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The Discourse Structure of the Rape
of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1-22)

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INTRODUCTION

A quick reading of the Rape of Tamar (RT) in English, and with our attention directed ahead to the wider story of Absalom's rebellion, gives us the impression of a story vividly told and with a highly relevant human interest. We experience mild disgust for Amnon and pity for Tamar as we move on to the rest of the Succession Narrative.

A close reading of the text, in Hebrew, and with our interest concentrated on RT as a self-contained narrative, is like seeing the story in three dimensions and in colour where before we have seen a flat picture in black and white. As we examine the building-blocks which go to make up RT, and the way the author uses language to advance and articulate these blocks, we gain some idea of the skills he has employed to produce the vividness, suspense, disgust for one character and pity for another that we noted in our quick reading.

But such an examination yields far more. We understand something of the 'atmosphere' of RT which the original hearers will have perceived much more readily than we do; and we are able to approach some of the difficulties of the text from a fresh perspective.

This analysis relies heavily on the insights of R E Longacre[1] into the analysis of discourse. But the subtleties of RT have made it necessary to go a little further than Longacre (and a little nearer to the standard commentaries) and examine linguistic aspects of some individual words and phrases. I have tried to confine myself to linguistic aspects that establish the atmosphere and move the narrative towards and away from the climax of the story (which Longacre calls 'peak').

ESTABLISHING THE BOUNDARIES OF RT

How do we know that 2 Samuel 13:1 is the beginning of a new unit?

We know this both by the material at the end of chapter 12 and by the way chapter 13 begins.

The last verse of chapter 12 exhibits two features which signal that this part of the Succession Narrative—David's defeat of Rabbah after the birth of Solomon—is now drawing to a close. In verse 31 the author first makes a generalizing, opening-out statement: *weken ya'aseh lekol are bene 'ammon*.

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This serves to diffuse the intensity of the preceding narrative. It also, by implication, alters the location of the story. But the author changes location much more obviously at the very end of

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[1] R E Longacre, *The Grammar of Discourse*, 20-38 (London 1983) and 'The Discourse Structure of the Flood Narrative' in G Macrae (ed) *Society of Biblical Literature* (1976 Seminar Papers), 235-261.

the verse, for here he tells us that all the participants leave the battlefield and return to Jerusalem. This, the equivalent of *exeunt omnes* in a play, also performs the discourse function of moving David into the correct place for RT, which takes place in the royal palace.

The beginning of chapter 13 exhibits three features which show that a new unit is beginning. First, there is a shift in the number of participants from *Dawid wekol ha'am* in 12:31 to a much smaller group of individuals comprising of members of David's family. Second, all these are fully named, and their relationship to David and to each other is shown. Third, as we have seen, the venue is now Jerusalem.

But the most important indication that a new unit has begun is the aperture marker *wayehi 'ahare-ken* (v 1a). This often-used formula 'signals to the reader that a new narrative time-flow is about to begin; it puts his sense of expectancy on the alert for a new mounting towards a climax and its subsequent release'.[2] Here it signals the start of a whole new cycle of units which extend to the end of chapter 14 and compromise RT (the reason for Absalom's hatred); Absalom's revenge; his exile; and his subsequent return and reconciliation with David. Although *wayehi 'ahare-ken* functions semantically, but rather vaguely, as a temporal marker, its most important function is a discourse function similar to the raising of the curtain at the beginning of a play.

How do we know that 2 Samuel 13:22 is the end of a unit?

We know this by the construction of verse 22 and by the material included in verse 23. It must be said, however, that the end of RT is not so heavily marked as the beginning, because it is a necessary prelude to the subsequent events listed in the last paragraph.

In verse 22 the three important characters Absalom, Amnon and Tamar are all mentioned again, forming an inclusio with verse 1. Like verse 1, this verse is descriptive of a strong emotion.[3] The last clause of verse 22 closes the unit by briefly summarizing the events that have gone before.

Verse 23 and following exhibit four signs that a new unit is commencing. First, it begins with *wayehi*, a device used in Hebrew to herald the fact that a shift, normally of time and/or participant, is about to take place. Second, there is a time-lapse of two years. Third, there is a shift of location from the court of Absalom's country estate. Fourth, there is a change of participant role. Absalom and David are now centre stage; Tamar disappears altogether and is only alluded to once more (13:32) as the reason for Amnon's murder.

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THE NOTIONAL STRUCTURE, OR PLOT, OF RT

David's son Amnon is in love with Absalom's beautiful sister Tamar but cannot see a way to satisfy his passion. His cousin Jonadab helps him stage a deception which will bring Tamar into Amnon's room. When she arrives, Amnon carries the deception further so that he and Tamar are left alone. Despite her protests, he rapes her. He then commands his servant to eject her from his house. The experience drives Tamar to distraction. Absalom gives Tamar words

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[2] C Conroy, *Absalom, Absalom! Narrative and Language in 2 Samuel 13-20* (Rome 1978) 41.
[3] *Ibid*, 17.

of comfort that fail to console her; David is angry. Meanwhile Absalom is filled with hatred for Amnon.

THE SURFACE STRUCTURE OF RT:
AN EPISODE-BY-EPISODE SURVEY

Each episode will be treated as a microcosm of the whole unit. The boundary of each episode will be established, together with a more detailed account of the notional structure, or plot, before we consider how the plot is encoded in the surface structure (that is, in the language of the text itself).

Setting the stage—13:1b-1d

Delimitation
A new set of participants is introduced and named.

Notional structure
Absalom has a beautiful sister, Tamar. Amnon is in love with her.

Surface structure
Except for the last clause of verse 1, which we shall look at later, this stage-setting episode (called 'Stage' by Longacre) is marked entirely in background language. Not only is there a complete absence of the prefixal verbs preceded by *waw* used throughout the rest of this pericope (and traditionally in Hebrew narrative) to indicate that a main event is taking place; there are no verbs at all here. Added to this, verse 1 consists entirely of nominal forms—nouns and one adjective—preceded by *waw's* and one prepositional *le*. Nearly all the nouns are proper names.

Stage, therefore, directs our attention to the characters rather than advancing the narrative. For although *wayye'ehbeha* in the last clause of verse 1 is marked as a main event, it is static semantically, describing as it does Amnon's emotional relationship with Tamar. *'ahab* can mean 'to fall in love', as Conroy suggests.[4] but it need not mean this, and if verse 1 is a unit, as it seems to be from its construction, the more probable meaning of *'ahab* here is 'to be in love'.

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However, the fact that Amnon's love for Tamar is marked on the main event line is surely significant. The author wishes our first intimation of the incest, and therefore of the problem that will set in train events which eventually lead to civil war,[5] to be signalled in a way that claims our interest.

The particular characters mentioned in Stage, the number of times they are mentioned, the syntactical importance given them, and the way in which their relationship to each other is marked, all give us a clue as to the importance of their role as well as supplying us, subtly and in advance, with information not yet visible in the notional structure.

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[4] *Ibid*, 20.
[5] See R P Gordon, *I and II Samuel: a Commentary* (Exeter 1986) 26.

Jonadab, who plays an important part in RT, is not mentioned in Stage. He is introduced later in a 'mini-Stage' all to himself and thus is accorded a prominent position within this pericope. But he is only introduced at a point in the narrative when the need for him arises, and his role is confined almost entirely to RT. Even here he is merely the means by which Amnon and Tamar meet. Therefore he is excluded from Stage.

On the other hand, Absalom, who plays an important part in RT until the very end, is mentioned in Stage. He need not have been mentioned; it would have been more natural for the author to introduce Tamar using David's name and say *wuleDawid bat yapah*. The author deliberately uses Absalom's name here to prepare his hearers for the ever-greater part played by Absalom in later portions of the Succession Narrative. We are not allowed to forget that RT, however vivid in itself, is but a reason in narrative form for Absalom's revenge.

The phrase *ben-Dawid* occurs twice, once with reference to Absalom, once with reference to Amnon. The two occurrences of *ben-Dawid* have the very practical function of reminding the hearers that David has two sons called Absalom and Amnon. So far the sons have only been mentioned once before: in 2 Samuel 3:1-5, where we learn of their birth to David in Hebron by different mothers.[6]

But the fact that *ben-Dawid* occurs twice in a short verse in a semi-redundant position—we have already been told that Absalom and Amnon are David's—should alert us to the discourse function of these two references to David:

They carry David's presence through from the last cycle of units (chapters 8-12) into this cycle. We are not allowed to forget that David is the chief character in the Succession Narrative and that every aspect of it has a bearing on his progress. As we shall see, redundant or near-redundant allusions to David occur frequently throughout RT.

They remind us that 'all of the persons involved in this sordid tale are within David's immediate family'.[7]

They express, delicately but unmistakeably, the scandalous nature of Amnon's passion. The author is writing for members of a community in which sex between brother and sister was forbidden as a pagan practice

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(Lev 18:3, 9; Deut 27:9, 22). Now if both Absalom and Amnon are ben-Dawid, and if Tamar is Absalom's sister, than Amnon's love for Tamar must be incestuous. The contemporary hearer has to think a little to work out this implication of the two references to *ben-Dawid*,[8] but the implication is there. We shall later see how, in practice, David's court violated Israelite bounds of decency in this respect.

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[6] See P Kyle McCarter, *II Samuel: a New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (New York 1984) 100; Conroy, *Absalom!*, 20.

[7] G Ridout, *The Rape of Tamar*, in J J Jackson & M Kessler (eds), *Rhetorical Criticism: Essays in Honour of James Muilenburg* (Pittsberg 1974) 76.

[8] See Conroy, *Absalom!*, 3. He and other commentators connect the Succession Narrative with Wisdom literature.

The word *Tamar* is placed in such a way—before a closed syllable and at the end of a short clause—that heavy emphasis falls on it when the sentence is read aloud. Heavy syntactical weight is also given to *'Amnon ben-Dawid*. For an audience who may already have known the basic facts of the stories concerning Absalom'[9] the above emphases must have been enough to indicate that the tale of Amnon and Tamar was about to commence.

Episode 1—peak -8—13:2

Delimitation
One of the participants highlighted; Amnon named at the beginning.

Having introduced us to all the participants, the narrative momentarily sheds all its characters except one. Amnon, who alone remains on stage, has the spotlight turned full on him, and the focus shifts to his inner thoughts.

Notional structure
Amnon is sick with desire for Tamar but is unable to satisfy his love for her because she is a virgin.

Surface structure
With episode 1 the first incident occurs which sets the story out on its road towards the climax or peak. Things 'get going',[10] however, in the form of an obstacle to verse 1.

This is the first and most important of many obstacles that arise to frustrate Amnon. The problem of his being unable to 'do anything to' Tamar is eventually resolved in verse 14; but between now and then a whole series of smaller complications arise and are dealt with. Thus we find, from verse 2 to verse 14, a carefully constructed pattern of obstacle within obstacle. The suspense called by so much delay bears witness to the skill of our narrator.

Although *wayyeser* and *wayyipole'* are on the main event line and therefore begin to advance the narrative, neither of them are words denoting action; rather they denote an emotion and a situation respectively. So, although it begins to move, the narrative does not yet move onward to new events but inward into Amnon's mind.

The use of *'ahoto* in this verse is the first of copious instances in RT in which a sibling-word—*'ah* or *'aho*—follows a proper name and is

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therefore redundant. These often-repeated sibling-words have a discourse rather than a practical function: they serve to remind us again and again of the incestuous nature of Amnon's love for Tamar.

The unusual predominance of long vowels in the second clause of this verse provides a fitting expression for its subject-matter. The languishing tones help us to imagine the love-sick Amnon bewailing his passion. Some commentators draw attention to the source in Egyptian love poetry of the phenomenon of lovesickness and point out that the original hearers of RT

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[9] See Conroy, *Absalom!*, 113; Conroy, *1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, with an Excursus on Davidic Dynasty and Holy City Zion* (Wilmington 1983) 12.

[10] Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*, 21.

may well have recognized the pagan connection.[11] If this is true, the author seems to be inviting his hearers to begin making a negative assessment of Amnon at this point. Conroy suggests that our antipathy to Amnon begins with the crude euphemism in the last clause of the verse;[12] but if the original audience perceived Amnon to be suffering from a pagan love-malady as well as breaking God's law by loving his real sister instead of the 'sister' (that is, lover) of pagan poetry,[13] then the antipathy must begin here.

Perhaps, too, we are supposed to assume that Amnon's Egyptian-style love was symptomatic of a pagan atmosphere that pervaded Amnon's environment. In this case we are also being invited to begin making a negative assessment of the whole of David's court. As we shall see, the author's moral standpoint becomes increasingly clear from this point on, although it is expressed in such a way that it never intrudes into the flow of the narrative.

In order to understand correctly the last three clauses of verse 2 we have to decide whether the statement they make is an example of a tactful omission—a device often used by our author[14]—or whether it is to be taken at face value. Our problem arises because the author does not explain why Tamar's being *betulah* (v 2c) makes it impossible for Amnon to satisfy his love. The original audience will have understood this far better; we have to guess from the text.

Many scholars assume these clauses to be a simple case of omission: the narrator does not tell his audience, because they already knew, that Tamar was constantly guarded by chaperons, even in the presence of her brothers.[15] But why, in episode 6, does Tamar come on her own to Amnon's private apartment (vv 8ff)?

Another solution to the significance of these clauses is to accept the sentence at face value and take *betulah* to refer to Tamar's unmarried status. The author is then saying that Tamar's being unmarried (rather than married) prevents Amnon having sex with her; had Tamar been married, Amnon would have had easier access. In other words, fornication was forbidden in David's court but probably adultery was not: a situation which has existed in many courts through the ages.

Why does Amnon use the vague, negative *a'asot lah me'umah* instead of the positive and explicit *iskab 'otah*? Here we can assume that the author, thinking Amnon's thoughts,[16] uses the words that Amnon

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actually says to himself in the midst of his frustration. His use of a euphemism here tells us two things about Amnon:

First, his 'love' for Tamar is not real love at all.[17] We do not know whether this phrase had a noble or a crude connotation in the original Hebrew, but its denotation certainly suggests that

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[11] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 320; Conroy, *Absalom!*, 27.

[12] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 23.

[13] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 320-321.

[14] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 108-109.

[15] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 321; Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 262, though he also suggests that *betulah* would refer to Tamar's nubility.

[16] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 22.

Amnon's thoughts about Tamar are of a lustful nature, and that true respect for her is totally lacking.

Second, he is unwilling to face up to the seriousness of his flouting of Israelite law. At this point, he uses a vague phrase to conceal from himself that he wants to have sex with his sister. Only much later does he use the more explicit *sikbi 'immi* (v 11).

Episode 2—peak -7—13:3-5

Delimitation
Shift of focus away from Amnon; new character introduced; Jonadab named. Episode 2 is marked by the introduction of Jonadab, who is given his full title. Here Jonadab takes centre stage while Amnon's role is passive. After this episode Jonadab drops out of RT altogether and does not reappear until the next pericope (2 Sam 13:32-33, 35).

Notional structure
Jonadab, having learned of Amnon's love for Tamar, proposes a trick designed to bring Tamar into his apartment.

Surface structure
Episode 2 presents a suggested solution to the obstacle of verse 2. But it is as yet only a suggestion; we are left wondering whether the solution will work and what will happen if it does.

This episode is an embedded discourse in its own right. Its surface structure is divided into three paragraphs which reflect this.

(v 3) Stage
Here Jonadab is named and described, both in terms of his ability and his relationship to Amnon. There is a noticeable parallelism between this verse and Stage for the whole pericope. *wule'Amnon* in verse 3 mirrors *wule'Absalom* in verse 1; *wusemo* followed by a proper name in verse 3b mirrors *wusemah* followed by a proper name in verse 1; and the last clause of verse 3, like that of verse 1, is descriptive.

As we have already noted, the reiteration of Stage for Jonadab's benefit gives him a position of importance in this periscope. But it also serves to underline the splitting at this point of David's family into two opposing camps: Tamar is in Absalom's camp, Jonadab in Amnon's.[18]

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(v 4) Episode 1
The theme of Jonadab as hokam is expanded in this episode as Jonadab persuades Amnon to tell him why he looks so miserable. The notional structure is encoded here in the form of dialogue consisting of question and answer, each preceded by *wayyomer* on the main event line.

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[17] *Ibid*, 23.
[18] *Ibid*, 27.

This dialogue evidences a great degree of familiarity between the two characters. Jonadab does not use a respectful form of address when talking to the crown prince; nor is there any mention of his doing bodily obeisance. We must recognize, of course, that any original discussion would have been extended in both directions, and that familiarity is to be expected, as Jonadab and Amnon are cousins. But it is still striking that Jonadab, without any preamble, asks Amnon a personal question and ends with *halo' tagid li*, language one would use to coax a difficult child. It seems probable that Jonadab occupied the role of mentor to Amnon, and that our author wishes to present Amnon yet again as effete and immature.

(v 5) Episode 2
Jonadab's proposal that Amnon should feign illness and ask David to request Tamar to come and cook for him takes the form of direct speech by Jonadab. This direct speech, however, is divided into two parts.

The first part of the suggested trick—the suggestion that Amnon should lie on his bed, and the easy part for Amnon—is encoded as a threefold command: *sekab*, *wehithal*, and *we'amarta*, preceded by *wayyomer* on the main event line. These commands again show the extent of the intimacy between the two characters and, possibly, the fact that Amnon is weak and needs someone with initiative to 'organise' him. From now until the beginning of the rape scene in verse 11, the narrative is articulated by a series of commands, and executions of those commands, which we shall discuss as we reach them.

The second half of the trick—the part where Amnon himself will have to take the initiative—is in the form of a speech embedded in Jonadab's direct speech and depending on *we'amarta*. Why this double embedded speech? It possibly indicates that Jonadab is telling Amnon exactly what to say as though he doubts whether Amnon can manage on his own. But the embedded speech also performs the discourse functions of giving variety to the narrative and highlighting that part of the deception that will actually bring Amnon and Tamar together.

The second half of Jonadab's trick introduces a third imagined participant, David, into the story. The suggested request to David, couched in polite terms with use of *na'* is very unlike the tone Jonadab uses to Amnon. His real attitude to David is perhaps more apparent in his use of *'abib* rather than *hammelek*, which may indicate that Jonadab views David as an indulgent parent and thus an easy prey to deception.

Peak —7 is of key importance to the narrative in that its surface

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structure helps establish the atmosphere of David's court and also helps apportion responsibility for the grim deeds that follow. All the characters except Absalom and Tamar are seen in a disparaging light, which is not visible in the notional structure.

David
Heavy attention is drawn to David in Peak —7. Not only is he discussed explicitly as a willing instrument of Jonadab's craftiness, but he is also referred to implicitly. In verse 3 the author reminds us that Jonadab is David's kinsman, and in verse 4 Jonadab wonders why such sadness is found in *ben-hammelek*. These references to David at the moment when a deception is being mooted signal to the hearer that David was not in control of his court, that things were going on behind his back which he should have prevented.

Amnon

McCarter points out that the last clause of verse 4, in which Amnon confesses his love for Tamar, consists of 'a series of gasping sighs' achieved by repeated alliteration of *aleph* and by repetition of long o and long a.[19] We can also draw attention to the word-order of this sentence, with *'et-Tamar* at the beginning and *'oheb* at the end, the present participle instead of the more usual perfect tense, and the emphatic *'ani*.[20]

This sentence is so melodramatic that one wonders if the author meant his hearers to laugh at Amnon or at least to regard him as beneath contempt. This impression is supported by the fact that here Amnon refers to Tamar as *'ahot* Absalom *'ahi*. Thus he acknowledges that Absalom is his brother, but he carefully avoids admitting that Tamar is his sister.

Jonadab

We have already seen Amnon using language in order to conceal his sin from himself and from Jonadab. Now Jonadab performs the same doubtful service to Amnon. The end of this episode gives us a perfect example of the tactful omission. 'An obvious conclusion is left unsaid';[21] that is, once Tamar is in Amnon's room, he can do what he likes with her. In proposing a trick, Jonadab cunningly conceals its real purpose.

The Court

The frequency of reference in this episode to Tamar preparing food 'before Amnon's eyes' so that he may 'see' what she is doing and eat 'from her hands' (v 5, also repeated later in v 8 and v 9) is striking enough to merit special attention. It has been suggested on African models[22] that these are allusions to the fact that attempts were often made to poison members of the royal family and that the safest recourse, when

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poisoners were active, was for princes to have their food cooked by other members of the same family. If this postulation is correct, we have here yet another subtle but unflattering comment on David's court.

Episode 3—peak -6—13:6

Delimitation

Change of Amnon's location and bodily position; Amnon named at beginning. Jonadab now disappears, leaving Amnon alone until David enters. Amnon now alters his bodily position by lying down. Change of location is implied here; his bed is in the *heder*, probably a curtained recess off the main apartment.[23]

Notional structure

Amnon duly pretends to be ill. When David visits him, he asks him to request Tamar to come and bake cakes for him.

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[19] 321. See also Conroy, *Absalom!*, 29.
[20] See Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 261.
[21] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 108-109.
[22] Suggested by Dr A Naden in a seminar.
[23] See Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 263; B M Newman, *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*, 238.

Surface structure

Episode 3 describes the execution of Jonadab's proposal in episode 2. The first five clauses of verse 6 are in the form of straight narrative; the three-fold command of verse 5, plus the prediction in the last episode that David will visit Amnon, are now marked as main events. The last three clauses of verse 6—the proposal to David to summon Tamar—takes the form of direct speech by Amnon preceded by *wayyomer* on the main event line.

The language of episode 3 almost exactly mirrors Jonadab's words in the last episode. This repetition is a testimony to Jonadab's shrewdness; he has accurately predicted what actually takes place, and the fact that Amnon repeats his instructions to the letter demonstrates his trust in Jonadab's capability. But this repetition also has the discourse function of delaying the flow of the narrative and thus producing a feeling of suspense which will increase from this point on, now that the plot has begun to be implemented.

In one important aspect, however, Amnon does not repeat Jonadab's instructions. He requests that Tamar *telabbeb le'enay sete lebibot*; Jonadab merely suggested that Tamar be asked to produce *ehem* and *biryah* (v 5). In the next episode David reverts again to the more neutral *biryah* in his command to Tamar (v 7).[24]

Why does Amnon depart from Jonadab's instructions in this one particular? Some scholars have suggested that *lebibot* has an erotic connotation because of its connection with *yelabbeb*, which can mean 'to arouse'. They suggest that *lebibot* were cakes prepared and eaten by lovers, and that they come to Amnon's mind because he is obsessed with love.[25]

If this is so, the author must wish to convey two things about the

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participants: first, that Amnon is being very blatant indeed in his expectation of receiving from Tamar 'more than the restoration of his health';[26] second, that David, in not realizing Amnon's evil intentions and stopping him at this point, is being indulgent to the point of stupidity.

Neither of these assumptions about David and Amnon fit the general delicacy of the text. Those who suggest that *lebibot* connotes food eaten by lovers also have to explain why Tamar interprets David's request that she prepare *biryah* as a request for *lebibot*, as she clearly does (v 8 and following); and why she then prepares *lebibot* in Amnon's apartment quite unaware of the implication of her action—unless the author wished to emphasize her total naivety and innocence. The text makes it much more probable that *lebibot* were an enlivening food with a similar etymological derivation to our English 'cordial',[27] whose ingredients were supposed to stimulate a flagging appetite.[28]

Another important departure is made, this time by the narrator, from the exact words of Jonadab's proposal in verse 5. Jonadab's rather dismissive reference to David as *'abika* (v 5) is replaced in verse 6 by *hammelek*. This subtle but obvious editorial denial of Jonadab's

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[24] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 29.
[25] *Loc cit*.
[26] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 321.
[27] Suggested by Dr A Naden in a seminar.
[28] Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 262.

assessment of David reminds us that David is still the king and as such is worthy of the respect that Jonadab fails to give him.

Episode 4—peak -5—13:7

Delimitation
Change of location; change of participants; David named at beginning. The scene opens up for this episode and becomes more spacious as focus shifts from Amnon's house to Tamar's within what must have been the royal palace compound. David briefly resumes a dominant role.

Notional structure
David tells Tamar to go to Amnon and cook for him.

Surface structure
Here David, in the person of his messenger, puts into execution the proposal made to him by Amnon and issues a command to Tamar. Thus the chain of command/execution/command is continued in this episode. The first clause of verse 7 is straight narration initiated by *wayyislah* as a main event; the last two clauses are commands by David in direct speech depending on *le'mor*. Tamar's passive role in episode 4 is marked by the fact that she does not speak.

David's request to Tamar is considerably shorter than Amnon's request to David, which in turn is shorter than Jonadab's original suggested speech in verse 5. This progressive shortening of repeated speeches, made possible because the audience already knows the gist

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and does not need the whole speech repeated each time, demonstrates our author's narrative adeptness; for the economy of language thus achieved moves the story along faster, but not so fast that suspense is lost.

Episode 5-peak -4—13:8—the first four clauses of 9

Delimitation
Change of location; new character enters; Tamar named at beginning. The beginning of this episode is marked more strongly than those of the previous few episodes. Here we have a change both in participants and in location as Tamar enters for the first time.

Notional structure
Tamar goes to Amnon's house and prepares cakes for him. But he refuses to eat.

Surface structure
Episode 5, in which Tamar executes the command issued by David in verse 7, also describes the successful execution of Jonadab's original plan in verse 5. Thus Tamar acts in obedience to two sets of commands. This dual compliance gives us the feeling that a crucial point in the drama has been reached, and our suspense is heightened.

The focus here is on Tamar: on her entry, and on her activity, for she still does not speak. Although Amnon is mentioned (v 8), his presence is conveyed as background information.

We see him, and everything else in this episode, through Tamar's eyes,[29] including Amnon's refusal to eat (v 9c-d).

The dramatic but poignant nature of Tamar's entrance into the centre of the drama is demonstrated by the use of *telek* on the main event line. The way her entrance is marked shows that it is more important to the story than the king's entrance in verse 6. The verb *halak* conveys more movement than the forms of *bo'* and the forms of *ra'ah* used earlier to describe David's entry. We are therefore meant to picture Tamar as she moves from her house into Amnon's. But she does not know she is about to be ruined; we do. In this episode the author uses the device of putting the hearer in a position of superior knowledge to the chief participant,[30] thus causing us, the hearers, to pity Tamar even before she is raped.

The action now speeds up. The predominance of verbs denoting action on the main event line show a change from the conversations of previous episodes to 'bustling activity'.[31] Until this point, the narrator's efforts have largely been directed towards creating atmosphere and moving characters into their right position. Now that these results have been achieved, events begin to take place much more rapidly.

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Commentators rightly lay stress on the great detail devoted to Tamar's preparation of the food. Besides implying that Tamar performed her task with loving care,[32] this detailed description fulfils two discourse functions. It engages our visual imagination—we are to imagine Tamar busily occupied while Amnon looks on from the *heder*—and it delays forward movement, so heightening our feeling of tension.[33]

Amnon's refusal to eat occurs at the very moment when Jonadab's original plan seems about to be implemented. His refusal breaks for the first time the smooth sequence of request and compliance previously alluded to. Expressed in two words after the long description of Tamar's preparation, this refusal shocks the hearer, lowers his opinion of Amnon still further, and heightens tension by presenting another obstacle which delays the narrative flow. From now on we will begin to find that although the action grows faster, the author's delaying devices are employed more frequently.

Episode 6—peak -3—13:the last three clauses of 9—the first two clauses of 11

Delimitation
Shift in participant role; Amnon named at beginning. Amnon now returns once again to centre stage and plays a dominant role. Tamar, though on stage, acts as an agent of his command.

Notional structure
Amnon commands his servants to leave the room. They obey. Amnon commands Tamar to bring the food to his bed. She obeys.

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29 Conroy, *Absalom!*, 22.
30 *Ibid*, 113.
31 *Ibid*, 30.
32 Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 262.
33 Conroy, *Absalom!*, 21.

Surface structure
Amnon's return to the centre of the drama is marked by *wayyomer* on the main event line. This episode is encoded in the form of a series of commands (from Amnon) and compliances (first from the servants, then from Tamar).

The interaction between Amnon and the servants moves very swiftly; his curt dismissal of the servants is quickly followed by their obedience to the letter of his command (v 9). But the speed of the narrative is then reduced as Amnon addresses Tamar, and it slows down even further as Tamar brings the cakes to Amnon's bed (v 10)—the first two clauses of v 11). Here the focus is briefly on Tamar, and the author again utilizes the fact that we know what is happening whereas Tamar does not. The use in verse 10 of *miyyadek,* a repetition of *miyyadah* in verses 5 and 6, increases the atmosphere of suspense. So does the redundant *'aser 'asatah* in verse 10 and the nearly redundant information given in the last clause of verse 10—the last clause of verse 11.

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The fact that much action is taking place is shown by the three verbs of movement on the main event line (vv 10d, 10f and 11a); but the action is in slow motion. This marked difference between Tamar's 'bustling activity' and the slowness of the narrative is an indication that a climax is imminent.

Episode 7-peak -2—13:the third clause of 11-14

Delimitation
Change of mood and pace; shift in participant role. With this episode the narrative flow suddenly becomes very fast. Amnon and Tamar now assume equal precedence as they finally confront each other.

Notional structure
Amnon seizes Tamar and asks her to lie with him. She refuses, suggesting instead that they be married. He refuses to listen; he overpowers her and rapes her. This episode brings us to the climax of the plot.

Surface structure
This episode, and the next two (peak —1 and peak), display a marked decrease in the number of proper names. Pronominal forms are used instead; neither Amnon nor Tamar is named.

Episode 7 is carried forward by a rapid sequence of command/refusal/request/refusal. The dramatic change of pace is encoded in verse 11 (the third and fourth clauses) by a series of staccato clauses. The first two of these are verbs on the main event line; the last two (the fifth and sixth clauses) are imperatives.

For the first time since verse 1 the sibling-word *'ahoti* is used (v 11) in a non-redundant position as a form of address to Tamar. By analogy with *'ahi* in verse 12 we can assume that Amnon commonly addressed Tamar as *'ahoti*; the fact that this polite but affectionate form of address is used here by a man who has tricked his sister into his bedroom and wants to have sex with her adds shock to our feeling of suspense.

After the initial dramatic piece of straight narrative, 'he took hold of her', episode 7 assumes the form of embedded dialogue until the last clause of verse 13. The episode ends with a sequence of verbs, all on the main event line and all denoting violent physical action (v 14).

But the length of Tamar's speech and the following editorial comment which gives weight to Tamar's speech by referring to it as *qolah*, suggests that the author does not intend our interest to fall on the rape alone. Verses 12-13 contain the 'moral' of the tale and therefore represent what Longacre calls the 'didactic peak'.[34]

It is a tribute to the author's skill that he chooses to give us the 'moral' at a moment when the hearer's suspense is at its height; to put it in the

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mouth of the impending victim; and to give this speech to a woman. He has already used a similar technique in the David/Bathsheba pericope, where a statement of true Israelite morality is put into the mouth of the Gentile Uriah at a tense moment in the narrative prior to his death (2 Sam 11:11).

The substance of Tamar's speech, after her terrifed denial in the second clause of verse 12, is as follows:

1 This thing—incest[35]—is not done in Israel (v 12c).

2 This act is *nebalah*: sacrilege (v 12). McCarter points out that the association of this word with the rape of Dinah by a non-Israelite (Gen 34:7), the appropriation of taboo objects (Josh 7:15), and all kinds of sexual misconduct (Jud 20:6-10; Deut 22:21; Jer 29:23; Jud 19:23) give this word a powerful connotation of 'sexual and cultic disobedience'.[36] In wanting to rape his sister, therefore, Amnon is behaving in an un-Israelite manner—it is noticeable that the word *Yisrael* appears twice in Tamar's speech—and descending to the level of the Canaanite.[37]

3 This act will utterly ruin Tamar (v 13).[38]

4 This act will cause Amnon to become one of Israel's *nebalim* (v 13b). This word, closely related to *nebalah*, can be translated as 'disgraceful ones', but an alternative meaning of *nabal* is '(irreligious) fool'.[39]

5 David, if approached, will allow Amnon and Tamar to be joined in marriage (v 13).

Points 1 to 4 are straight statements concerning the heinous nature and disastrous consequences of incestuous rape. Point 5, however—a further example of the author's use of telling omission—is designed to convey information over and above its face value. Tamar's statement seems to indicate that marriage between her and Amnon would have been possible

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[34] Longacre, *Grammar of Discourse*, 24.

[35] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 327.

[36] *Ibid*, 323; see also, Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 263; Conroy, *1-2 Samuel*, 119.

[37] Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 263.

[38] See McCarter's association of Tamar's 'Where shall I take... ?' with the portrayal on an Egyptian stele of defeated kings crying 'Where shall we go?' *II Samuel*, 323.

[39] See *New American Standard* translation of 2 Sam 13:13, text and margin note; also McCarter, *II Samuel*, 323 and Ps 14:1.

despite the prohibitions of Deuteronomy 27:22 and Leviticus 18:9. Questions have been asked as to whether the above prohibitions had come into force by this period in Israel's history. If they had, then the fact that Tamar knew that David would have been willing to permit her marriage to Amnon is meant to reflect badly on the morals of David's court.[40]

Episode 8—peak -1—13:15-18

Delimitation
Amnon named at beginning; change of emotion. The shift in this episode is one of emotion: from love to hate. Unlike many of the episodes in RT, the end of episode 8 has a very noticeable participant and locational marker. Tamar is pushed outside Amnon's house and the door is bolted behind her.

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Notional structure
Amnon, who now hates Tamar more than he loved her, tells her to go. When she refuses, he compels her to leave his house.

Surface structure
If episode 7—the rape scene—had marked the surface peak of RT as well as its notional climax, this episode would serve to wind down the drama towards its conclusion. But instead, episode 8 advances the narrative by complicating the issue and thus produces a heightening of tension.

The transformation of Amnon's love into hatred is marked by a verb on the main event line (the first word of v 15) whose denotation is not only in dramatic contrast to Amnon's former feelings for Tamar but also shifts the focus of events away from the very physical scene we have just witnessed and into Amnon's inner thoughts. Last time we looked into Amnon's mind (v 2) he was sick with desire for Tamar; by concentrating our attention on Amnon's thoughts at this point, the author reminds us of verse 2 and therefore of the depth of the change which Amnon has undergone.

The first part of episode 8 (the first five clauses of v 15) is straight narrative. The remainder of verse 15—verse 17d, however, continue the cycle of request/refusal/command, couched in embedded dialogue dependent on *wayyomer/wattomer* on the main event line (vv 15, 16, 17). The last two clauses of verse 18—the execution of the command in verse 17—begins with verbs on the main event line which denote violent physical action and draw the hearer's attention to Tamar's exit in shame just as our attention was earlier drawn to her entrance.

Between these two main line events is placed a piece of background information concerning Tamar's robe (the first two clauses of v 18) which we shall study later.

The increasing speed of this episode is produced by a number of devices: the staccato tones of the last two words of verse 15; the short speeches carrying rapid interchange of dialogue; and the fact that Tamar's protest at being asked to leave (v 16) is expressed in far fewer words than her earlier protest at Amnon's attentions in verses 12-13.

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[40] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 323-324.

We have already noted that the author invites us to make a progressively more negative evaluation of Amnon as the story proceeds. In this episode our view of Amnon is made to descend even lower—if that is possible—than previously. It is noticeable that the author uses many surface structure devices over and above the content of the notional structure to convince us of the heinousness of Amnon's crime. Some of these devices are:

1 Four-fold repetition of *sin'ah* and related words in verse 15, outnumbering the two-fold repetition in the same verse of *'ahebah* and related words.

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2 The curt commands to Tamar of verse 15, this time with no form of address.

3 The author's comment at the end of verse 15 concerning Amnon's hardness of heart which repeats that of verse 14.

4 Amnon's contemptuous reference to Tamar as *'et-zo't* (v 17) and his talking about her in the third person to a servant although she is still present.

5 The implication of Amnon's speech to his servant (v 17) that Tamar has forced her attentions on him, not vice versa.[41]

6 The emphasis in the surface structure on the violence of Amnon's last act towards Tamar. Specific mention is made of putting her 'outside' and of 'bolting the door behind her' (v 18); also draws our attention to the fact that this deed is performed by Amnon's servant because it is the execution of Amnon's command.

7 The disjointed speech given to Tamar in verse 16, indicating her distress. If she had been speaking rationally, *lesallheni* would have followed *hazo't*. Much weight is laid too, on words, denoting 'evil' and 'grievousness' in Tamar's speech. (I have accepted Conroy's and Driver's reading of the second clause of verse 16 as *'al-'adah hara'ah haggedolah...*, 'No! This great evil in sending me away is more grievous than the other that you have done to me !'[42]) The placing at the end of the speech of *lesallheni*, a technical term for the dismissal of a divorced wife,[43] lays added emphasis on the fact that as Amnon and Tamar are now notionally married, Amnon has no right to send Tamar away.

8 The position here of the information concerning Tamar's robe (the first two clauses of v 18). We are not told what she is wearing at her entry onto the stage, surely—at least from a Western point of view—the most logical place to include such information. Why are we told it now?

   Because it seems irrelevant to the story, some commentators take the view that these two clauses are an interpolation.[44] Whatever the source of the information about Tamar's robe, as part of a discourse this information fulfils a useful role. It engages our visual imagination; it serves to delay the execution of Amnon's command in verse 17

[41] W McKane, *I and II Samuel: Introduction and Commentary* (London 1963) 239.
[42] Conroy, *Absalom!*, 151.
[43] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 324.
[44] See Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 264.

and thus heightens suspense; and it prepares the ground for peak. If it had been mentioned in verse 8, the hearer may have forgotten it by peak, where Tamar's robe plays an important part. On the other hand, to introduce it for the first time in peak itself (where, as we shall see, it plays an important role) would detract attention from Tamar's grief. From a discourse point of view, then, it is right to include this information here.

But it also communicates something by virtue of its position in the text which reflects poorly on Amnon. It reminds the hearers

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that the person whom Amnon has raped and now orders out of the house 'like an irksome prostitute',[45] besides being his sister, possesses the highest social and political status. *ketonet passim* only occurs in one other place in the Old Testament: with reference to the tunic worn by Joseph which marked his status as higher than that of his brothers (Gen 37:3).[46]

9   The structural resemblance between the sixth clause of verse 15-18 in this episode and the earlier fourth clause of verse 11-14 underline the fact that twice in the narrative Amnon displays an extreme degree of hard-heartedness. Verses 15-18 mirror verses 11-14 in the following ways:

   i.   Both begin with *wayyomer lah*.

   ii. Both occurrences of *wayyomer lah* are followed by curt commands from Amnon.

   iii. Both of these commands are followed by Tamar's refusals prefaced with *wattomer* to and including reasons.

   iv. In both instances, Tamar's refusals are followed by editorial comments describing Amnon's hardness of heart, which break the waw consecutive with *welo'* and are couched in almost identical language.

   v.   Both end with a description of Amnon's violent action.

Verse 15, with its many repetitions of words denoting love and hate, falls right between these two similar constructions and forms a pivot between them at the moment of the story's notional climax. G Ridout describes the whole structure of RT as an elaborate chiasm of which the first three clauses of verse 15 (also a chiasm) is the centre.[47] Our author may well have used this literary device in order to craft his story; the first part of verse 15 is indeed a chiasm, although one has to exert a certain amount of pressure on the rest of RT in order to fit it into a chiastic structure. What concerns us more here is that the structural resemblance between verses 11-14 and verses 15-18 again presents Amnon in a poorer light and invites us to make a progressively more negative assessment of his character.[48]

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[45] H W Hertzberg, *I and II Samuel: a Commentary* (London 1964) 324.
[46] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 325.
[47] Ridout, 'Rape of Tamar', 81-83.
[48] See McCarter, *II Samuel*, 326.

Episode 9—peak—13:19

Delimitation
Tamar named at beginning; focus on one participant; no location. Amnon now disappears from the scene, leaving our attention concentrated entirely on Tamar.

Notional structure
Tamar mourns the loss of her dignity and status.

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Surface structure
Episode 9 displays three features that mark it off from surrounding episodes:

1 It dispenses with location, leaving Tamar in a sort of limbo so that all the hearer's attention falls on her grief.

2 It changes word order once and breaks the waw consecutive twice. The unusual syntax of the second, third and fourth clauses of verse 19, combined with the position of *qara'ah* in the exact middle of the verse as one reads it, concentrates all our interest on Tamar as she tears her robe to betoken her lost innocence, beauty and eligibility.[49] Similarly, the build-up of verbs of movement in the penultimate clause of verse 19, plus *weza'agah* at the end of the episode, vividly convey her distracted state. (*qara'ah*, which has no waw, is, however, the dominant verb here.)

3 This episode exhibits poetic qualities not present in the rest of RT. Some of these are:

   i.   The rolling rhythm of the first three clauses, rudely broken by *qara'ah*. The use of *happassim* instead of *passim* in the last episode helps the rhythm flow more smoothly.

   ii. The dying rhythm of the last three clauses, caused by decreasing clause-length.

   iii. The use of *-ah* at the end of most of the words that precede a pause. This produces a rhyming effect.

   iv. The parallel construction of the first and fifth clauses.

4 This episode directs our attention to the participant's body in a way not found in other episodes. The first and fifth clauses both allude to Tamar's head, the focal point of her suffering as she first smears it with ashes, then places her hand on it in a gesture of grief.[50]

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[49] Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 264.
[50] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 326.

Episode 10—peak +1—13:20-21

Delimitation
New character enters; Absalom named at beginning; David reappears. With this episode Absalom comes on stage and begins to take an active role. Tamar, though still present, now becomes much less dominant.

Notional structure
Absalom tells Tamar not to take the rape seriously, but Tamar remains inconsolable under Absalom's protection. David is angry but does nothing.

Surface structure
After the poetry of peak, the narrative moves on towards its conclusion.

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The first part of episode 10 is encoded in embedded dialogue prefaced by *wayyomer* as a main event (the first five clauses of v 20); the second part is in the form of straight narrative.

With episode 10 the drama begins to wind down. The pattern of command/refusal is repeated in verse 20, but in a much-weakened form; and the following reference to David (v 21), though giving due respect to him by breaking the waw consecutive and naming him fully as *hammelek Dawid*, is but brief.

Some scholars imply that the MT version of this reference to David is inferior to the LXX version because it omits a sentence about him which is present in the LXX: 'But he did not cause his son Amnon pain, because he loved him seeing that he was his first-born'.[51] But the brevity of the MT, while failing to provide this valuable insight into David's mind, serves the discourse function of being powerful but short at a point in the narrative where anything longer would overshadow Tamar's desolation and the important concluding clause. It also shows, by virtue of the use of 'all these matters' which reminds us of the end of Absalom's speech, that David reacts correctly to the news of the rape whereas Absalom does not.

This episode is notable for its copious use of the sibling-words *'ah/'ahot* which were abandoned during the notional climax and structural peak of RT. Here, after the rape, they serve to underline the desperate nature of Tamar's plight. For Absalom's comfort is hardly brotherly, offering as it does only words and no action on her behalf; and the fact that Amnon is also Tamar's brother does not make his raping of her any less horrible. Absalom's use of the diminutive form *'Aminon* instead of the usual *'Amnon*,[52] and the euphemism for sex likewise have a hollow, cynical ring. Thus language is used here to produce both pity for Tamar and the beginnings of a negative evaluation of Absalom which will increase as the Succession Narrative progresses.

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[51] Conroy, *1-2 Samuel*, 119; McCarter, *II Samuel*, 315; *I and II Samuel*, 240.
[52] Gordon, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 264.

Conclusion/Stage to Absalom's revenge—13:22

Delimitation
Absalom named at beginning; shift of focus; summary in last clause. Here the focus moves from the outward events of the court to Absalom's inner thoughts and from Absalom's positive attempt at calming Tamar to his negative silence with regard to Amnon. This episode ends with a clause that sums up the whole pericope.

Notional structure
Absalom harbours silent hatred for Amnon because of his rape of Tamar.

Surface structure
The concealed nature of Absalom's hatred is encoded by *welo'* on the

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main event line followed by a break in the waw consecutive. The more intense *dibber* is used rather than *dabar* to convey the idea that Absalom 'said nothing' to Amnon.[53]

Like Stage, this episode contains a large preponderance of proper names. Absalom, Amnon and Tamar are all listed again, but this time the antagonism between Absalom and Amnon is marked by a two-fold juxtaposition of the two names, one separated by *'im*, the other by *'et*.

Longacre points out[54] that the exposition of a longer narrative is often encoded as a short embedded narrative which provides the main one with impetus. RT is a perfect example of the short embedded narrative. For although 13:22 adequately sets the stage for the next pericope by telling us of Absalom's hatred for Amnon, it is RT that fleshes out the reason for this hatred.

The fact that RT is Stage to a larger narrative has little effect on its structure and language. We have already noted the frequent reference in RT to Absalom and David, but these are not great enough to interrupt the narrative flow. The function of RT as Stage does, however, affect its ending. According to Longacre[55] the notional conclusion of a narrative brings the story to an end, be that end satisfying or unsatisfying. But the last verse of RT is clearly not the end of the relationship between the participants. In particular the bold statement of the second clause of verse 22, which condenses the unresolved situation of Absalom's hatred for Amnon into a few short words, are designed not to satisfy, but to make us read on.

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[53] McCarter, *II Samuel*, 315.
[54] *Grammar of Discourse*, 22-23.
[55] *Ibid*, 21.