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CHAPTER

13 The Conquest of Memory in the Book of Joshua

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Abstract

This chapter tracks the shift in reading approaches to the book of Joshua, from the more traditional criticisms of source and form during the twentieth century to the “new” literary methods that have characterized the transition to the twenty-first century in biblical scholarship. The poetics stance that gradually emerged within the field of Joshua scholarship opened up the book to constructivist as well as deconstructivist readings. The narrative studies mentioned in the chapter exhibit not only remarkable literary depth, but also a strong social and cultural sensitivity that trouble the book’s colonial and androcentric outlook. Using the lens of postmodern spatial theory (“Thirdspace”), the reading of Joshua’s conquest at the end of the chapter decenters the book’s core construction of Israel’s identity around violence, land acquisition, and memorialization of the conquest. The critique “from the margin” gives way to a more compassionate “center.”

Keywords: identity, violence, memory, the Land, spatial theory, postcolonial, androcentric, biblical poetics, source and form criticism, Joshua

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THE book of Joshua recounts Israel’s entrance into and conquest and settlement of Canaan. The events it narrates mark the end of Israel’s sojourn through the wilderness and the beginning of a period characterized by living in the land that God had promised to Israel’s ancestors. Because the territory Joshua and the Israelites are about to occupy is understood to be God’s promised and exclusive gift to them, the land of Canaan (hereafter the “Land”) is declared sacred (Josh. 5:15), and its peoples are subject to a war of annihilation, known as the “ban” or *herem* (Josh. 6:16–18). The background to Joshua’s conquest of the Land is the failure of the Exodus generation of Israelites to occupy it. The members of that generation had witnessed powerful acts of deliverance and provision during their journey to Canaan; yet when it came time to enter and conquer the

Land, they lacked the courage (Num. 13). The book of Joshua is constructed as a series of similarities and contrasts between the two generations, showing that where the “old” generation had failed, the “new” generation has succeeded. The first part of this chapter summarizes the content of the book of Joshua, tracking the interlocking themes of “land,” “identity,” and “memory.” The second part is an overview of the application of narrative approaches to the book. The final section proposes a spatial-critical reading of the conquest of the Land.

The Narratives of the Book of Joshua

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A cursory reading of Joshua quickly reveals the book’s overarching structure: the conquest of the Land is narrated in chapters 1–12, while the parceling of the Land (on both sides of the Jordan River) is told in chapters 13–21. Short summaries bring the conquest and land-distribution narratives to their respective ends (11:16–23; 12; 21:43–45), whereas other reports bridge them (13:1–7). The dismissal of the two-and-a-half tribes that received their inheritance east of the Jordan River (the so-called Transjordan) in chapter 22 might seem to be a natural conclusion to the book, given Joshua’s solicitation of their military help at the beginning of the conquest (1:12–15), but the book does not end there. Joshua’s farewell speech in chapter 23 offers a further sense of ending; yet, still, the book marches on to recount a covenant-making scene at Shechem (24:1–27). The report concerning the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar offers yet another likely conclusion, but again, the book presses forward to note the reburial of Joseph’s bones at Shechem (24:28–32). This last report connects Joshua firmly to Genesis and Exodus, showing Israel’s settlement in the Land to be the fulfillment of earlier promises (Gen. 50:25; Exod. 13:19).

The description of Joshua’s conquest as a series of sweeping campaigns that quickly subdue the Land is challenged by other accounts that depict more modest gains and a longer struggle with the Canaanites. The prologue to Judges, in particular, indicates a piecemeal acquisition of the Land, as individual tribes fight for their own lands within it. According to Judges, Joshua’s conquest was only the initial phase, and each tribe is responsible for finalizing the conquest (Judg. 2:6). Even more dramatic in Judges, however, is the estrangement from YHWH, the God of Israel, of the generations that come after Joshua (Judg. 1:1–2:10–15).

The events of the conquest narrative in Joshua (1–12) are artfully arranged along three geographical axes. Overlapping themes of the people’s unity, obedience to the law of Moses, and divinely granted military success appear clearly in each axis. The foundational events for the nation’s life occur along the first axis, which is a movement from east to west across the Jordan River. The people’s miraculous crossing through the Jordan and encampment inside Canaan at Gilgal exhibit the defining features of the “new” Israel: (1) the leadership of God (represented by the leading Ark) and the people’s dependence on him to overcome any obstacles, (2) the people’s readiness to follow God/Joshua in battle, and (3) the commemoration of the past and present mighty deeds of YHWH (4:6–7, 20–24). The recall of God’s former acts marks the people of Israel and draws a line of distinction between them and the Canaanites, who are not present in the camp and do not identify with those memories.

The Jericho stories (chs. 2, 6) and Ai (ch. 7) disrupt established lines of identity. A Canaanite prostitute named Rahab, the quintessential “other,” recalls Israel’s miraculous past and uses that knowledge to win her and her family a place in Israel. The quintessential “Israelite,” Achan of Judah, on the other hand, disregards Joshua’s instructions to destroy all property belonging to the Jerichonites. Achan’s misdeed attracts YHWH’s judgment upon himself and Israel. Jericho’s ruins and Achan’s burial site offer both a testimonial and a warning to those who oppose YHWH and his leader Joshua, be they Canaanites or Israelites. Geographical markers continue to proliferate. At the end of second battle against Ai (ch. 8), another pile of stones is erected over the king of Ai’s lifeless body (8:28–29). The ceremony on Mount Ebal follows immediately after the conquest of Ai (in the Masoretic Text). While this is hardly explainable from a chronological or spatial point of view, thematically, it

pinpoints the need to remember Moses's instructions (Deut. 27). The transcription and recitation of the law on Mt. Ebal are acts of memory that remake Israel's boundaries around the Torah and its hearers (8:30–35).

p. 170 In Joshua 9 and 10, the conquest narrative moves along a southern geographical axis. Joshua and his men depart from Gilgal to aid Gibeon and continue south to engage in what turns out to be a military campaign of resounding success. The Gibeonites, a Hivite enclave at the foot of the central highlands, save themselves from destruction by pretending to be from far away. In their artful negotiation with Joshua's men, the Gibeonites at first obscure the most recent events in Israel's memory (namely, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the conquests of Jericho and Ai), recalling instead the Exodus and the conquests on the west side of the Jordan (9:9b–10). This calculated move immediately endears the Gibeonites to Israel (there sit before them a far-away people attracted by YHWH's fame, v. 9a) and, conveniently, depicts them to be innocently unaware of the latest events in the Land. Once the Gibeonites' true identity is discovered, however, the memory of the recent conquests at Jericho and Ai (9:3, 24) emerges in their negotiation. The Gibeonites clearly know about Moses's instruction concerning their destruction. They effectively recall those words amid supplications that they be accepted as servants and when addressing Joshua, who, although he is striving to fulfil Moses's commandment, appears to be more reasonable than the rest of the Israelites (cf. v. 26a). The Gibeonites' strategic use of Israel's memory seals the deal in their favor. Their survival contrasts with the fates of Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, and the four kings that join him against Gibeon. Joshua destroys the armies of the five kings with apparent ease, thanks to YHWH's involvement. The humiliation, execution, and burial of the five kings in the Makkedah cave reiterates Israel's adversarial relationship with the Canaanite rulers and demonstrates their desire to monumentalize the Canaanite failure to oppose them and YHWH (10:22–28). The description that follows the campaign in the south is formulaic. It stresses Israel's unity ("Joshua and all Israel with him"; see 10:29, 31, 34, 36, 38) in attacking one town after another (Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron, Debir). Because of YHWH's martial valor, the local rulers are unable to resist Joshua.

The battle against King Jabin of Hazor and his coalition army at the Waters of Merom (11:1–9) shifts the focus to the north. This story resembles the previous one, in that a decisive battle leads to a wider campaign in which Israel gains control of extensive territory. The disregard for Israel's past parallels Adoni-Zedek's story with a similar outcome. The campaign that ensues after the defeat of Jabin shows again the pitiful fate of those who oppose YHWH and his people. Desolate towns in the north speak to their inhabitants' demise before them (11:10–14).

After conquest summaries (11:16–23; 12), the allotment narrative (chs. 13–21) opens with an intriguing statement about Joshua's old age and the need to allocate areas that are still unconquered (13:1–7). The Israelite tribes, it appears, are unable to remove the indigenous populations from their allocated lands. Judah is not able to defeat the Jebusites in Jerusalem (15:63); the Ephraimites cannot remove the Canaanites from Gezer, one of the towns that they receive, and neither can the half tribe of Manasseh (16:10; 17:12–13); the Danites cannot get a handle on their portion and instead retreat to one city (19:47). The Israelites are forced—and eventually prefer—to coexist with the Canaanites, especially since material benefit can be obtained from the Canaanites' enslavement.

The stories of Achsah and the Zelophehad daughters (15:18–19; 17:3–6) are artfully integrated between and around the inheritance allocations of the tribes of Judah, Ephraim, and half-Manasseh, enlivening what otherwise are dry listings of place names. In these stories, Israelite women speak for the first time in the book. Their voices are subsumed under the narrator's concern with tribal allocations, but enough of their own particular needs and wants are retained to portray them as assertive women. They seek a fairer treatment of themselves and their families.

The next literary unit (chs. 18–20) concerns the inheritance of the seven remaining tribes. Joshua admonishes the tribes not to delay in taking possession of the Land, but his impatience seems unfair. How can they occupy their portions before knowing which are theirs? The account of tribal allocations is stylized, shifting from lists

p. 171 of territorial boundaries with requisite towns (Benjamin) to lists of inherited towns only (Simeon, Issachar, Dan) to lists of only territorial borders (Zebulun, Asher, Naphtali). Reserving the town of Timnath Serah (known also as Timnath Heres) for Joshua, the Israelites “finished dividing the land” (19:51). The job is not done, however, until towns of refuge (ch. 20) and towns for Levites (ch. 21) are chosen. The strategic naming and renaming of towns and regions, the listing and relisting of these sites in various inheritance reports, expresses Israel’s ownership of the Land. This is a form of narrative *inscription*, a “writing-in” of Israel’s identity into the literary surface of the Land. The tribes become contiguous with their allocations.

The tenuous unity of a divided nation living on both sides of the Jordan River surfaces in the crisis erupting with the building of an additional altar at Geliloth near the Jordan. The act sends Israel to the brink of civil war (ch. 22). This and Joshua’s Deuteronomic warning in his farewell speech (23:13) that Israel will perish from the Land if it turns away from YHWH show that not all is well with Israel. The suspicion persists in the following episode, the Shechem covenant, where Joshua both charges Israel to serve YHWH (24:14–15) and spells their inability to do so: “You are not able to serve the LORD; He is a holy God” (24:14–15, 19). The people’s repeated assurance that they will serve YHWH and their ceremonial pledge (24:16, 21–27) are almost as inadequate as they are necessary.

Narrative Readings in the Book of Joshua

The first studies to read Joshua *as literature*, rather than as a complex literary document, were done in 1980s. This represented a shift in emphasis that came after a century of modern scholarship on Joshua that was fundamentally informed by the revolutionary ideas of Julius Wellhausen (1882), Hermann Gunkel (1906), and Martin Noth (1943) who sought to elucidate the documentary sources (J, E, D, P) and the literary genres (*Gattungen*) that characterize the book. Their influence on Joshua was—and still is—profound, as is clearly evidenced in the commentary tradition.

In his 1968 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, James Muilenburg (1969) challenged the prevailing methodological status quo by asking biblical scholars to expand the scope of their inquiries and integrate an appreciation for the biblical text’s final form. He named his proposed method “rhetorical criticism” (8). While his approach was eventually developed by others into the full-fledged method of biblical rhetorical criticism that we have today (Patrick and Scult 1990), Muilenburg’s invitation to expound the text’s poetic features encouraged the emergence of other methods that shared similar goals and assumptions (e.g., narrative criticism). It took another decade for the fruit of Muilenburg’s approach to catch up with the scholars of Joshua. The first significant contribution to demonstrate an appreciation for the final text of Joshua was Robert Polzin’s *Moses and the Deuteronomist* (1980). Polzin reads the narrative of Joshua (along with that of Deuteronomy and of Judges) as a dialogue between two opposing “voices” regarding the application of Moses’s law in the account of Israel’s settlement in the Land. Polzin’s work was a nuanced application of a dialogic method inspired by the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, but more than that, it was also a validation that the “new literary criticism” was capable of generating profound insights and lasting results. Following on Polzin’s work was that of Lyle Eslinger (1989) who offers a synchronic reading of Joshua 1–9 that highlights the narrative’s apparent contradictions concerning Israel’s (and YHWH’s) achievements.

p. 172 The “new” literary criticism found its expression within the framework of traditional (“old”) literary or historical criticism.¹ Polzin’s work, for example, placed Joshua firmly within the framework of the Deuteronomistic History. Subsequent studies in the 1990s embraced a somewhat similar approach, although the connection with historical criticism has become more and more tenuous, in part because of the great lack of consensus among historical literary critics. Gordon Mitchell (1993), for instance, examines the unresolved tensions between Israel’s obedience and the remaining Canaanites, with an eye to a post-exilic setting in which the returnees must learn to live “together” with other peoples while wishing times had been more favorable to

them. Lori L. Rowlett (1996) reads the conquest narrative's violence as a work commission by King Josiah to secure the support of his officials for reinstating the Yahwistic faith as sole religion and eliminating all other cults from the kingdom of Judah (including Samaria). The narrative's rhetoric of inclusion, exclusion, and marginality serves Josiah's program (prefigured by Joshua) by showing his opponents, whether ethnic Israelites (Achan) or non-Israelites ("Canaanites"), what awaits those who resist YHWH and his leader. Drawing on the resources of rhetorical and narrative approaches, my own reading (Creangă 2010a) positions Joshua 1–12's rhetoric of memory and commemoration in an exilic context, while Koert van Bekkum's (2011) granular reading of the conquest stories in Joshua 9–13 posits a composition period between the tenth and ninth centuries BCE.

Several book-length studies mark sharper departures from questions of the ancient historical context. L. Daniel Hawk (1991, 2000) has produced two significant studies, each exploring Joshua's internal dynamics. Both works expose, by means of narrative analysis, the assertion and contradiction of Israel's obedience to the law, possession of the Land, and ethnic purity, insisting that what really defines Israel is its choosing of YHWH. Elie Assis (1999, 2005) seeks the meaning of the conquest narrative in its literary structure. His analysis underscores a series of symmetries, or mirror-like structures, at the level of events and characters between the Pentateuch and Joshua, as well as God's departure from the expected leadership in war. Sarah Lebharr Hall's (2010) study on the characterization of Joshua examines a range of narrative techniques (epithet, dialogue, contrast, perspective, narrative pace, repetition, analogy, etc.) that create Joshua's complex portrait. Two other books deserving of mention here are those of William T. Koopmans (1990) and Blažej Štrba (2008). Koopmans investigates in detail the poetic features of Joshua 24, while Štrba provides an in-depth literary analysis of Joshua 5:13–15 in order to demonstrate that Joshua enjoyed the same level of authority as Moses.

Alongside these lengthier studies, a plethora of shorter studies have appeared over the past three decades. These works, too, focus on the poetics of characterization (of story characters and events) and narrative artistry (Biddle 1998). To name a few, M. A. Beek (1994) examines Joshua's depiction as a "saving figure" bridging the gap between Deuteronomy and Judges; David Gunn (1987) points out thematic continuities and discontinuities between the Joshua and Judges narratives; Hawk (1992) reads Rahab's story intertextually with Lot's story; Assis (2004) attempts a similar act with Yael's and examines the repetitions and conflicts in the report of Israel's crossing of the Jordan River (Assis 2012); Robert Gordon (2003) examines the internal dynamics of the Gibeonites' story; and Hawk (1997), Rowlett (1992), Nancy Claissé-Walford (1998), and Robert Ellis (1998) have explored how the conquest narrative, through the use of ambiguous ethnic and theological markers, constructs Israel's identity in stable and unstable ways.

p. 173 The analysis of gender in biblical literature has also enriched literary approaches to Joshua. Engaging the text closely, biblical feminist scholars have unmasked the androcentric features of the Joshua narrative and the patriarchal values that are inscribed in it (Creangă 2007). Feminist studies of Rahab (Bird 1989; Frymer-Kensky 1997; Brenner 2002; Sherwood 2006), Achsah (Fewell 1995), and the Zelophehad daughters (Sakenfeld 1998; Shemesh 2007) have exposed the men's concern with preserving their power and resources, as well as their insecurity around strong, confident women who resist being stereotyped. Creangă (2010a) underscores the sexist images conjured up by Deuteronomic laws of warfare against the inhabitants of Canaan (Deut. 20–22) in Joshua's conquest narrative. The current wave of biblical gender scholarship, drawing from masculinities and queer studies, interrogates Joshua's hitherto unexamined hegemonies or normativities (heterosexual, ethnic/racist, materialistic) that disadvantage men and women alike (Creangă 2010b; Carden 2006; Runions 2011).

Narrative artistry, of course, does little to diminish the thorny ethical questions arising from the book's colonial outlook (Warrior 1995). The deaths of Canaanites—men, women, and children—as victims of a war they did not start, coupled with the notion that God wills them to perish (Josh. 11:20), is distasteful to modern sensitivities. Israel's enrichment from the spoils of war (Josh. 6:24; 8:27; 11:14; 22:8) adds to the injustice. The legacy of these (and subsequent) acts of sanctified violence against a changing other has left a long trail of

bloodstains on the canopy of premodern and modern Western civilization. Uncritical appropriations of the book's rhetoric of violence has fueled many of the colonial projects of the past. Close readings that uncover in the text of Joshua a critique of the dogmatic and authoritarian stance that characterizes much of the book can save us from repeating the mistakes of the past (see Hawk 2010).

Narrative and Spatial Theory: The Land as “Thirdspace” in Joshua 1–12

The following short treatment of Joshua's conquest narrative joins the fruit of narrative analysis and postmodern spatial theory. Earlier attempts to uncover, through close readings, the ideologies of space underlying the book of Joshua have focused on geographical features, such as the River Jordan and the place of the Transjordan in Israel's imagination, or on the land map constructed in Joshua (Knight 2002; Jobling 1987; Havrelock 2007). Spatial theory claims that space is as much a cultural construct as a physical reality and that the production or rendition of space (be it in film, pictures, paintings, or texts) is often tied to identity and power struggles within the communities that produce representations of space. The approach proposed here follows this assumption as it applies to Joshua 1–12. Unlike other spatial studies in Joshua, the ensuing discussion not only uncovers binaries (as in structuralism) or official ideologies (as in symbolic geography), but also illustrates the agency of the spatially and socially marginalized Canaanites to reshape Israel's hegemonic outlook.

p. 174 The concept of “Thirdspace” that informs my reading of the conquest narrative is associated with the geographer and urban specialist Edward W. Soja (1996). Drawing from the French Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre (1974), Soja sees perceptions or epistemologies colliding and fertilizing over space and in response to it. The engagement with space, ↳ in Soja's view, gives rise to expressions of the hegemonies that are inherent in a particular society. These hegemonies—be they materialist, colonialist, sexist, or others—produce and reinforce rigid binaries through space. The notion of “Thirdspace” or, as Soja (1996, 60–61) calls it, “Thirling-as-Othering,” expresses both the disruption of set binaries as well as their reconstruction as *trialectics*, that is to say, in dialogue and opening to radical otherness.

The starting point in deciphering the “Thirdspatial” nature of a place is the encounter and experience of the “Firstspace.” This is the encounter with the perceived physical, objective reality of space. “Secondspace” is the conceived, ideational, artistic, and (we may add) theological representation of space. If Firstspace denotes the physical space and Secondspace the subjective interpretation/imagination of it, Thirdspace expresses the phenomenon of lived space, the experience of living in or occupying—or, neither living in nor occupying—a particular place. Thirdspace is a site of resistance in that those who are not inside a hegemonic spatial “center,” whether because of their economic, racial, cultural, sexual, or religious differences, are not powerless entities but actors who fight their marginality by assaulting and potentially transforming the “center.”

Joshua lends itself particularly well to a spatial analysis because it makes space (the Land) its central theme. Let us, therefore, begin by noticing the Land's Firstspatial features in the conquest narrative. The narrative opens with a spatial imperative: “[A]rise, go over the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I give them, to the sons of Israel” (1:2). In the next two verses, the designated territory is delineated. It encompasses the area between “the wilderness” (south) and the “great river” (the Euphrates, to the north), and between the “great sea” (the Mediterranean) in the west, and the “land of the Hittites” in the east. Nothing more is said at this point about the spatial features of the land enclosed between these geographical points, but over the course of the story, a multitude of relief features emerge: from the lowlands of the Jordan Valley to the high plateau of Mt. Ebal. Equally important in this description of the Land is the presence of urban, not only natural, space. Canaanite towns and settlements, from Gilgal to Jericho and Ai and to all other towns mentioned in the southern and northern parts of the country, dot the entire Land. A further dimension of the Land is its produce.

Canaan is not a wild, unnourishing place. Its produce, consumed after the manna stops, affords Israel another means of knowing the space they have entered and are about to conquer (Josh. 5:12).

At the most basic level, Joshua's conquest of the Land is a Firstspatial endeavor. It occurs in a defined territory, over land, and concerns the acquisition of a place to settle in. In the process of conquest, the Israelites do not only traverse this natural and urban space, but they alter it. In some places they set up camp (Gilgal). Some towns they completely destroy (Jericho, Ai, Hazor), others only in part (Makkedah, Libnah, Lachish, Eglon, Hebron), while others not at all (Gibeon, Kephirah, Beeroth, Kiriath Jearim). In some sites, they erect shrines (Mt. Ebal); commemorative monuments come up in or near the Jordan (Josh. 4; 22); and tombstones mark the graves of those who disregarded or opposed YHWH for posterity (Josh. 7; 8; 10).

p. 175 Relief features and localities mix with the narrator's rhetoric of conquest. In grand, sweeping generalizations, the narrator tells us that Joshua captured "all that land" (Josh. 10:40; 11:16, 23) and "all these cities" (Josh. 11:12) and "all these kings" (Josh. 11:5, 12, 18). The report after the southern campaign recounts the captured land using such relief features as the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills, and the mountain slopes and such places as Kadesh Barnea, Gaza, and Gibeon (Josh. 10:40–41). Similarly, the concluding summary reviews the entire territory that the Israelites have conquered (Josh. 11:16–23). The report lists large blocks of land according to their relief features. Moving from south to north, the narrator's eye surveys the highland of Judah, all the Negev, the whole region of Goshen, the western foothills, the Arabah, and the mountains of Israel with their foothills (Josh. 11:16); taking a different look at the Land, he measures the Land from Mt. Halak to Baal Gad in the Lebanon Valley at the foot of Mt. Hermon (Josh. 11:17). This reporting largely focuses on geographical, rather than political space, with two noteworthy exceptions: this concluding summary does mention two contrasting entities, the Hivites from Gibeon who made peace with the Israelites (11:19) and the old and much-feared enemy, the Anakites, who are eliminated (only) from the central spine (the highlands) of the Land (11:21–22). The Land's former rulers do, however, become the subjects of the long victim list in the next chapter. The former centers of power in Canaan, the fallen indigenous rulers of the Canaanite nations, are counted one by one, along with their capital towns, in what looks like an arithmetic of death similar in style to other ancient Near Eastern war literatures (12:7–24).

When ideas and beliefs meet over a physical space, we are dealing with Secondspatiality. This aspect of Canaan's characterization manifests in the narrator's belief that it (and not any other territory) is the object of God's promise to Israel (1:6). Moving quickly from Firstspatiality (mapping the physical Land in 1:4) to Secondspatiality, the narrator describes the Land as Israel's "sworn inheritance" (1:6). In the allotment narrative, the noun "inheritance" denotes an allocated territory to be inhabited by a family, clan, or tribe (14:13; 16:4; 17:6). "Inheritance" in the conquest narrative, on the other hand, denotes a belief that that Land is the object of a binding contract between YHWH and Israel's ancestors and that Joshua (continuing the work of Moses) is to put Israel in possession of it. The word frames the conquest narrative appearing at the beginning and end (1:6; 11:23).

The stories's fusion of Israelite memory into concrete physical nature underscores the special connection of the Land to Israel. Gibeath Haaraloth—the hill of foreskins—receives its name from the second circumcision that occurs there; the memory of the pile of foreskins is now fixed in the place (5:2). The first Passover ceremony in the Land is observed at Gilgal, where, in addition, Egypt's shadow upon Israel is "rolled" away (5:9). On Mt. Ebal, Israel fulfills Moses's instruction to write and read the Torah, and the shrine that is built there confirms that it has happened. Stones from the River Jordan are used to erect a monument there to commemorate YHWH's miracles (4:5–7, 20–25); unchiseled stones form the sacrificial altar on Mt. Ebal; and other stones become the stele on which the words of the Torah are written on Mt. Ebal (8:30–32). The ruins of Jericho uphold Joshua's curse over the city (6:26). A pile of stones from Achor Valley cover Achan and his family (7:26), just as executed Canaanite kings lay buried under the rubble of their former habitat (8:28–29; 10:27). These are no longer

ordinary places, the habitat no longer mere space. Such storied places are sites of Israel's memory and markers of Israelite identity.² They point to the law of YHWH and to the punishment that follows from breaking it.

Finally, a Thirdspatial analysis of this place of victory and struggle. The production of a spatial narrative such as the conquest of the Land betrays the narrator's interest in reconfiguring Israel's ties with the Land and with the Land's "other" inhabitants. On the one hand, the overall message of the conquest account expresses the power of YHWH/Israel over the Land. The victim list in Joshua 12 and the summary of the two military campaigns in the south and north (11:16–23; 12:7–8) convey the decentering of Canaanite hegemony.

p. 176 Secondspatial analysis indicates that the Land is Israel's "inheritance" and that Israel's bond to the Land runs deep into its ground. Although the map of the conquered territories resulting from the summary of all the conquests in 11:16–18 is smaller in size than the area described in Josh 1:4, the conquered Land is now Israel's, and Israel is "its" inhabitants. Canaan has become, as Joshua 11:22 puts it, "the land of the sons of Israel" (see also Josh. 1:2; 2:9, 18, 24; 5:6; 7:9; 9:24; 11:16, 23; 13:2; 21:43; 23:15; 24:3, 18).

On the other hand, even though the conquest account repositions the former Canaanite inhabitants at the margins of the Israelite hierarchy of power, the anxiety over the unconquered territories tells a different story. The Canaanite marginality is expressed spatially in a number of ways. Pacified Canaanites like Rahab and the Gibeonites live as insiders of sorts, incorporated but not fully absorbed into the Israelite community. The southwestern margin of the Land stretching along the Mediterranean coast, however, is an area that remains firmly in the hands of Anakim. The outer ring around the map of the conquered lands remains Canaanite at the end of Joshua's conquest. This territory runs from the border with Egypt (Shihor River) in the south to the coastal towns of Gaza, Gath, Ashdod, and Ashkelon, Ekron in the west, to Aphek, Dor in the north, and then moves northeastward to include the region of Lebanon, from Baal-Gad to Lebo Hamath at the foot of Mt. Hermon (11:22; 13:2–5). This "land that remains" unconquered is included in the promised Land but lies outside Israel's control at the end of Joshua's life.

This Canaanite margin—the outer space—not only interrogates the central claims of the conquest narrative (that Joshua took the entire promised Land, 11:23; 21:43), but also transforms the binaries (Israelites versus Canaanites) with which the narrative operates. The job of removing the unconquered inhabitants that remain in the Land at the end of Joshua's conquest is reassigned to YHWH alone: God takes it upon himself to finish off the surviving Canaanites (13:6). The departure from the typical approach, in which YHWH instructs Israel in how to defeat the Canaanites, is clearly shown in the ring that frames the book's center—chapter 12. In 11:21, the old binary is yet unchanged: Joshua eliminates the Anakim. In 11:22, where the survival of Anakim in the coastal towns is acknowledged, nothing is said about their future fate. But in 13:6, a change has been introduced: not Joshua, not Israel, but YHWH will deal with the remaining nations. Furthermore, note also in Joshua's farewell address the claim that YHWH, not Israel, will push out the remaining Canaanites from the Land, provided Israel obeys the Lord (23:5). The narrator's charging of God to complete the job of conquest is, in my view, a tacit recognition that Israel is not able to subdue those groups and that these groups challenge Israel's perception of itself; but, perhaps more importantly, it is a critique of the violence that has occurred before. YHWH no longer instructs Israel concerning the death of the survivors. And while the narrator commits YHWH to some level of violence necessary for removing the remaining Canaanites when (and if) he pleases, a lesser violence is to be enacted: YHWH will not "totally destroy" but only "drive out" or "push out" the remaining inhabitants (13:6; 23:5). The timing and manner of this divine action are not disclosed, and that is a good thing. It is now possible that YHWH will not do it. Thirdspatial insight, then, encourages a longer and deeper look into how the "periphery" causes the "center" to readjust. In this case, the strong Canaanite enclaves that remain after the conquest not only reject Israel's hegemony but create a better, more humane "center."

In conclusion, the narrative of Joshua continues to benefit from the marriage of new literary criticism and historical criticism, on the one hand, and with deconstructive/poststructuralist/postcolonial/cultural/gender

p. 177 studies, on the other. Disciplinary cross-fertilization and new analytical tools and insights continue to deepen our understanding of the biblical text. ↪ My hope, however, is that close readings that illuminate the beauty and depth of the Joshua narrative will continue to do so with an eye to mitigating the social, political, economic disparity present in our nations. This is to imagine the exegetical task differently: the memories and impulses that cruelly and unnecessarily turn people into “others” must be conquered and replaced with life-giving visions of plenitude and care for each other that the Joshua narrative can also support.

Notes

1. The valuable work of scholars using a comparative literary approach (drawing comparisons with other conquest accounts from Greek, Egyptian, and Neo-Assyrian literatures of the ancient Near East) will not be discussed due to lack of space. For a useful summary of this and other directions of study in Joshua, see Hess (1995).
2. Elsewhere in the book of Joshua we find similar practices: erecting a stone memorial (24: 26–27), (re)naming (14:12–15) and tracing the pilgrimage of ancestors to this land (24:1–3). Such practices attribute special significance to the Land and turn it from “mere space” into a meaningful, if dangerous, “place” (Brueggemann 1977).

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