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Goliath’s Humanimal Body: Masculinity, Ethnicity, and Animal Imagery in 1 Samuel 17*

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Abstract

In 1 Samuel 17, Goliath is described using animal imagery, depicted like a sea creature, a lion and bear, a dog, and scavengers’ prey. I argue that these images present Goliath as not fully human, and contribute to the construction of his masculinity and ethnicity. This article traces the trajectory here: masculinity is established then undermined; the foreigner encroaches then is expelled. Goliath is introduced as a hypermasculine ultrapredator. Akin to a sea monster from the chaotic beyond, he has an exoskeleton of fish-scale armour (17:5). David then likens him to lions and bears (17:34-37), imperial symbols for fearsome foreign nations. David, though, can grasp their beards (overturning their masculinity) and slay them. Goliath perceives David to be treating him like a scavenging dog (17:43)—a dishonourable creature encroaching where it does not belong. Consequently, the opponents threaten to give the other’s flesh to the birds and beasts (17:44, 46). Their bodies’ masculine wholeness is disarticulated by scavengers and expelled from society.

Key words

Animal imagery; masculinity; ethnicity; 1 Samuel; Goliath; monster

Introduction

When David faces Goliath in the Elah Valley (1 Samuel 17), no nonhuman animals[1] are present—this is man-to-man combat. However, the rhetorical imagination of this chapter is pervaded by nonhuman species. Goliath is described in terms resonant of a sea monster, a lion and bear, a dog, and the prey of scavengers. In this article, I will analyze these images, particularly examining their role in constructing Goliath’s gender and ethnicity. I will suggest that animals are used to first establish and then undermine his hypermasculinity, and that they evoke the encroachment and then expulsion of the foreigner.

* This article is forthcoming in *Biblical Interpretation*.
[1] Hereafter “animals.”

First, animal imagery plays a role in the construction of Goliath's masculinity.[2] I will draw out four main features that characterize the hegemonic male in 1 Samuel 17: bodiliness, warfare, authority, and honor.[3] The man is defined by his physical body and its paraphernalia. The ideal male body has integrity, is synecdochized by parts like penis and beard, and extends into its armor and weaponry.[4] Accordingly, the man is a fighter. Warfare is an emblematically male activity, which enacts masculine (and national) hegemony.[5] The hegemonic male has power and authority, performed by subordinating and denying agency to lesser groups (women, children, other men, and animals). In his position of authority, this man has honor and fears being shamed. We will see how, in the narrative trajectory of 1 Samuel 17, animal imagery first establishes these characteristics in Goliath and then undermines them.

Second, animal imagery conveys an ideology about Philistine ethnicity.[6] In the literary context here, Israel has appointed its first monarch and is establishing itself as a nation. Amongst its enemies (Ammon, Amalek, Moab, and others.), Philistia presents the primary threat. In this decisive battle, the two men—David and Goliath—embody their two nations,[7] which in turn represent proper and reprehensible religion. The characterization of "the Philistine"[8] Goliath thus refracts outwards to his nation and its gods. This fearsome beast of foreign religion is effectively depicted through imagery of wild animals. Spatially, the

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[2] There has been some work on masculinity in the books of Samuel, though this has mostly focused on David, with very little considering Goliath. E.g., David J. A. Clines, "David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible," in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), pp. 212–43; Sara M. Koenig, "Make War Not Love: The Limits of David's Hegemonic Masculinity in 2 Samuel 10-12," *BI* 23.4 (2015), pp. 489–517; Marcel V. Macelaru, "Saul in the Company of Men: (De)Constructing Masculinity in 1 Samuel 9-31," in Ovidiu Creanga and Peter-Ben Smit (eds.) *Biblical Masculinities Foregrounded* (HBM 62; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), pp. 51–68; Stephen Wilson, *Making Men: The Male Coming-of-Age Theme in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: OUP, 2015), pp. 96–107.

[3] Other characteristics of ideal Israelite males—such as virility, persuasiveness, and self-control—are less relevant for my purposes. See discussions of male characteristics in Wilson, *Making Men*, pp. 31–45.

[4] E.g., Hilary Lipka, "Shaved Beards and Bared Buttocks: Shame and the Undermining of Masculine Performance in Biblical Texts," in Ilona Zsolnay (ed.) *Being a Man: Negotiating Ancient Constructs of Masculinity* (Studies in the History of the Ancient Near East; New York: Routledge, 2016), pp.176–197 (178–79).

[5] Cynthia R. Chapman, *The Gendered Language of Warfare in the Israelite-Assyrian Encounter* (Harvard Semitic Monographs; Leiden: Brill, 2018); Harold C. Washington, "Violence and the Construction of Gender in the Hebrew Bible: A New Historicist Approach," *BI* 5.4 (1997), pp. 324–63.

[6] In the elite ideological construction of the text, the Philistines are presented as a united ethnic and national group, wholly distinct from (and the archnemesis of) the in-group Israel. The complex and disputed relationship between "ethnicity" and "nationality"—and the question of which (if either) term is appropriate for the historical Philistia—is beyond my scope here. Whatever the historical reality, the biblical text depicts the Philistines as both ethnically and nationally Other than the Israelites. See further Niels Peter Lemche, "Using the Concept of Ethnicity in Defining Philistine Identity in the Iron Age," *SJOT* 26.1 (2012), pp. 12–29 (24–28).

[7] Mark K. George, "Constructing Identity in 1 Samuel 17," *BI* 7.4 (1999), pp. 389–412.

[8] Goliath is called simply "the Philistine" throughout this chapter, his name being used only in 17:4 and 17:23.

Philistines represent an incursion into Israel's divinely-bestowed land, being encamped at Judahite Sucoh (17:1). Like foreigners in Mesopotamian texts, conceptualized as savage beasts encroaching from peripheral places,[9] this Philistine is imagined as a creature creeping in from the wild. David, though, will ultimately expel the foreign animal body.

Animals in this story, then, are not depicted for their own sake, but as part of an ideological discourse against an animalized other. Though each animal image functions differently, they all work together to this end. In what follows, I will examine each image in turn—sea monster, lion/bear, dog, and prey—particularly considering its implications for Goliath's masculinity and ethnicity. But I will begin with Goliath's body which, already when it enters the scene, appears as not-quite-human.

A not-quite-human body (1 Sam. 17:4)

As Goliath enters the battlefield, narratorial attention focalizes his body.[10] This Philistine from Gath is remarkable in his extreme height (1 Sam. 17:4). The textual tradition here may attest some anxieties around this physical excess: according to MT, he measures 6 cubits and a span (שֵׁשׁ אמות וזרת, around 9 and a half feet); according to LXX and 4QSam[a], 4 cubits and a span (τεσσάρων πήχεων καὶ σπιθαμῆς; around 6 and a half feet).[11] Though this is a significant difference, either option amounts a freak-show centralization of bodily abnormalities.[12] Indeed, throughout history, those with bodily differences and visible medical

[9] Brian Rainey, *Religion, Ethnicity and Xenophobia in the Bible: A Theoretical, Exegetical and Theological Survey* (Routledge Studies in the Biblical World; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018), pp. 54–95.

[10] On the importance of bodies in 1 Samuel 17, see George, "Constructing Identity."

[11] This textual issue cannot be resolved here. It may result from a scribal mistake—perhaps an original "four cubits" was inadvertently changed to "six cubits" in MT, anticipating "six hundred shekels" in v. 7. Or it may result from an intentional change—either "four" was changed to "six" in order to magnify David's success, or "six" to "four" to make the account more realistic or to make Goliath more akin to Saul. See discussions in J. Driesbach, *4QSamuela and the Text of Samuel* (VTSup; Leiden: Brill, 2017), p. 73; Benjamin J. M. Johnson, "Reconsidering 4QSama and the Textual Support for the Long and Short Versions of the David and Goliath Story," *VT* 62.4 (2012), pp. 539–41.

[12] Madadh Richey, "Goliath among the Giants: Monster Decapitation and Capital Display in 1 Samuel 17 and Beyond," *JSOT* 45.3 (2021), pp. 336–356 (347).

conditions[13] have been subject to a voyeuristic fascination and repulsion.[14] Goliath’s body pushes at, but does not quite cross, the boundaries of the human, lingering at the borderline of monstrosity.[15] He can thus neither be excluded from, nor integrated into, the categories through which we conceptualize humanity.

Fears of the giant mingle with fears of foreigners across cultures.[16] Throughout history, giants have been an emblem of the moral and physical depravity of the foreigner, deemed subhuman.[17] They represent those characteristics that have been conceptually expunged from the self-understanding of the in-group. In the biblical imagination, the race of giants and the race of Philistines are both mythic constructions. These constructions are mutually superimposed in 2 Sam. 21:15-22 (/1 Chron. 20:4-8), a passage which preserves in annalistic form an alternative tradition about the Philistine wars. Here, four Gittite warriors (including one Goliath[18]) are labelled as descendants of the *raphah*, probably the same *Repha’im* who appear as sinister gigantic opponents of the Israelites elsewhere.[19] Their freakish and excessive

[13] Some recent scholarship has analyzed Goliath’s height as resulting from a medical condition. Kellermann argues that Goliath has acromegaly (overproduction of growth hormone), a condition sometimes comorbid with “tunnel vision” (explaining why Goliath apparently cannot see David properly). Diether Kellermann, “Die Geschichte von David und Goliath im Lichte der Endokrinologie,” *ZAW* 102.3 (1990), pp. 344–57. Cf. Deirdre E. Donnelly and Patrick J. Morrison, “Hereditary Gigantism—the Biblical Giant Goliath and His Brothers,” *Ulster Medical Journal* 83.2 (2014), pp. 86–88 and, in popular literature, Malcolm Gladwell, *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits and the Art of Battling Giants* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), pp. 3-17.

[14] For example, on the “spectacle of deformity” embodied in the freak shows of Victorian Britain, see Nadja Durbach, *The Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

[15] As Cohen notes, monsters are used “to demarcate the boundary beyond which lies the unintelligible, the inhuman.” Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Of Giants: Sex, Monsters, and the Middle Ages* [Medieval Cultures 17; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999], p. xi). For an analysis of Goliath in light of monster theory, see Richey, “Goliath.”

[16] For example, Huot has examined the interconnected cultural fantasies of giants and racial identity in Medieval French prose. Sylvia Huot, *Outsiders: The Humanity and Inhumanity of Giants in Medieval French Prose Romance* (The Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2016). In a biblical context, Doak has described the giant as embodying that which is “anti-Israel.” Brian R. Doak, *Heroic Bodies in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: OUP, 2019), p. 146.

[17] Huot, *Outsiders*, pp. 2–12.

[18] The Goliath in 2 Samuel 21:19 is killed by Elhanah son of Jaare-Oregim, obviously contradicting 1 Samuel 17. The usual solution is to propose that an earlier story described Elhanah killing Goliath, but that royal propaganda later ascribed this victory to David. See Kaspars Ozolins, “Killing Goliath? Elhanan the Bethlehemite and the Text of 2 Samuel 21:19,” *VT* 72.4 (2022), pp. 716–33.

[19] There is debate over the meaning of הרפה in 2 Samuel 21 (vv.16, 18, 20, 22), as the usual spelling for the race of giants is רפא (BDB; s.v. III רְפָאִים). However, when the text is reproduced in 1 Chronicles 20 (vv. 4, 6, 8), this is changed to הרפאים, clearly linking into the tradition of giants. See discussion in Brian R. Doak, “The Last of the Rephaim: Conquest and Cataclysm in the Heroic Ages of Ancient Israel” (Harvard University, PhD, 2011), pp. 65-69.

bodies are epitomized in 21:20, where the Philistine has twelve fingers and twelve toes. Goliath's bodily excess is also encoded in his penis, the physical emblem of his masculinity. He is "foreskinned" (ערל; 1 Sam. 17:26, 36)—his body ethnically tagged and marked by religious infidelity. Without the civilizing, ritualized, and curated mutilation of Israelite circumcision, he begins to seem animalistic.

But Goliath is not straightforwardly a monster, nor quite an animal, creeping beyond rather than radically surpassing sanctioned categories of personhood. It is not his radical alterity that is troubling, but his uncanny closeness to humanity, his extreme height indexing both familiarity and otherness.[20] As such—and like giants throughout history—he projects Israelite fears about themselves.[21] Specifically, he exaggerates (and thus challenges) the hypermasculinity exhibited by king Saul.[22] The size and shape of bodies encode societal norms of masculinity and femininity, and the body of giants are "violently gendered" cross-culturally.[23] Goliath shares with Saul a masculinity defined by warrior status (e.g., 1 Sam. 11:11; 13:4), impressive armor (17:38-39), and bodily grandeur (9:2). By coupling height with hubris[24] and marking tallness as Philistine, anti-God, and almost nonhuman, the narrative decouples it from Israelite masculine ideals and precipitates Saul's downfall.[25] It enacts the message articulated in the previous chapter that Yahweh does not look favorably on the elevated (16:7). The heroic slaughter of this giant will be at the hand of the future king, who is both god-fearing and "small" (17:14). Our first glimpse of Goliath, then, is of a not-quite-human and hypermasculine foreign threat. As the scene progresses, he will be increasingly animalized.

Sea monster (1 Sam. 17:5)

Goliath's bodily excess is encrusted into his armor (1 Sam. 17:5-7). As in many ancient West Asian battle accounts, the battlefield here stages a performance of masculinity.[26] As the protagonist of the Philistines' gendered dramaturgy, Goliath is costumed with helmet, body

[20] Richey, "Goliath," p. 347; Grafius, "Text and Terror," pp. 35–37, 39-40.

[21] Grafius, "Text and Terror," p. 35.

[22] On the connections between Saul and Goliath, see Rachelle Gilmour, *Representing the Past: A Literary Analysis of Narrative Historiography in the Book of Samuel* (VTSup 143; Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 239–41; Matthew Michael, "Is Saul the Second Goliath of 1 Samuel? The Rhetoric & Polemics of the David/Goliath Story in 1 Samuel," *SJOT* 34.2 (2020), pp. 221–44.

[23] Cohen, *Of Giants*, xii. On the connection between monstrosity and masculinity in early Jewish texts, see Thomas Scott Cason, "Textuals Cialis: Four Narratival Strategies for Repairing Disabled Masculinity in the Second Temple Tradition," *BI* 23.4 (2015), pp. 601–23.

[24] Goliath's hubris is evident throughout the scene in his boasts and taunts against the Israelites; cf. Doak, "Rephaim," p. 161.

[25] On the ambiguous connotations of Saul's height, see Doak, *Heroic Bodies*, pp. 130–36.

[26] Chapman, *Gendered Language*; Washington, "Violence."

armor, greaves, and javelin, and wields a phallically-emblematic spear with a shaft like a weaver's beam. And whether this armor reflects the historical realities of a Philistine charioteer, a Greek mercenary, or a cultural composite,[27] it gives the impression of foreignness.[28]

Goliath's armor provides a second skin and his weapons extend his own physicality.[29] He is a cyborg—a hybrid of the technological and the organic. As a political figure, the cyborg can—according to the feminist socialist Donna Haraway—break down harmful and hierarchical dualisms.[30] The cyborg evidently transgresses the boundary between inorganic and organic. This opens up potential space to destabilize other binaries, such as culture/nature, self/other, male/female, and human/animal.[31] These break-downs, though, are not a given. For Haraway, while the cyborg has potential to invite utopian embodiment in "joint kinship with animals and machines," it can conversely offer "the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet… in a masculinist orgy of war."[32] In 1 Samuel 17, Goliath's cyborg ontology reinscribes militarized masculine power.[33] The merger of man and machine allows Goliath to transcend his own physicality. The body's soft fleshiness, associated with the feminine and understood as problematic, is buttressed in bronze. The soldier's body becomes a surface upon which male Philistine supremacy is technologically inscribed.

As well as destabilizing the human/machine boundary, Goliath's hybridization problematizes the distinction between human and animal. His cuirass is described as שריון קשקשים "scaled body-armor." קשקשים is never elsewhere used to describe armor, but rather the

[27] The inspiration for Goliath's armor is extensively debated. Some argue it reflects genuine memories from Iron Age I, such as the garb of Philistine charioteers (Jeffrey R. Zorn, "Reconsidering Goliath: An Iron Age I Philistine Chariot Warrior," *BASOR* 360 [2010], pp. 1–22; cf. Moshe Garsiel, "The Valley of Elah Battle and the Duel of David with Goliath: Between History and Artistic Theological Historiography," in Gershon Galil, Markham Geller, and Alan Millard [eds.] *Homeland and Exile: Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Bustenay Oded* [VTSup; Leiden: Brill, 2009], pp. 391–426). Others think it reflects cultural norms of later periods, such as the armor of Greek hoplites (Israel Finkelstein, "The Philistines in the Bible: A Late-Monarchic Perspective," *JSOT* 27.2 [2002], pp. 131–67; cf. Azzan Yadin, "Goliath's Armor and Israelite Collective Memory," *VT* 54.3 [2004], pp. 373–95). Galling suggests that it is drawn from an eclectic mix of items from different cultures (K. Galling, "Goliath Und Seine Rüstung," *VT* 15 [1966], pp. 150–69).

[28] King and Stager point out that much of the terminology here is non-Semitic: כובע; שריון; מצחה. Philip J. King and Lawrence E. Stager, *Life in Biblical Israel* (Library of Ancient Israel; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 228.

[29] George, "Constructing Identity," p. 396.

[30] Donna J. Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1985).

[31] Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, e.g., pp. 59-60.

[32] Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto*, p. 15.

[33] For the cyborg as a figure of masculine military supremacy, see Cristina Masters, "Bodies of Technology: Cyborg Soldiers and Militarized Masculinities," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 7.1 (2005), pp. 112–32.

scales of sea creatures (Lev. 11:9-12; Deut. 14:9-10; Ezek. 29:4). These atypical and animalistic connotations should be taken seriously. Those who engineered such armor (well-attested across ancient West Asia) may have borrowed from the adaptive mechanisms of the non-human world.[34] By binding together scales of leather, iron, or (as here) bronze, they aspired to emulate the denizens of the deep.

Scales evolved as a key adaptive mechanism in multiple species, such as crocodiles, pangolins, and various fish. Typically, hard geometrically-regular plates are attached to a flexible substrate in an overlapping pattern. This provides multiple evolutionary advantages. It resolves the potential incompatibility between protection (requiring hard materials) and flexibility (requiring soft materials).[35] The hard scales shield the underlying soft tissue from predators' teeth, while their arrangement distributes impact stress and tolerates localized damage. Scales' ability to move relative to one another allows the animal flexibility for locomotion. No wonder, then, if soldiers across the world have found bio-inspiration for their own armory;[36] indeed, there has been a recent resurgence of fish-inspired protective designs.[37] Both in ancient West Asia and today, this technological bio-mimicry brings soldiers not further from the animal world, but closer to it, disturbing the traditional dichotomy separating technology and culture from animals and nature.

Clad with armored scales and ready for battle, Goliath is akin not just to a fish but to a sea monster, the fierce and feared emblem of wild places, who must be fought and slain. This primordial monster of chaos, who inhabits the threatening spaces beyond the safe borders of the land, is an easy cipher for foreign enemies for other biblical authors too. Thus Isaiah labels Egypt as "Rahab" (Isa. 30:7), Jeremiah calls the Babylonian king "Tannin" (Jer. 51:34), and Daniel depicts imperial powers as beasts rising from the sea (Dan. 7:3-7). A foreigner from the

[34] Thomas David Hulit, "Late Bronze Age Scale Armour in the Near East: An Experimental Investigation of Materials, Construction, and Effectiveness, with a Consideration of Socio-Economic Implications" (Durham University, PhD, 2002), p. 5. Hulit offers an analysis and experimental reconstruction of scale armor from the Late Bronze Age. For the development of scale armor in the Iron Age, see Fabrice De Backer, "Scale-Armour in the Mediterranean Area during the Early Iron Age: A) From the IXth to the IIIrd Century BC," *Revue Des Études Militaires Anciennes* 5 (2012), pp. 1–38.

[35] Ravi Kiran Chintapalli et al., "Fabrication, Testing and Modeling of a New Flexible Armor Inspired from Natural Fish Scales and Osteoderms," *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics* 9.3 (2014), pp. 1–9 (8).

[36] Arciszewski and Cornell, for example, have shown that all the major types of armor in 2nd millennium CE Europe have analogues in the naturally-occurring armors of animal species. Tomasz Arciszewski and Joanna Cornell, "Bio-Inspiration: Learning Creative Design Principia," in Ian F. C. Smith (ed.) *Intelligent Computing in Engineering and Architecture 13th EG-ICE Workshop 2006* (Berlin: Springer, 2006), pp. 32–53.

[37] A. A. Johnson, G. A. Bingham, and C. E. Majewski, "The Design and Assessment of Bio-Inspired Additive Manufactured Stab-Resistant Armour," *Virtual and Physical Prototyping* 13.2 (2018), pp. 49–57; R. Häsä and S. T. Pinho, "Bio-Inspired Armour: CFRP with Scales for Perforation Resistance," *Material Letters* 273 (2020), pp. 1–4; Natasha Funk et al., "Bioinspired Fabrication and Characterization of a Synthetic Fish Skin for the Protection of Soft Materials," *ACS Applied Materials & Interfaces* 7.10 (2015), pp. 5972–83; Chintapalli et al., "Flexible Armor."

chaotic beyond, the Philistine here is like the king of Egypt whom Ezekiel describes as a great dragon of the Nile, notable for his scales (קשקשת; Ezek. 29:3-4).[38] Goliath makes pretenses towards monstrous power, like that of Job's Leviathan, the hypermasculine king of the sons of pride (Job 41:26 [ET 41:35]). Against Leviathan, spear, javelin, and sling stones are fruitless (41:18-21 [ET 26-29]); his armored scales are "made of rows of shields, shut up closely as with a seal" (41:7 [ET 41:15]) and thus they admit no penetration. As a cyborg sea monster, Goliath is emblematically hypermasculine: an enormous militarized and impenetrable body with power over all who might approach. We will later discover that, despite this garb, his weakness lies in the soft window of exposed flesh into which David's stone can penetrate (1 Sam. 17:50).[39] Goliath is introduced, then, as a human-animal-machine hybrid—a cyborg of monstrous proportions—who disrupts the boundaries of the human, embodies the fearsome power of the foreign, and reveals the troubling edges of the hypermasculine.

Lion and bear (1 Sam. 17:34-37)

The young shepherd David, of course, would seem to present no challenge to this mighty foe. Except that he is trained at slaying beasts. With a verbal aspect suggesting habitual action,[40] David declares that he would strike down any lion or bear who threatened his flock (17:34-36). This habituality may be exaggerated, but David's tale is not simply fantastical. The Southern Levant of the biblical period probably was home to the Asiatic lion and Syrian brown bear,[41] their presence being attested in textual, iconographic, and zooarchaeological evidence.[42] The home ranges of these species were large, inevitably overlapping with those of human settlers, and their protein requirements were high, motivating opportunistic consumption of prey. Little wonder, then, if flocks in the wilderness (17:28) presented an appetizing meal. In such moments, human pastoralists and nonhuman predators competed for the same resources,

[38] For the monstrous depiction of Egypt, see Safwat Marzouk, *Egypt as a Monster in the Book of Ezekiel* (FZAT 2. Reihe; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

[39] David's stone is usually understood to strike Goliath's forehead, though Wilson suggests the word here (מצח) may actually refer to his genitals. For Wilson, this contributes to Goliath's feminization and symbolical castration. Wilson, *Making Men*, pp. 101–2.

[40] David primarily uses vav + perfect conjugations. The only exception is ויקם in v. 35, which is presumably habitual in this context. JM §118n.

[41] As Ken Stone points out in his contribution to this special issue, though, such species are locally extinct in this area today.

[42] For iconographic evidence of lions see Brent A. Strawn, *What Is Stronger Than a Lion? Leonine Imagery and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (OBO; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), and for bears see Brady A. Beard, "Snatched from the Hand of a Bear: A Comparative Perspective on the Bear in David's Speech in 1 Sam. 17:34-37," *JNSL* 46.1 (2020), pp. 1–20. For zooarchaeological evidence see Ron Shimelmitz et al., "Large Predator Hunting and Its Interpretation: Leopards, Bears and Lions in the Archaeological Record of the Southern Levant," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 33.1 (2023), pp. 137–56.

and the physical capabilities of the latter stacked the odds in their favor.[43] Indeed, lions and bears were known for their strength and aggression (e.g. Hos. 13:8; Prov. 28:15), and biblical legislation suggested protocols for when livestock was inevitably savaged (Exod. 22:12 [ET 13]).

As David narrates it, his shepherding activities provide a training ground for warfare. The techniques he learns here are not just *analogies* for military practices—they are the very same practices. Describing himself in 17:35, he uses the verbs of a warrior. He goes out (יצא) just as the army ranks have (17:4, 8, 20). He grasps (חזק) the beard and strikes (נכה) the opponent as later his military general will (2 Sam. 20:9-10). He puts the beast to death with a verb for human slaughter (מות, hiphil).[44] And he saves (נצל) like a mighty warrior (e.g., 1 Sam. 14:48, 30:18). Later, when he confronts Goliath, his weapons are shepherds' implements (17:40). For David, it seems, shepherding practices *are* warfare practices. Correlatively, his opponents—lions, bears, and Philistines—belong to a common conceptual category. Goliath is "one of them" (אחד מהם; 17:36): a bestial opponent to be slain. This conceptual mapping is evident elsewhere too; for example, another verse narrates the mutual slaying of both a lion and a human adversary—a gigantic foreigner with a spear like a weaver's beam (1 Chron. 11:22-23).[45] The joint categorization of human and nonhuman opponents challenges the potency and relevance of the species line.

Furthermore, jointly categorized, the characteristics of humans and animals blur into each other. Goliath is animalized;[46] lions and bears are humanized. Indeed, each predator is described with body parts elsewhere indicative of humanity: a "beard" (זקן; 17:35) and "hand" (יד; 17:37). This humanization is sometimes fudged by translators and commentators. Even though this vocabulary elsewhere refers almost exclusively to humans, some translators substitute animalistic terms, like "mane" and "paw" (NASB). Alternatively, זקן might be emended based on the LXX (φάρυγξ) to גרון "throat," and יד taken in its figurative sense

[43] This is still a problem in the world today. For meta-analyses of predator-livestock-human conflicts in the contemporary world, see Kate Graham, Andrew P. Beckerman, and Simon Thirgood, "Human–Predator–Prey Conflicts: Ecological Correlates, Prey Losses and Patterns of Management," *Biological Conservation* 122.2 (2005), pp. 159–71; Chloe Inskip and Alexandra Zimmermann, "Human-Felid Conflict: A Review of Patterns and Priorities Worldwide," *Oryx* 43.1 (2009), pp. 18–34.

[44] The object of מות (hiphil) is almost always human (but cf. Exod. 17:3; 1 Sam. 15:3; Ps 105:29).

[45] 1 Chron. 11:22-23 replicates 2 Sam. 23:20-21, but makes the adversary more akin to Goliath by adding a note about his stature and beam-like spear. Doak ("Giant," pp. 24–25) refers to this passage in his discussion of "the giant as elite adversary and elite animal."

[46] Woodard has proposed that Goliath is animalized even in his name. He suggests that Goliath's name is etymologically akin to Luwian and Lydian names derived from *walwa- and walwe-, "lion." Roger D. Woodard, "On Goliath, Alyattes, Indo-European Wolves, and Lydian Lions: A Reexamination of 1 Sam. 17:1-11, 32-40," in Christopher Rollston, Susanna Garfein, and Neal H. Walls (eds.), *Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honor of P. Kyle McCarter Jr* (ANEM; Atlanta: SBL, 2022), pp. 239–54.

"power."[47] However, this misses the play of humanimal characteristics, and such sleights of hand (or paw) are not necessary. Just as Goliath has the scales of a fish, the predator has the hands and beard of a man.

Shepherding is not just a remembered datum of David's past; it is also rich with present semiotic potential. In particular, it can be adopted and molded within gendered discourses. For Eliab, David's shepherding signifies his youth and girlishness. He infantilizes and emasculates him by asking derisorily after "those few sheep" (מעט הצאן ההנה) in his care (17:28). Indeed, youngsters (Gen. 37:2; 1 Sam. 16:11) and women (Gen. 29:9; Exod. 2:16; Song 1:8) are elsewhere described as tending domestic animals. David, however, offers a resignification: shepherding should not be associated just with the domestic and feminine, but with the wild and masculine. Indeed, ancient West Asian kings were dubbed "shepherds." Slaughtering a wild animal provides a script for performing key masculine traits, such as strength, bravery, skill, and heroism. It is a form of costly signaling designed to boost a man's social capital.[48]

Goliath's own masculinity is negotiated in relation to David's. Figured as a leonine or ursine predator, Goliath has the power and fighting prowess of the culturally-exalted male,[49] and likely the beard to boot. He correlates with Hushai's description of mighty men enraged like bears (גברים המה ומרי נפש המה כדב; 2 Sam. 17:8), and valiant men with lions' hearts (בן־חיל אשר לבו כלב האריה; 17:10). However, his predatory powers are no match for the shepherd's skills. David, though ruddy and smooth-faced (1 Sam. 17:42), is able to immobilize and ultimately slay his opponents through control of their beards, at once signaling and overturning their masculinity.[50]

Within David's discourse, the animal imagery also acquires connotations of ethnicity. Idealized masculinity is not indiscriminately violent, but violent against certain types of people. Bears and lions are fearful foreign bodies, who encroach from the peripheral places of the wild. Within ancient West Asian imperial rhetoric, they become symbolic vehicles of foreign aggression. Some neo-Assyrian records, for example, describe tying bears and defeated kings beside each other at the city gate.[51] Large-scale Assyrian reliefs memorialize the king's lion hunts: a prime symbolic display of monarchic and national power over enemies.[52] The king

[47] For example, Gordon and McCarter read גרון here, assuming a misreading of ג for ז and of רו for ק. This is possible but not necessary (Robert P. Gordon, *1 & 2 Samuel: A Commentary* [Exeter: Paternoster, 1986], p. 157; P. Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation, with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* [AB 9; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984], p. 287). יד is translated as "power" by, e.g., ISV; Keith Bodner, *1 Samuel: A Narrative Commentary* (HBM; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), p. 184.

[48] Shimelmitz et al., "Large Predator," p. 139.

[49] Indeed, kings frequently depicted themselves as lions in ancient West Asia; Strawn, *Lion*, pp. 174–84.

[50] Cf. Lipka, "Shaved Beards."

[51] RINAP 4:18, 1, iii.41-42; COS 4.41:192.

[52] These are mostly housed in Room 10a of the British Museum; e.g., BM124868.

who hunts the lion—depicted even as grasping the predator by his hairy throat[53]—is the king who masters and destroys all foreign threats. Thus, David will defeat the lion of Philistia and legitimize Israelite rule. This image, then, jointly categorizes Goliath with lions and bears—representatives of foreign masculine powers, who can yet be overcome by the divinely-endowed soon-to-be king of Israel.[54]

Dog (1 Sam. 17:43)

Having convinced Saul of his fighting credentials, David approaches Goliath, his shepherd's weaponry of staff and slingshot in hand. Goliath does not see these as legitimate implements of war. "Am I a dog," he asks, "that you come to me with sticks?" (הכלב אנכי כי־אתה בא־אלי במקלות; 17:43). David has depicted an interaction between a heroic fighter, ferocious predator, and helpless sheep; Goliath recasts this.

In David's depiction, Goliath the predator and Israel the sheep are both figured as animals. But neither, it seems, is wholly dehumanized (in technical, psychological terms). Psychologists have shown that targets of dehumanization are typically both antagonistic (like Goliath but not Israel) and powerless (like Israel but not Goliath).[55] These characteristics are combined by Goliath the dog, who is both incapable and aggressive. Such targets are not, according to brain-imaging studies, neurologically recognized as fully human.[56] This psychological phenomenon has moral repercussions. The targets are excluded from the human community, where humanity forms the boundary within which interpersonal ethics apply.[57] Those excluded are deemed fair targets of violence and harm. In a society where violence against dogs had ethical legitimacy, Goliath's apparent dehumanization permits David to approach him "with sticks."

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[53] As noted by Strawn (*Lion*, p. 237), this posture is depicted on Assyrian wall reliefs and clay bullae. A bulla with an identical pose has been found from Iron Age II Samaria (p. 403, fig. 3.93).

[54] David's prowess is clearly derived from God throughout this chapter. At the end of his speech here, he subtly shifts the analogic components. The predator is still Goliath, but the shepherd saving (נצל) the sheep is no longer David saving Israel (as in 17:35-36) but God saving David (17:37). David's identity thus shifts from savior to potential prey. Correlatively, the model of human manhood ultimately advocated is one that subordinates itself to the supreme masculine power of the deity.

[55] Lasana T. Harris and Susan T. Fiske, "Dehumanizing the Lowest of the Low: Neuroimaging Responses to Extreme Out-Groups," *Psychological Science* 17.10 (2006), pp. 847–53.

[56] Thinking about those deemed low-friendliness/warmth and low-power/competence does not activate the brain regions associated with social cognition (the medial pre-frontal cortex), suggesting their dehumanization. Harris and Fiske, "Lowest."

[57] Albert Bandura, "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities," *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3.3 (1999), pp. 193–209; Susan Opotow, "Moral Exclusion and Injustice: An Introduction," *Journal of Social Issues* 46.1 (1990), pp. 1–20.

What's more, canines in ancient Israel could be both wild and domestic, with the unspecified image of a dog standing uncomfortably between the two.[58] As a creature which can form meaningful relationships with humans, the dog is easily humanizable,[59] moving troublingly close to the conceptual boundary we draw around our own species. As James Serpell puts it (based on cross-cultural research) the dog "is an interstitial creature—neither person nor beast—forever oscillating uncomfortably between the roles of high-status animal and low-status human."[60] It is an apt figure, then, for dehumanization.

The image of a dog, whether wild or domestic, challenges Goliath's masculinity. The biblical imagination primarily depicts wild dogs—feral pariahs. Though they occasionally present real predatory threats, they more often scavenge the kills of other animals. Unlike the lion and the bear, they lack the fighting prowess correlated with masculinity. Furthermore, their predilection for eating waste products, dead bodies, and blood[61] provokes revulsion, heightening the disgust reaction already activated by dehumanization.[62] This disgust cannot exist alongside masculine honor. Dogs can also be domesticated (employed for guarding, hunting, or herding). As such, they have value insofar as they serve their masters. If the hegemonic male is characterized by his authority over others, the dog is his opposite—an obedient subordinate. Thus, ancient West Asian texts often correlate "dog" and "servant" in formulae of self-abasement.[63] As a derogatory label, then, the dog's combination of the

[58] Cf. Ken Stone, *Reading the Hebrew Bible with Animal Studies* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2017), p. 56.

[59] Though dogs were not regularly kept as pets in the Iron Age Levant, relationships may still have formed between work-dogs and their masters (Helen Dixon, "Late 1st-Millennium B.C.E. Levantine Dog Burials as an Extension of Human Mortuary Behavior," *BASOR* 379 [2018], pp. 19–41). Most biblical imagery of dogs is negatively-charged (D. Winton Thomas, "Kelebh 'Dog': Its Origin and Some Usages of It in the Old Testament," *VT* 10.4 [1960], pp. 410–27; Idan Breier, "'Who Is This Dog?': The Negative Image of Canine in the Lands of the Bible," *ANES* 54 [2017], pp. 47–62), though some recent scholarship has emphasized the more positive aspects (Idan Breier, "Man's Best Friend: The Comradeship between Man and Dog in the Lands of the Bible," *JANES* 34 [2020], pp. 1–21; Geoffrey David Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs in Ancient Israel: A Reassessment," *JSOT* 32.4 [2008], pp. 487–500). For an overview of dog imagery in ancient Israel and the ANE, see Alec Basson, "Dog Imagery in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East," *Journal for Semitics* 15.1 (2006), pp. 92–106, and for a collection of essays about dogs in Jewish history (including the biblical period), see P. Ackerman-Lieberman and R. Zalashik (eds) *Jew's Best Friend? The Image of the Dog Throughout Jewish History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

[60] James Serpell, *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior and Interactions with People* (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), p. 312.

[61] 1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:19, 23, 24; 33:48; 2 Kgs 9:10, 36.

[62] Targets of dehumanization provoke amygdala and insulin reactions associated with disgust. Harris and Fiske, "Lowest"; cf. further Gordon Hodson and Kimberly Costello, "Interpersonal Disgust, Ideological Orientations, and Dehumanization as Predictors of Intergroup Attitudes," *Psychological Science* 18.8 (2007), pp. 691–98.

[63] 2 Sam. 9:8; 2 Kgs 8:13 (cf. 1 Sam. 24:15; 2 Sam. 3:8, 16:9); in the Amarna letters, 'Abdi-Aširtu is referred to as a "servant and dog" in EA 71, 85, 88, 104, 109, 116, 124; see also Lachish 2 (3.42A) and 6 (3.42E). See further George W. Coats, "Self-Abasement and Insult Formulas," *JBL* 89.1 (1970), pp. 14–26.

despised and the dominated, the abased and the obedient, effectively challenges the target's masculinity. Goliath is without fighting power, without authority, and without honor.

The imagined scenario also affects David's masculinity. Goliath's comments are stimulated by his recognition of David's youth and ruddiness (17:42). He is no armored man but just a boy with a stick. Attacking a dog does not suggest heroism, valor, or even straightforward self-defense. It is an act of aggression against a verminous creature excluded from the moral community. It may reflect, as cross-cultural ethnographic studies have suggested, a youthful bravado, an outlet for the displaced aggression of one who feels emasculated.[64] Goliath's imagery thus shames and emasculates both opponents. But he does not agree with both emasculations: he takes as a given that David's behavior is shameful (he has come to the battle as though to a dog), but he is affronted by the implications of this: that David's opponent is therefore shameful vermin.

Goliath's rhetoric is particularly resonant because he is non-Israelite. Indeed, ethnicity is a key stimulant of dehumanization cross-culturally.[65] And the image of a dog is particularly effective here. Dogs were likely associated with foreign practices: they may have played a role in foreign cults;[66] they violated Israelite purity laws by consuming dead bodies and blood; and they were possibly part of the Philistine diet.[67] Furthermore, dehumanization is often correlated with spatial transgression.[68] As creatures which (as the Psalmist says) prowl about the city (Ps 59:7, 15), dogs are spatially liminal, confined to the outskirts of society, yet threatening intrusion. They represent the foreign encroaching on native land, the wild encroaching on civilization, and the animal encroaching on the human. Here, they describe the man-of-the-in-between (איש־הבנים; 1 Sam. 17:4), who has stepped outside the camp enacting the illegitimate extension of Philistine ground. Goliath perceives himself, then, to have been emasculated and dehumanized by David, cast as a shameful dog to be repelled.

Prey for birds and beasts (1 Sam. 17:44-46)

Goliath and David continue their verbal jousting. They mutually threaten to give the other's body to the birds and the beasts (17:44, 46). Humans here are reduced to meat. They

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[64] Serpell, *Domestic Dog,* p. 304.

[65] E.g., see overview in Nick Haslam and Steve Loughnan, "Dehumanization and Infrahumanization," *Annual Review of Psychology* 65.1 (2014), pp. 399–423 (407–8).

[66] Meir Edrey, "Dog Cult in Persian Period Judea," in Ackerman-Lieberman and Zalashik, *Jew's Best Friend?*, pp. 12–35.

[67] Edward F. Maher, "Flair of the Dog: The Philistine Consumption of Canines," in Alan Gilbert, Justin Lev-Tov, and Paula Wapnish (eds.), *The Wide Lens in Archaeology: Honoring Brian Hesse's Contributions to Anthropological Archaeology* (Archaeobiology; Atlanta, GA: Lockwood Press, 2017), pp. 117–48.

[68] Cristian Tileaga, "Ideologies of Moral Exclusion: A Critical Discursive Reframing of Depersonalization, Delegitimization and Dehumanization," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 46.4 (2007), pp. 717–37.

are no longer individuated persons, but simply flesh (בשר; 17:44) or carcasses (פגר; 17:46), cast away like any other dead creature.[69] Indeed, humans need not be figured as other species to be animalized—they are already animals.

In this imagined future, the interaction between the human and nonhuman is no longer conceptual and figurative, but literal and physical. This profoundly disrupts the species boundary. Indeed, as scavengers rip through skin, the physical barriers separating species are ruptured; as they take flesh into themselves, the gut transforms human into nonhuman, the energy from human meat feeding diverse species.[70] Val Plumwood has called this "the most basic feature of animal existence on planet earth—that we are food and that through death we nourish others."[71] It powerfully evokes mortality salience—a reminder of humanity's perpetual vulnerability and edibility. There is a close psychological connection between recognizing our mortality and recognizing our animality,[72] and cross-culturally humans assuage their fears of death by denying their animal nature. They symbolically lift the body from its animal state by embedding it in systems of meaning.[73] These systems may be death-related, like mortuary rituals, or broader constructions, such as performances of gender and ethnicity which inscribe bodies with cultural meaning.

In fact, the community's performance of proper death practices is the concluding movement in the deceased's recital of masculinity, establishing his honor for posterity. Such a performance is prevented by scavenger depredation, which marks the death as intensely shameful.[74] Scavengers usurp the role of the grieving community, taking charge of the disposal of the dead, and thus disallowing the rituals which manage the terror of mortality. The deceased can no longer be honored with proper memoralization, nor integrated alongside other patriarchs

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[69] These terms can be used for both human and nonhuman flesh. פגר usually describes human bodies, but is used for animal bodies in Gen. 15:11.

[70] See Joshua Trey Barnett, "Mortal Assemblages: Rhetorics of Ecology and Death" (University of Utah, PhD, 2017).

[71] Val Plumwood, "Tasteless: Towards a Food-Based Approach to Death," *Environmental Values* 17 (2008), pp. 323–30 (324).

[72] This connection is developed by Terror Management Theory, based on the work of Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York: Free Press, 1973) and S. Solomon, J. Greenberg, and T. Pyszczynski, "A Terror Management Theory of Social Behavior: The Psychological Function of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews," in M. P. Zanna (ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (San Diego: Academic Press, 1991), pp. 91–159. See further Jamie L. Goldenberg et al., "I Am Not an Animal: Mortality Salience, Disgust, and the Denial of Human Creatureliness," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 130.3 (2001), pp. 427–35, and the application to biblical studies in Isaac Alderman, *The Animal at Unease with Itself: Death Anxiety and the Animal-Human Boundary in Genesis 2-3* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020).

[73] Goldenberg et al., "Not An Animal," p. 428.

[74] Saul M. Olyan, "Some Neglected Aspects of Israelite Interment Ideology," *JBL* 124.4 (2005), pp. 601–16; see also Carl Elliot Pace, "Over My Dead Body: Desecration of the Dead and the Afterlife in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel" (Hebrew Union College, PhD, 2015), pp. 134–40; Francesca Stavrakopoulou, "Gog's Grave and the Use and Abuse of Corpses in Ezekiel 39:11–20," *JBL* 129.1 (2010), pp. 67–84.

into the ancestor cult. Transformed into meat, his body is no longer active and agentive, but passive and powerless. His body reveals as illusory the narrative of man's mastery over subordinate creatures.[75] It falls on the wrong side of the carnophallogocentric discourse of Israelite masculinity, in which it is women and animals who have consumable flesh.[76] Penetrated and dismembered by ravaging beasts, its integrity is lost, and with it, its masculine wholeness. It is rendered unidentifiable, forcing social dislocation and prohibiting community recognition. It no longer eats, but is eaten; no longer a hypermasculine sea monster, predatory lion, or even scavenging dog, but rather their prey. Like Ezekiel's great dragon of the Nile, it is left to the appetites of the birds and the beasts (Ezek. 29:5). David and Goliath, then, mutually portend a profound emasculation, threatening their bodily integrity, agency, and honor.

David here heightens Goliath's rhetoric, predicting the fate not just of his immediate opponent, but of the whole Philistine camp (17:46). This at once ethnicizes and depersonalizes the slaughter—Goliath's body is significant insofar as it represents the national body. Losing an army of males would weaken and fragment the Philistine nation and symbolically assert the supremacy of Israel and her god. Scavenger depredation, a cruel inevitability of warfare, is transformed into nationalistic messaging (as occurred in many ancient West Asian texts and images).[77] In David's rhetoric, scavengers overrun the camp, that temporary and precariously-pitched Philistine outpost. They may take this territory for themselves, or relocate the deceased to their own kingdoms: birds dispersing flesh to the heavens, mammals across the land. David again raises the stakes. While Goliath had described "the cattle of the field" (בהמת השדה), David amplifies their savagery and geographical scope: "the wild beasts of the earth" (חית הארץ). This broad dispersal of Philistine flesh nullifies the possibility of its repatriation, its spatial reintegration into the community, or its placement in family tombs. It threatens the disintegration of Philistine nationhood.

Conclusion

In this article, I have analyzed the animal imagery in 1 Samuel 17. Each image works differently, each offering a different mode of relation between human and nonhuman. Goliath is a cyborg sea monster (human and animal join into a single hybrid being). He is categorized

[75] This is the conclusion reached by Val Plumwood after her near-death experience in the jaws of a crocodile. Val Plumwood, "Being Prey," in David Rothenberg and Marta Ulvaeus (eds.) *The New Earth Reader: The Best of Terra Nova* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 76–92.
[76] "Carnophallogocentrism" is Derrida's neologism to describe the meat-eating (carno), male (phallo), rational (logo) subject who is dominant in society and discourse (centrism). Though Derrida applied this idea to modern Western male subjectivity, it is also relevant for the Bible. See Ken Stone, "Animating the Bible's Animals," in Danna Nolan Fewell (ed.) *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative* (Oxford: OUP, 2016), pp. 444–55 (450–52).
[77] Pace, "Dead Body," pp. 138–40.

with a lion and bear (human and animal enter the same conceptual box). He is dehumanized as a dog (human becomes animal). And he is consumed by birds and beasts (human and animal physically interact). These modes of relating have different conceptual effects. Yet they all problematize the boundaries between species, drawing human and animal closer together. And they all work towards the same rhetorical ends, deployed in discourses of gender and ethnicity.

To begin with gender: animal imagery establishes then progressively undermines Goliath's hypermasculinity (signaled by his body, warfare, authority, and honor). This correlates with a dynamic of predation in which he moves from super-predator to prey. He begins as a hypermasculine monster: a gigantic impenetrable body, armored for war, with the authority of Leviathan (17:4-7). He becomes an apex predator, attacking like a lion or bear (an esteemed figure for a powerful monarch). Yet the predator's beard can be grasped, his flesh penetrated, and his honor overturned (17:35). Goliath then becomes a dog—still aggressive, but stripped of authority and esteem (17:43). He ends as flesh for scavengers—body disarticulated, removed of any agency, and suffering the ultimate shameful death (17:46). Animal imagery also constructs David's masculinity. To his opponents, he is no honored and authoritative fighter, but a mere shepherd (17:28), a boy who attacks dogs with sticks (17:43), who may end as disarticulated flesh (17:44). Of course, this is not the story's final assessment, and David emerges as the heroic victor epitomizing idealized manhood.

Moving to ethnicity: animal imagery also crafts Goliath's Philistine identity. The animals begin as wild and fearsome representatives of foreign aggression, but are progressively defanged as the Philistine threat recedes. Equally, their territorial connotations suggest the incursion and expulsion of the foreigner. Goliath begins as a sea monster, an uncontrollable power from the chaotic, unbounded beyond. He moves closer as a predatory lion or bear, prowling the wilderness for undefended flocks, an imperial symbol for a foreign aggressor. Closer still, he encroaches upon the city as a dog, scavenging the waste of human homes and violating Israelite purity taboos. But ultimately he is expelled, dispersed outside the civilized world, flesh for birds and beasts. When the story ends, the Philistines scatter from Israelite land (17:52).

Animals, then, are not mentioned for their own sake. Indeed, no actual animals are present in 1 Samuel 17—only imaginary portrayals for ideological purposes. This is common in the anthropocentric, gendered, and ethnicized discourse of the Hebrew Bible.[78] Here, these images subtly undermine distinctions or species, while reifying distinctions of gender and ethnicity. Together, they render Goliath's body monstrous, emasculated, foreign, and fearfully humanimal.

[78] See, for example, Ken Stone, "Animal Difference, Sexual Difference, and the Daughter of Jephthah," *BI* 24.1 (2016), pp. 1–16, Suzanna R. Millar, "The Poor Man's Ewe Lamb (2 Sam 12:1–4) in Intersectional, Interspecies Perspective," *VT* (2022), pp. 1–27.