for he had not eaten yet any bread all that day, and all that night.</td>
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<td>οὐ γὰρ ἔφαγεν ἄρτον ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν καὶ ὅλην τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην</td>
<td>21 And the woman came in to Saul and saw that he was greatly hurried, she said to him: Look now, your female slave has heard your voice and I have placed my soul in my hand, and I have heard the words which you have spoken to me.</td>
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23 And he was determined not to eat, but his servants and the woman prevailed upon and he hearkened to their voice and he arose from the earth and sat upon a chair.

23 καὶ οὐκ ἔβουλήθη φαγεῖν καὶ παρεβιάζοντο αὐτὸν οἱ παῖδες αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἤκουσαν τῆς φωνῆς αὐτῶν καὶ ἀνέστη ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπὶ τὸν δίφρον

24 And the woman had a fat young cow in the house; and she hurried and slew it; and she took wheat flour and kneaded [it], and baked unleavened cakes.

24 καὶ τῇ γυναικὶ ἦν δάμαλις νομᾶς ἐν τῇ οίκῳ καὶ ἐσπευσεν καὶ ἔθυσεν αὐτὴν καὶ ἐλαβεν ἄλειφα καὶ ἐφύρασεν καὶ ἐπεφέσεν ἄζυμα

25 And she brought [it] before Saul, and before his servants; and they ate, and arose, and departed that night.

25 καὶ προσήγαγεν ἐνώπιον Σαουλ καὶ ἐνώπιον τῶν παίδων αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφαγον καὶ ἀνέστησαν καὶ ἀπῆλθον τὴν νύκτα ἐκείνην
APPENDIX D

My Translation—The Dead Are Not Dead

Listen more often
To the things than to the beings,
The voice of fire is heard
Listen to the voice in the water

Listen in the wind
The sobbing bush:
It's the breath of ancestors.
Those who are dead are never gone
They are in the shade that lights up
And in the shade that thickens,

The dead are not underground
They are in the tree that shivers
They are in the wood that groans,
They are in the water that flows,
They are in the water that sleeps,
They are in the hut, they are in the crowd

The dead are not dead.
Those who are dead are never gone,
they are in the woman's breast,
They are in the child who wails,
And in the branch that catches fire,

The dead are never underground,
They are in the fire that extinguishes itself;
They are in the rock that moans,

Le Morts Ne Sont Pas Morts

Écoutes plus souvent
Les choses que les êtres,
La voix du feu s'entend
Entends la voix de l'eau

Écoutes dans le vent
Le buisson en sanglot:
C'est le souffle des ancêtres.
Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis
Ils sont dans l'ombre qui s'éclaire
Et dans l'ombre qui s'épaissit,

Les morts ne sont pas sous la terre
Ils sont dans l'arbre qui frémit,
Ils sont dans le bois qui gémit,
Ils sont dans l'eau qui coule,
Ils sont dans l'eau qui dort,
Ils sont dans la case, ils sont dans la foule

Les morts ne sont pas morts.
Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis,
Ils sont dans le sein de la femme,
Ils sont dans l'enfant qui vagit,
Et dans le tison qui s'enflamme,

Les morts ne sont jamais sous terre,
Ils sont dans le feu qui s'éteint,
Ils sont dans le rocher qui geint,

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D-1
They are in the grasses that cry,
They are in the forest, they are in the residence,
The dead are not dead.
Listen more often
To the things than to the beings,
The voice of fire is heard
Listen to the voice of the water

Listen in the wind
The sobbing bush:
It's the breath of ancestors.
The breath of the dead ancestors.
Who are not gone,
Who are not underground,
Who are not dead

Listen more often
To the things than to the beings,
The voice of fire is heard
Listen to the voice of the water

The destiny of our dead who are not dead;
The lord pact that binds us to the acts
Of breaths that are dying,
In the riverbed and the bank of a river,
In many breaths that dwell
In the rock that groans, and the grass that cry
The breaths that dwell
In the shade that lights up one grows thick,
In the tree that quivers, in the wood that groans,
And in the water that flows and in the water
that sleeps,

Stronger breaths who took
The breath of the dead who are not dead,
The dead who are not gone,
The dead who are no longer underground.
Listen more often
To the things than the beings...

dort,

Des souffles plus forts, qui ont pris
Le souffle des morts qui ne sont pas morts,
Des morts qui ne sont pas partis,
Des morts qui ne sont plus sous terre.
Écoutes plus souvent
Les choses que les êtres...
ABBREVIATIONS

I have chosen to use abbreviations sparingly. Those few used herein follow the conventions of P. H. Alexander, et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1999); and R. Borger, *Handbuch der Keilschriftliteratur* (3 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967-75). None deviate from those two sources. In most cases where I use an abbreviation more than once within this study, I indicated the abbreviation after the first full reference to the source.