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Essays on Biblical History and Literature

In Honour of

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NEW YORK • LONDON

2006

JEZEBEL—THE “CORROSIIVE” QUEEN

Herbert B. Huffman

Bruce Lincoln's (1994) discussion of the famous Icelandic saga called *Egill's Saga* calls to mind the portrayal of Ahab and Jezebel in Kings.¹ The Saga offers a striking comparison. The hero of *Egill's Saga* is an Icelandic warrior, farmer and poet who repeatedly has negative encounters with the Norwegian king, Eirik Bloodaxe, and his wife, Queen Gunnhild. Eirik marries Gunnhild during the course of a campaign in the Arctic north, in Bjarmaland—roughly Lapland. Egill's brother, Thorolf Skallagrimsson, joins Eirik on the expedition and serves as the ship's standard-bearer. Thorolf and Gunnhild become close friends. Thorolf is portrayed as “big and handsome” (§31) and Gunnhild as “outstandingly attractive and wise, and well versed in the magic arts” (§37).² Much later, after spending winters with Eirik and going on Viking raids in the summer (§37), Thorolf falls out of favor with Queen Gunnhild. Most likely the author of *Egill's Saga* “took an extant Norwegian tradition of

1. On the use of the Icelandic traditions in the study of the Hebrew Bible, see Nielsen (1954, 32–33, 47) who traces this comparison back to Klostermann's (1907, 348–428) use of the old Icelandic law-book in reference to the book of Deuteronomy. The secondary prompting towards this paper is the fact that when my parents were courting in the late 1920s they each drove a Model A Ford coupe. They nicknamed their two look-alike cars “Ahab” and “Jezebel.” I don't think that they had any idea of the implications of the stories about these two, but I imagine that they thought the names a bit risque.

2. In other texts, Gunnhild is the daughter of the famous king, Gorm the Old; see Jones (1984, 113) who concludes that Gunnhild's image is “consistently distorted” in written sources which show her “clear-headed, hard-hearted, retentive of personal loves and hates, and as wife and widow wedded to policies of disaster.” The “harsher” adjectives for Eirik and Gunnhild are supplied by “twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic historians, more especially by Snorri Sturluson in his *Heimskringla* and Egill's *Saga*, and are more profitably regarded as the penalty paid by those who are not of the poets' party” (p. 121).

polemic against Eirik and Gunnhild and transformed it into an Icelandic polemic against Norwegian kingship in general.³ King Eirik ruled briefly and was overthrown by his own people, so he is an easy target. Gunnhild, however, appears throughout Icelandic literature as a witch and a troublemaker.⁴

"Tempting as it is to admire Gunnhild as a woman who used men for her purposes and her pleasure," this is not the attitude adopted by *Egil's Saga* and other sagas. Instead, they describe her as "a witch, a murderer, a harriadan and an insatiable seductress: in short, the hyperbolic incarnation of the negative characteristics conventionally associated with women in a patriarchal society." For in their portrayal of Gunnhild, these Icelandic texts sought to discredit the Norwegian kingship, which they treated "as so deeply flawed an institution that it could permit a woman—and a woman so debased as Gunnhild—to speak with devastating power." Consequently, *Egil's Saga* presented "corrosive [that is, 'subversive'] speech of gossip, scandal, and innuendo, in which the *wanton and violent queen was made to represent monarchy in general*, and provided the point of vulnerability through which its claims to authority could be nullified."⁵

The portraits of Ahab and Jezebel are not an exact match for the portraits of King Eirik and Queen Gunnhild, but the similarities in the situation with *Egil's Saga* and 1–2 Kings are sufficient to suggest a re-examination of these latter narratives from the perspective of possible "corrosion" or "subversion." We will never know the actual historical truth of the time of Ahab and Jezebel, but we can examine the narratives

3. Lincoln 1994, 193. Pålsson and Edwards (1976, 9) describe Egil and his father as "resolutely anti-royal."

4. Throughout Old Norse literature, Gunnhild is "a stock character," portrayed as "beautiful, cruel, crafty, and unprincipled" (Lincoln 1994, 92).

5. All quotations from Lincoln 1994, 93 (emphasis added). Women's opportunities for "resistant, subversive and corrosive speech" were "eminently attractive" when they were unable to speak with authority (p. 101). Lincoln offers a biting comment on Queen Gunnhild's behaviour at the special court assembly that heard Egil's appeal to King Eirik: "Just before ordering her troops to demolish the court circle," Gunnhild "shockingly" compares Eirik's "timidity" with "Egil's strength," even envisaging Egil as "a threat to the throne." She contrasts "her own willingness to take action with Eirik's waffling and hesitation." She measures the king against his favourite retainer Berg-Onund. Specifically, she shows by her speech and conduct that she would rather "inflict shame on the king and cause him loss of pride than let his indecision cause Berg-Onund loss of property." Gunnhild refers to Berg-Onund as "my friend," so one is curious as to "what their friendship entails" (pp. 91–92, citing §§56.57–58; in other editions this is §57).

in 2 Kings to see something of what the text conveyed to its hearers and readers who understood what was stated or implied, whether understood as sober history or as clever propaganda, thus engaging in a variation of "reader-response" criticism, an investigation "of the *original* audience and its responses."⁶ And I want especially to look at the "subversive" elements.⁷

Certainly the belittling of King Ahab in the Deuteronomistic History is already well known, as is the unflattering portrait of Queen Jezebel.⁸ The two were the targets of "hatchet" wielders in a way that even unscrupulous politicians of the present might admire. Although many aspects of Ahab's loyalty to the God of Israel are also cited in the biblical text, the concluding description of him lists building projects and offers no encomium (1 Kgs 22:39–40). Even Jeroboam II, who is not spared the usual condemnation of the kings of Israel, gets an honourable mention in the brief description of his 41-year reign for restoring the boundaries of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the LORD's word (2 Kgs 14:23–28). The report that Jeroboam fought and recovered Damascus and Hamath is ascribed to "the annals of the kings of Israel" (2 Kgs 14:28) but is without confirmation in extra-biblical sources. Yet Assyrian texts describe King Ahab's leading participation in the great campaign that stopped Shalmaneser III at Qarqar in 853 BCE, as reported in detail in Shalmaneser's "Kurkh Monolith" inscription. This inscription is not necessarily an accurate account itself,⁹ but it lists King Ahab as third among the eleven cited rulers, following the kings of Damascus and Hamath. According to Shalmaneser's text, Ahab brings an

6. See Barton (1996, 212–13) who notes: "The reader-response critic is to a great extent the text's master, *deciding* within what context of expectations he will read the text and so make sense of it. In this system of thought, there are no correct interpretations of texts, only 'readings' which are more or less interesting, illuminating, novel, or valuable; the question what the text 'actually means' is seen as unbelievably naive." If "can be a false understanding of what reader-response criticism is, if we use the term to refer to reconstructions of the *original* audience and its responses." Nonetheless, the reconstruction of the way in which the text would be heard or read by its contemporaries seems an appropriate enterprise, however it might be labeled.

7. On "subversive" elements in Samuel–Kings, see Mason 1997 and the unpublished Ph.D. thesis of Seibert 2002, now scheduled for publication by T. & T. Clark.

8. Note also the condemnation of "all the practices of the House of Ahab" in Mic 6:16. For an analysis of the various portraits of Ahab down through the Talmud, see Brennerman 2000.

9. Tadmor (1961, 144) describes this monolith as "actually a provincial document, copied rather carelessly by some local—not very experienced—scribe." Tadmor adds: "The text... contains over fifty scribal errors, omissions, and misspellings."

improbable force of 2000(!) chariots and 10,000 foot soldiers.¹⁰ But Ahab's contribution, however one calculates his forces, was regarded by the Assyrians as a major asset, if only by the sequence of leaders cited. Nonetheless, Ahab's efforts to prevent further Assyrian advance in that campaign does not even draw a passing reference in the biblical text. Similarly, Ahab's exploits in Moab are referred to in passing in connection with the report about Jehoram, his son and successor (2 Kgs 3:4-5).¹¹ The opening summary on Ahab enumerates only his many crimes (1 Kgs 16:31-33).¹² The closing summary regarding Ahab mentions "the ivory house... and all the cities" which Ahab built as cited in "the Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel" (1 Kgs 22:39), but again ignores his major achievements. Granted, one might take 1 Kgs 22:39 as a tribute to "a man of unbounded energy and a zealous builder," a judgment that fits the archaeological evidence, although the text does not link any king by name to a specific building project.¹³ First Kings 22 concentrates on Ahab's final, unsuccessful battle with the Aramaeans over Ramoth-gilead. It mentions his prudent but clearly unheroic step, in response to Micaiah ben Imlah's prophecy of his death, of concealing his identity during the battle, a step that might well have impeded his leadership of the conflict. Whereas Ahab disguised himself, as clearly stated in the

Correction of mangled footnote

10. For Shalmaneser's text, see Grayson 1996: 11-24, esp. ii 89b-102, and for Ahab, ii 90-91. For the coalition of twelve kings aiding Qarqar (eleven others mentioned), Ahab provided a force exceeded only by that from Adad-idi of Damascus. Shalmaneser reports a force of 3,940 chariots, 2,000 being assigned to Ahab, along with 10,000 of the 51,900-plus foot soldiers cited. Adad-idi of Damascus and Uth-leni of Hamath together also provided 1,900 cavalry, and Gindibu of Arabia 1,000 camels. The Assyrian scribe or military intelligence was almost surely mistaken, as Ahab presumably did not have such chariot resources even if Judah, as his vassal, contributed to the number (see Na'aman 1976: 97-102). But such an Assyrian "error" does not justify the presumably unintended diminishings of Ahab's military contingent in some of the reports about this text. Avigad (1993: 4.1300b) reports 2,000 cavalry and 10,000 foot soldiers, whereas Wiseman (1998: 47) cited 200 (!) chariots and 10,000 foot soldiers, a serious misprint—an easy error in an English text but not in cuneiform writing. Note Halpern's (2001: xvii) judgment that King Ahab probably led about 15,000 troops to battle in 853, following the Assyrian text.

[Note also R. Tappy, *The Archaeology of Israelite Samaria II* (2001), 507-12.]

11. For discussion of King Mesha's own report, see van Zyl 1960, 189-92; Dearman 1989, 157-67.

12. 2 Kgs 10:26 refers to the sacred pillars (pl.) of the temple of (the) Baal which Jehu's forces brought out from the temple of Baal and burned it (fem. sing.), suggesting a textual problem and the possible omission of reference to the *asherah*; see Burney 1903, 306. Previous to Jehu's action, king Jehoram had already "removed the pillar of Baal" which his father Ahab had made (2 Kgs 3:2).

13. A positive assessment of King Ahab as builder by Avigad 1993, 4:1303b.

LXX, King Jehoshaphat of Judah fought in full regalia, attracting the attention of the designated Aramaean special chariot forces—but Jehoshaphat let the Aramaeans know that he was *not* King Ahab! (1 Kgs 22:30-33). Granted, some commentators read the story as commending Ahab's courage, in that, having been seriously wounded, he withdrew from the active battle yet remained "propped up in his chariot facing the Aramaeans" until evening, when he died, with the retreat call sounding soon afterwards (1 Kgs 22:35-36). But such commentators as those who award Ahab a sort of posthumous medal of honour may be unduly kind.¹⁴

The narrators attack Jezebel as well, though less directly. The first specific charge against Ahab was his marriage with Jezebel, a daughter of the Phoenician king, Ethbaal,¹⁵ which is immediately followed by the charge that Ahab "went and served Baal," "erected an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal which he built in Samaria," and made an *asherah* (אֲשֵׁרָה, 1 Kgs 16:31-33). Jezebel's first initiative is her "killing off the prophets of the LORD" (1 Kgs 18:3), something of which Ahab would presumably have been aware, whereas Ahab's vizier (וִּזְיָן) Obadiah was hiding prophets in caves and provisioning them (1 Kgs 18:4), again something of which Ahab presumably would have been aware and something that Jezebel could not prevent. And, as the legend unfolds, Elijah orders Ahab to assemble all Israel at Mount Carmel, including "the 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table," a command that Ahab executes (1 Kgs 18:19-20). And, so the story goes, after Elijah's stunning triumph and his victory command to the people to "seize the prophets of Baal," Elijah "brought the

14. Gray (1970, 444-55) refers to "the common assumption" that Ahab "was determined to remain in his chariot facing the enemy... to sustain the morale of his troops." For Walsh (1996, 354), the text might initially be read as indicating "Ahab's apparent cowardice and disdain for his royal ally's well-being," but disapproval of Ahab "changes to admiration" once we see that he "intends" to "brave the dangers of battle himself," while Jehoshaphat chooses "the protection of a special bodyguard." But what was Ahab's intent? Ultimately, for Walsh (1996, 355), "the narrator leaves us hopelessly unsure of Ahab's motivations but very clear about what is likely to happen. Whether through bravery or cowardice, Ahab will probably escape the lethal attentions of the king of Aram." On Ahab's possible withdrawal, see Jones 1984, 371.

15. Ethbaal ruled ca. 889-856 (Moscati 1988, 41). Josephus (*Ag. Ap.* 1.18 [116-25]) indicates that Ethbaal/Thobal, who came to the Tyran throne at age 16 by killing his predecessor, Phelias, and who ruled 32 years, was a priest of Astarte (Ἰσθβαλός ο ἱεὶς Ἀστάρτης ἱερεύς); see *Ag. Ap.* 1.18 (123). According to Josephus (from Menander), the dynasty which Ethbaal founded lasted for well over one hundred years. For a critical assessment of Josephus in regard to the Ahab period, see Timm 1982, 224-31.

prophets down to the Wadi Kishon, and killed them there" (1 Kgs 18:40). To all this, Ahab, who is reported as in the vicinity, makes no objection. And then, in the face of the long-sought heavy rain, Ahab rides off in his chariot to Jezreel with Elijah running a victory lap and leading the procession for the king all the way to the entrance of Jezreel (1 Kgs 18:45-46).

But, according to the narration, once Ahab communicates the amazing events to Jezebel, he, in consistent polytheistic fashion, puts one foot in the Yahwistic camp and the other in the Baal camp. Jezebel, like Elijah, is made of sterner stuff, just as inflexible in her support of Baal (and presumably Asherah) as Elijah is in his support of Yahweh.¹⁶ Thus Jezebel issued an immediate death notice for Elijah, who took her threat seriously and fled. Jezebel is unable to carry out her threat, however, in line with God's reprimand of Elijah for escaping into the wilderness (1 Kgs 19).

Though apparently lacking in direct political power, Jezebel knew the path to indirect power, reminiscent of Queen Gunhild's recourse to magic and secret plotting. The portrait of Jezebel's devious dealings in the affair of Naboth serves both to discredit her and at the same time to discredit Ahab. The narrative, whatever its process of formation, slays two targets—Ahab and Jezebel—with one story. Jezebel undermines Ahab in the Naboth incident in a fashion worthy of Queen Gunhild. As such, she is actively subversive—or corrosive, to use Lincoln's term. After all, kings are not supposed to be indecisive, to be corrected by or subordinated to their wives. Note David's sharp response to Michal, Saul's daughter, when he "leaped and danced before (the Ark of) the Lord" and she commented on his exposing himself in mixed company, behaviour judged by her as unsuitable to a king (2 Sam 6:16-20).

For kings who are chided for spending too much time with the ladies or not acting like adults, acting like babies instead of warriors, note the criticism of Yasmah-Addu, king of Mari, by his father Samsi-Addu, king of Assyria and his brother, Ishme-Dagan, king of Ekallatum and successor to his father. Samsi-Addu chides his son, Yasmah-Addu, for keeping

16. On some curiously parallel aspects of Elijah and Jezebel, see Trible (1994) who notes that 1 Kings portrays Jezebel "unsympathetically, indeed ignominiously," and thus contributes to the "condemnation of the North" (p. 167). Trible (p. 178) notes that both Jezebel and Elijah are portrayed as "strong, ambitious, and dedicated"; they use their power to get what they want. Jezebel worships Baal, and Elijah Yahweh, but they both "manipulate, scheme, and murder." It is striking that Jezebel is described as someone who would have accepted Elijah's challenge—either Baal or Yahweh is the primary god. Traditional polytheists would not concur in the necessity of such a choice.

the company of women while he and his other son, Ishme-Dagan, were winning great victories. He tells him to "go on a campaign to Qatna and show yourself a true man." "Make for yourself a great reputation with the Qatna expedition."¹⁷ Note also the letter from Samsi-Addu to Yasmah-Addu, with the critique of what the father judged to be an over-indulgence in the production of cult statues and divine paraphernalia.¹⁸

Whence comes your silver, whence comes your gold, with which you can reckon to make your gods? Or more yet, what is the expedition that you have organized? What city has given you ten or twenty minas of silver as a contribution or as payment for...? You assert, "I do not have silver at my disposition," yet you put out an order to make gods? (...) Are you a baby? To make so many deities... You have given signs of the mentality of a child.¹⁹

This perspective on kingship is well expressed also in the common ancient Near Eastern curse that "warriors become women" (Hillers 1964, 66-68), a theme closely related to the motif expressed by Isa 19:16: "In that day, the Egyptians shall be like women, trembling and terrified because the LORD of Hosts will raise His hand against them."

But how did Ahab respond to Naboth's rejection of his generous offer to buy his vineyard or to exchange a better vineyard for it, given that the vineyard adjoined his palace in Jezreel? He accepted Naboth's invocation of the inalienability of his inheritance, but went back to his palace and sulked, staying in his room and refusing to eat. When Jezebel confronted him and he told her of Naboth's refusal, Jezebel responded: "Now you need to exercise rule over Israel (or, 'Are you now exercising rule over Israel?'). Get up and eat something and show some spirit. I will get you the vineyard."²⁰ But having challenged his kingly courage and his judgment, it was Jezebel herself who "exercised rule" and obtained the vineyard. The indecisive, sulking king is no match for the decisive,

17. For the full translation of this text, see Durand 1998, No. 452 (ARM I.69 + M.7538).

18. In this connection note Walsh's (1996, 321) comment that Jezebel's behaviour toward Ahab in the Naboth story "includes the compassionate support of a spouse, but at the same time the kind of simplistic consolation she gives him has a parent-to-child tone about it ('Don't cry. Mummy will make everything all right')."

19. The Mari letter, A.3609, is published in a Spanish translation by G. del Olmo Lete from J.-M. Durand's French text; see Durand 1995, 273-74. I am indebted to Alberto R. W. Green for help in understanding the nuances of the Spanish text. (For a full edition of this text, see now Durand 2005, 17-20.)

20. A characteristic comment is that of Montgomery (1951, 330-31): "The queen, his evil genius, acts in a wifely way to comfort her lord; she replies to his complaint with feminine pre-emptiveness."

scheming queen. "She wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal" (1 Kgs 21:8), and thereby arranged to suborn perjury, specifically the charge against Naboth, "You have cursed God and king" (1 Kgs 21:10).²¹ And as a capital charge, conviction could mean death and the forfeiture of his property to the state.²² So Jezebel exercises rulership, using the law to subvert the law, and in so doing she also subverts King Ahab and his kingly manhood, in that Ahab is portrayed as a wimp or, perhaps, though it seems no better, as a clever manipulator himself.²³

To restate Lincoln's (1994, 93) assessment of Queen Gunnhild, the story "permit[s] a woman—and a woman so debased as Gunnhild [Jezebel] to speak [act] with devastating power." The story of Naboth's vineyard presents a "corrosive [i.e. subversive] speech of gossip, scandal, and innuendo, in which the wanton and violent queen was made to represent [the] monarchy [of the Omri dynasty] in general, and provided the point of vulnerability through which its claims to authority could be nullified" (Lincoln 1994, 93). Jezebel is decisive and knows how to achieve her objective; Ahab, the great warrior, in Assyrian eyes, at least,

21. Exod 22:27 reads, "You shall not curse God, nor shall you revile a N^{w} of your people."

22. Note Alalakh text No. 17.9-11, from the Middle-Babylonian period (Wiseman 1953, 40, Pl. IX) concerning the property of a criminal being forfeited to the palace (*2 ki-ma ar-wi-si iddalk / u bit-si a-ma ekall / i-tu-ub...*); and for his crime he was put to death and his property entered the palace..."; see also the translations by Finkelstein (ANET, 546) and Hess (COS, 3:251). For the relevance of this Alalakh text to the Naboth incident, see Westbrook 1991, 123. Cogan (2001, 481, 486) argues that the several-century gap in time between the Alalakh text and the Naboth narrative renders the parallel irrelevant. He does conclude, however, that "from the Naboth case... it does seem that the property of convicted criminals (or perhaps only the property of criminals guilty of *lese-majesté*) was transferable to the crown."

23. Regarding the role of Ahab in this use of his seal, note the comments in Cogan (2001, 485), including the notice of David Noel Freedman's suggestion: "Ahab manipulated the manipulative Jezebel. He knew exactly what he was doing and what the outcome would be." See also Walsh 1996, 321: "Is the king merely passive or is he cleverly manipulating Jezebel into doing his dirty work?" In 1 Kgs 21:19, Elijah bypasses Jezebel and charges Ahab directly with the killing of Naboth. Interestingly, the corresponding LXX passage (3 Kgdm 20:16) portrays Ahab as responding to the news of Naboth's death with the conventional signs of mourning, unlike the MT, where these actions come only after the accusation by Elijah; the LXX cites this mourning behaviour twice. Long's (1984, 226) comment that Jezebel "act[s] decisively with the unscrupled strength that Ahab lacks" would fit Queen Gunnhild perfectly. So does his statement that "Jezebel was the consummate expression of Ahab's misguided ways" (p. 226). All of these perspectives fit with a "corrosive" role for Jezebel.

is unable to deal with Naboth, an "uncooperative" traditionalist, though he is often shown in the narratives with Elijah as able to accommodate the power of Elijah's exclusive devotion to Israel's God, even Elijah's question to him, "Will you murder and also take possession?" (1 Kgs 21:19).

The Naboth vineyard episode, perhaps even an episode significantly reshaped by a later redactor if Rofé (1998) is correct, manages in this one story to demigrate both Ahab and Jezebel, using Jezebel's assertiveness to damage both her and her sulking husband. She becomes a murderer and he becomes someone who hides behind his queen. Ahab, who initially sulked, calmly accepts the consequences of the suborned, lethal perjury—calmly at least until accused by Elijah. And the denigration of Jezebel and Ahab is even more marked if one takes the account of Naboth's death in 2 Kgs 9:25-26 as more reliable, with 1 Kgs 21 then being a deliberate rewriting of the tradition to make propagandistic points.²⁴ Will we ever know the truth of the matter? Will we ever know to what extent the account in Kings is just propaganda against the northern kingdom and one of its most famous kings, Ahab? Will we ever know the extent to which the portrait of Queen Jezebel is accurate? Probably corrective sources will never be available, and there are many plausible ways in which the present texts might be interpreted.²⁵ What is available, however, is alertness to the multiple ways in which the texts may have been intended. Sober history they are not; effective propaganda they certainly are. With one-sidedness, distortion, and innuendo that would be the envy of current political campaigners, the stories in 1 Kings have achieved their goal of "smearing" the north and its most famous, its most notorious couple. Portraying Jezebel "unsympathetically, indeed ignominiously, feeds their [Deuteronomicist] condemnation of the North" (Trible 1994, 167). Alternatively, especially in regard to the Naboth incident, some scholars argue that the story "was composed to legitimate Jehu's overthrow of the Omrides and massacre of everyone associated with them, probably shortly after the event" (White 1997, 36). Yet massacres of royal families in the northern kingdom seem commonplace. Such massacres are attributed to Baasha, in accord with the

24. See the discussion in Jones 1984, 350-51.

25. For the range of understandings, see Cogan 2001. White (1997, 65-76) concludes that "the targeting of Jezebel as the cause of the violence" suggests her "high rank at the time of the coup, higher than that of queen mother. The virulence of the attack on her character suggests that she was regent (with her sons), that she was actually ruling in place of Joram when Jehu made his sweep" (p. 70), an argument which seems a bit forced.

word of the Lord spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite (1 Kgs 15:29), and to Zimri, in accord with the word of the Lord spoken by Jehu the prophet (1 Kgs 16:11-12).

With reference to the focus on Jezebel, Gwyn Jones observes that the portrait of Gunnhild in *Egil's Saga*, for all its slanders, shows that Snorri Sturluson was fascinated "by what his imagination" made of the queen. "Wicked she might be, but it is a regal lady who lives in his pages."²⁶ So the report of the death of Jezebel, even with its conceivable innuendo that in her old age she was seeking to vamp Jehu,²⁷ portrays her as scheming wickedly to support her husband, as meeting death with dignity.²⁸ She gains the grudging admiration of the bloody usurper, Jehu. Even though he "demonstrates his disdain for her by going in to eat and drink" (Miscall 1989, 80), he utters this final order regarding Jezebel: "Attend now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she was the daughter of a king" (2 Kgs 9:34).²⁹ Had she known of Jezebel, Queen Gunnhild, also the daughter of a king, would have admired her predecessor.

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26. Jones (1984, 121-22 n. 1) adds: "There is no evidence that Erik, Gunnhild, and their royal brood were greedier, crueler, more devious or ambitious than their fellow contenders for rank and riches in Norway."
27. For the possibility of this innuendo in the text, see Parker 1978; White 1997, 74.
28. For an illuminating discussion of Jezebel's last day, see Ackerman 1998, 160-61.
29. For another, less grudging, tribute to Jezebel, see Frost 1964. Frost judges Jezebel to be "a strong character, a determined one and a courageous one, who fought with sincere conviction for what she thought to be right... She tried to make Israel like her own Tyre and Sidon" (p. 515). Note also Frost's discussion of Ps 45 (pp. 516-17).

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