



The King Stayed Home: David with Bathsheba and Uriah

Jaco J. Hamman^{1,2}

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Abstract

This paper explores the person of David (ca. 1010–1097 BCE), king of Israel and Judah, especially his personal, familial, and professional undoing through his adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband, Uriah the Hittite. After situating this event in the corpus of Davidic narratives, the paper examines David’s inner world—the David *with* Bathsheba—by drawing on the contribution of the British object relations theorist, W. R. D. “Ronald” Fairbairn. This paper argues that David relinquished his central ego to the castigations of an active inner critic and to the excitement of his libidinal ego. David, caught between these powerful forces, sabotaged his own reign, violated Bathsheba, became a murderer, and participated in his personal and familial demise. Men and contemporary leaders can learn from David’s undoing.

Keywords Bathsheba · Walter Brueggemann · David · W. R. D. Fairbairn · Endopsychic structure · Leadership · Men · Object relations theory · Psychology of religion

Introduction

Young boys often have a special attraction to the boy David, the fearless young warrior who killed the giant Goliath and who later became king of Israel and Judah (ca. 1010–1097 BCE). When I was a boy, David was my role model as I played with slings. Unlike David, I never hit the mark. Still, I was mesmerized by the boy soldier who killed Goliath with a single stone. In my illustrated children’s Bible, one print showed David wearing a soldier’s armor much too large for his body. In another, he triumphed over a slain Goliath. Young boys—and men too—know there are giants to slay, and having David as a role model brings comfort in uncertain times.

There is grace in growing up. Today, the person of David mostly awakens sadness in me rather than admiration. A boy soldier who matured to kill men by the “tens of thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7), who built a great friendship with Jonathan (1 Samuel 18), and who wrote songs and poems used in worshipping God then and now, David played an active role in destroying lives and relationships and ultimately saw his life and family collapse in ruin. I

✉ Jaco J. Hamman
jaco.hamman@vanderbilt.edu

¹ Vanderbilt Divinity School, 411 21st Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37240, USA

² Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa

argue in this paper that David's psychodynamics structure was the architect of this demise and as such brings lessons to all men, especially men in leadership.

"Truth [is] that which summons us to newness," Walter Brueggemann (1985) writes. "Our society currently is preoccupied with flattening and securing old truths, of putting the epistemological wagons in a circle" (p. 12). Brueggemann's enduring words grab one's attention in this age of disinformation and unilateral invasions. Since truth now faces multiplicity, *what are the "truths" about David's demise?* We can look at David and Bathsheba, as many scholars have done, and explore the intersectionality between trauma, rape, patriarchy, and power. We can also look at Jesus' genealogy, which is tied to David, and highlight God's covenant, faithfulness, providence, and grace. The gap between patriarchy and providence, however, may be too big for any person to cross. Another approach might be to look at how the person of David was remembered or received by Israel's or contemporary Christianity's imaginations. Here, we have a focused psychodynamic approach as we ask: *What vision of personhood does the British object relations theorist Ronald Fairbairn bring to a discussion of David's last years?* This question seeks to discover what was happening "within" David before something happened "between" David and Bathsheba. We are interested in the David *with* Bathsheba.

Identifying the dynamics that unfolded "within" a leader such as David is important for all males, especially those who claim leadership. Though this exploration will have direct implications for women too, I have men in mind as a contribution to a conference on pastoral care to boys and men. Like David, men still face giants; they take risks and create sustaining legacies for good and ill; they still seek erotic excitement in ways that enliven or deaden and traumatize. A leader anticipates unconsciously the last day at the office and the first day of a successor who will find fault, undo, and change the legacy created. The defenses against this unconscious knowledge are strong. The fear of how one will be remembered determines much of how men live their lives. Defensive living in the face of fear takes a man on a different path compared to living with open-hearted freedom and wisdom. Pastoral theologians and therapists invite us to look inward and discover our inner worlds, which determine much how we engage the outer world. Exploring a man's interiority resists reductionistic tendencies seeking to describe human nature through data analysis or through neuroscience.

W. Ronald D. Fairbairn is the master of interiority. Psychoanalytic theorist Thomas Ogden (2010) argues we need to read Fairbairn as his "theory of internal object relations constitutes one of the most important contributions to the development of analytic theory in its first century" (p. 102). "Object relations," James Grotstein (1993) reminds us, is, "strictly speaking [and] by definition, a statement of failed interpersonal relations with the needed parent" (p. 427). Despite Fairbairn's contribution, his work remains rather unexplored in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in general and in pastoral theology in particular. Compared to his contemporaries Melanie Klein, D. W. Winnicott, Alfred Bion, and John Bowlby, Fairbairn is less known and underappreciated as a theorist. His physical isolation in Edinburgh (Scotland) along with his "dense prose style, a highly abstract form of theorizing and a set of unfamiliar theoretical terms... that have not been adopted by subsequent analytic theorists" played a role in Fairbairn's marginalization as a theorist (Grotstein, 1993, p. 427).

This paper explores the inner person of King David in the time of his personal, familial, and professional undoing. It focuses on David's object relationships, which are prior to his relationships with people. A narrow focus on David's "within" and the David *with* Bathsheba does not seek to minimize the violation Bathsheba experienced, the deaths of her husband Uriah and other soldiers, the questionable loyalty of the general Joab, or even the

role the prophet Nathan played. All these figures and their experiences can inform us about human nature, the memory of Israel, life in the Ancient Near East, and humans relating to God. In the first part of the paper, I revisit Israel's memory of David. I discuss diverse narratives that played specific roles and functions in the life of Israel. Next, I paraphrase 2 Samuel 11, a narrative often titled "David and Bathsheba," and turn to David's endopsychic structure as introduced by Fairbairn: "[An] endopsychic structure is a sub-organization of the self (split off from the main 'body' of the ego/self)" (Ogden, 2010, p. 91). It describes how the self functions and relates to its various parts. Through these inner interactions, David sought to escape an active inner critic while he was driven by the excitements of voyeurism, climaxing, and murdering, actively participating in his own demise and the demise of others. David's interiority adds to the complexity of a well-known religious figure.

David's truths

In his book *David's Truth in Israel's Imagination and Memory*, Walter Brueggemann argues that David's person and place in history were too big to be contained by just one story. David is identified as a man after God's "own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14), God's "chosen one" (1 Samuel 18:14), a man even the apostle Paul revered (Acts 13:22). David, more so than Moses, dominates Israel's narratives. Still, "[N]one of the stories quite comprehend him," Brueggemann (1985) writes, "let alone contain him" (p. 13). Driven by narratives that served specific political, social, and religious purposes, the search for a "historical" David is futile (p. 14). Compelling as David's life is, the narratives surrounding him invite us to participate in meaning-making. Following Brueggemann, this essay intends "to focus on the question of truth. That means [we] do not inquire about facticity, not what happened, but what it claimed, what is asserted here about reality.... We do not ask in general about the truth, but in particular about the truth as it is linked to David's person" (pp. 14–15). Brueggemann reminds us that David's truth is polyvalent and filled with ambiguity. He is neither the "bloodthirsty oversexed bandit" nor a man with "faith [that] assumed a quality of elegance" (p. 16). We only have *truths* about David, and this essay will add one more truth to that list by drawing on the contributions of Fairbairn. In these truths, men have a chance to find themselves anew in an ancient narrative.

At least four primary narratives—"truths"—can be identified around the person of David. The first set of narratives describe "The Rise of David" (Brueggemann, 1985, p. 19). This is the narrative of Samuel anointing David, the eighth shepherd son of Jesse, who is then introduced to Saul, the king of Israel at the time, who was already rejected by God. It is the narrative of the innocent boy-looked-down-upon-by-his-brothers killing the giant Goliath. It tells of the tribe of Israel trusting that God will provide a new king and secure their survival. Here we find a naïve, hopeful truth as David is celebrated without any critical appraisal. David is a rising star as Saul's sun is setting.

The second set of narratives Brueggemann (1985) identifies around David describes "the painful truth of the man" (p. 41). This is the narrative that is the focus of this paper as David encounters Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, but includes the narratives of the rape of Tamar by Amnon, Absalom's rebellion, and David passing succession to his son with Bathsheba and his tenth son in lineage, Solomon. Brueggemann sees these narratives turning away from naïve endorsement to show the complex interiority of David "and all the delicacy, ambiguity, and freedom that David in fact exercises" (p. 42). David finds himself "under curse [and in] agony and anguish [as a] failed man" (p. 42). The narrator of this second set of narratives is suspicious

and critical of David. David the king has been replaced by David the man, and the naivete has faded away. Politically charged, the narrator is ambivalent as David's personal agenda and public roles clash (p. 45). If the tribe was effusive, the narrator is jaded. Since this essay questions the David who sought out Bathsheba, suffice it to say that in this second set of narratives one discovers David being an archetypal leader.

A third set of narratives surrounding David describes the stately kingdom David created or, as Brueggemann (1985) refers to it, "the sure truth of the state" (p. 67). These are the narratives of 2 Samuel 5–8, where David first captures Jerusalem and then settles there after finally winning over Israel's long-term enemies, the Philistines and the Moabites. Despite his successes, though, David is denied the privilege of building a temple for God (2 Samuel 7: 4). The reader discovers David as a blessed king and worshipping God (2 Samuel 18–28). The narrative has moved from the imaginations of the tribe and of the man to the imagination of the state secure in its political and sociological power. These sets of narratives are ideological and read like propaganda. They were possibly written by scribes to portray David as a faithful king engaged in empire building.

"The hopeful truth of the assembly" is the fourth set of narratives Brueggemann (1985) identifies that surrounds the person and myth of David (p. 87). 1 Samuel 25:28 and 2 Samuel 7: 24–26 but also Psalms 89 and 132 as well as sections of Chronicles (chapters 10–29) are ascribed to David, though the historicity of these texts is questioned. There is less imagination and idealization as the focus turns to Israel assembling to worship God in the context of exile when the power and status of the empire have disappeared. "Now the texts think primarily of a community of faith gathered around a future derived from David, but this David is no concrete help for politics and no concrete threat to the Babylonian or Persian overlords. Imperial dreaming is now precluded" (pp. 87–88). For Brueggemann, "'Assembly' refers to religious community, originally Jewish—but then also Christian—which has no ground to hope for political preeminence but can realistically be a community of faithful practice and anticipation" (p. 88). These liturgical narratives are hopeful as they anticipate, eschatologically, a Messiah who will bring salvation. This "hoped-for David" is the ideal messenger from God to proclaim God's will for God's people (p. 89). In these narratives, themes of *steadfast love* (Psalm 89), *security*—an "enduring dynasty" or a "sure house" (as some translations put it in 1 Samuel 25:28)—*covenant* (Psalm 132), and *eternal salvation* surround the myth of David (CEB, NIV [1984]).

Brueggemann (1985) concludes his book by saying that David "is indeed the dominant engine for Israel's imagination" (p. 111). The narratives, Brueggemann warns, cannot be collapsed or made to agree with one another; each has a unique function in a life of faith. Brueggemann calls on us to recognize the "power and fidelity" in David's memory (p. 112) and asks, "What is it that makes David endlessly fascinating to us" (p. 112)? Between David's "*amazing human sensitivity and solidarity*" and his "*profound yielding to God*," we are invited to discover ourselves anew (p. 114, italics in original).

We further explore "the painful truth of the man" (Brueggemann, 1985, p. 41) as Brueggemann identifies the second set of narratives around David.

David with Bathsheba

This paper focuses on the narrative found in 2 Samuel 11:11–27. The narrator gives us just enough information to voyeuristically fill in the details, as this essay will explore. The narrative can be paraphrased as follows:

In the time of the year when kings were off fighting wars, David stayed home in Jerusalem. Instead of leading his army, he abdicated his leadership to his general Joab. One night, unable to sleep, David got up from his couch and was pacing back and forth on the roof of the palace. He noticed a beautiful, naked woman bathing and sent an assistant to inquire. She was purifying herself after her menstrual cycle. David learned she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, but rather than letting it go, David sent for her. She took care preparing herself to enter the presence of the king. David had sex with Bathsheba and sent her home. Later, Bathsheba, missing her period, sent word to David: "I'm pregnant."

David, seeking to cover his infidelity, summoned Uriah with the hopes that he would have sex with his wife. Uriah abstained, however, as his own moral code led him to identify with the other soldiers who could not sleep with their wives. Uriah's abstinence derailed David's plans. Increasingly anxious, David tried again to get the couple to be intimate, this time by getting Uriah drunk. Yet again, David's plan failed. Frantically, David wrote Joab a letter telling him to place Uriah near the front line in the war and then to pull back the soldiers so that Uriah might die. Uriah carried his death letter to Joab, who, as a loyal general, did as his king ordered. Uriah, alongside other soldiers, was killed.

When David and Bathsheba got word Uriah was killed, she mourned as was customary. She then joined David's house, giving him a son. The Lord saw what David did as evil. David's firstborn with Bathsheba, as earlier foreseen by the prophet Nathan, died. Whereas David fasted to avert the death and mourned while the boy was still alive, he did not mourn the customary way when the child died. Nathan, a prophet whom David trusted, visited with David to confront him with his actions. David repented in response. Later, Bathsheba birthed another son, Solomon, who would become king of Israel.

Reflecting on this narrative, Baruch Halpern (2001) writes that "David has now sunk to or even below the level of his subordinates in earlier narratives: as king, he has become, in the end, the outlaw he once represented without incurring guilt. He has murdered, not an enemy nor even a former enemy, but a loyal and upstanding subordinate.... Yahweh is furious" (p. 36).

Questions abound: Why would David choose to stay home when other kings were off fighting wars? Why did he remain on the palace roof, turning himself into a voyeur? Why did he have sex with the wife of another man, as we know he had a number of wives and concubines? Why did he feel he needed to hide his actions? Why did he not call on the prophet Nathan—a wise man—before embarking on his schemes? Why did David not follow Ancient Near East laws that would have allowed him to pay reparations for his adultery and seek forgiveness from Uriah? Why was David willing to sacrifice many other soldiers to ensure Uriah was killed? Why did he not feel any remorse when his subjects died? How did David, the once beloved soldier boy and king, become a bully, an evil-doer, and murderer? What are the roles of power and patriarchy in this narrative? Halpern (2001) asks: "Was David the maniac that his opponents accused him of being? And if so, how did he succeed in becoming a nearly universal icon of piety, decorum, and success?" (p. 103).

The narrative is unambiguous in portraying David as a king who lost his way. Something was going on in David's inner world. The object relations theorist Ronald Fairbairn gives us a glimpse into this world.

Fairbairn's endopsychic structure

Ronald Fairbairn's 1944 paper "Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-Relationships" is described as "groundbreaking" (Celani, 2010, p. 51). It is the culmination of three earlier papers in which Fairbairn refined his thoughts: "Libido Theory Re-Evaluated" (1930) (D. E. Scharff et al., 1994, pp. 115–156), "Schizoid Factors in the Personality" (1940), and "The Repression and Return of Bad Objects" (1943) (Fairbairn, 1996b, pp. 3–27, 59–81). Always revising and clarifying his theory, Fairbairn returned to this paper throughout his career. The endopsychic structure is a compelling vision of the inner dynamics of a person. Since I imagine Fairbairn's essay will be unfamiliar to most readers, I will elucidate Fairbairn's thought in some detail.

An infant, Fairbairn contends, is born with an integral yet undifferentiated self (or an ego that can become a self). Frustrated with parental responses to especially physical, emotional, and relational needs, the infant internalizes relationships as a first defense. The internalization process splits the infant's experience in two, with one part becoming a rejecting ego, which is painful and therefore repressed. David Celani (2010) reminds us that "ego structures are not composed of hundreds of separate actual interpersonal events that are sequentially dissociated and held in the unconscious. Rather, they are complex views of the object over time that are melded together and modified by the child's fantasies and fears that were appropriate to the age at which the dissociation took place" (p. 85). The rejecting ego is called by various names: the antilibidinal ego, the internal saboteur, or the inner critic.

The other part, which inevitably also frustrates and fails, is split off around excessive excitement and stimulation. In the presence of abuse and trauma, the split is more intense. This exciting part, also called the libidinal ego, is the internalization of the (m)other who taunts with false promises, who can act seductively, who excites without offering satisfaction. It is "infantile, naïve, and unrealistic, and seeks compensation for all the hurts it has experienced from a higher power" (Celani, 2010, p. 90). Grotstein (1993) sees the use of

exciting [as appropriate] to describe a mother's or father's actual behavior toward the child. In other words, the term may refer to a seductive or overstimulating parent whose excitations the infant must painfully internalize to control. Another meaning, probably the more general one, is that the exciting object is so only because it is the inescapable Janus-face of the rejecting object. It is important to realize that Fairbairn has described an unconscious demonology, as it were. (p. 434)

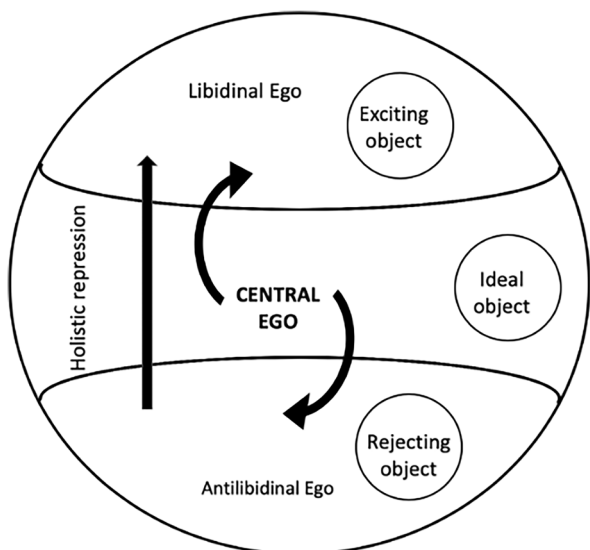
Both the split-off parts engage the central ego, a third part of the self associated with being able to grow into relationships of relative independence. The central ego develops in response to the emotionally neutral, morally idealized (m)other. It has its own idealized objects, though, in an oversight, Fairbairn does not write about this in his paper (Celani, 2010, p. 53). (The "ideal" object appears in Fairbairn's 1954 one-page paper "Observations on the Nature of the Hysterical States," p. 107). The central ego represses both the antilibidinal ego and the libidinal ego as the self finds both unbearable. Between maturity or rejection and excitement that fail, the structures of the self dynamically influence each other as there is no separation between energy and structure. This three-in-one structure has a backdrop Fairbairn takes over from Freud—the unconscious, the pre-conscious, and the conscious—though Fairbairn is not clear how these elements inform the psychodynamic structure (Clarke, 2005, p. 65).

Fairbairn thus replaces Freud's tripartite view of human nature—the ego, the superego and the Id—with a six-fold structure that constitutes the self—the central ego and its idealized (or ideal) objects, the antilibidinal ego and its rejecting objects, and the libidinal ego and its exciting objects. These structures are “dynamically interacting” as they influence each other (Celani, 2010, p. 85; Davies, 1998, p. 60). This personal constellation can be portrayed as shown in Fig. 1.

“Fairbairn’s conceptualization of the different selves,” Jody Messler Davies (1998) writes, “a libidinal self and an antilibidinal self—and a central ego organized inextricably around distinct but irreconcilable experiences of the object—experiences that are gratifying, overstimulating, rejecting, and depriving—suggests a mental organization in which psychic structures themselves are agentic and dynamically interacting” (p. 60). The subsidiary egos function as three different “selves” (Rubens, 1984, p. 431). In Fairbairn, we thus receive a multiplicity of self–other configurations that remain vital in understanding human nature, especially in a world where divisions are increasing and the “other” often becomes either a rejecting or stimulating object.

In the first part of his paper on the endopsychic structure, Fairbairn (1996a) separates himself from Freud. With his explanation that “the libido is primarily object-seeking (rather than pleasure-seeking, as in the classic theory) and it is to disturbances in the object-relationships of the developing ego that we must look for the ultimate origin of psychopathological conditions,” Fairbairn invites his readers to a new understanding of human nature (p. 82). He frames his quest as a scientific one, identifying with the scientific revolution of the early twentieth century. Still, he does keep ties to Freud’s understanding that “love seeks for objects” as well as to Klein’s notion of internalized objects (p. 83). Though Fairbairn goes to great lengths to show that he is in the Freudian tradition, he faults Freud for not engaging in “scientific re-formulation” (p. 83). “Introjected objects in the inner reality are processes which by their very nature imply that libido is essentially object-seeking,” Fairbairn continues (pp. 82–83). The pleasure principle and repetition compulsion are inadequate to explain introjection, he concludes.

Fig. 1 Fairbairn’s object relations theory of personality (Scharff & Birtles, 1997, p. 1095)



Schizoid persons, those for whom object relationships present a special difficulty, led Fairbairn (1996a) to move away from Freud and Klein (p. 84). They experience “the dramas enacted upon the stage of inner reality” without being involved, as if an onlooker (p. 85). Our attention, Fairbairn contends, needs to focus on “the relationships of various *parts* of the ego to internalized objects and to one another as objects” (pp. 84–85, italics in original). Fairbairn then describes a woman whose internal objects were punitive and rejecting, which filled her with a sense of “badness” (p. 86). In analysis and in counseling, a counselee establishes “an object relationship of a special kind with the analyst” (p. 87). The central ego oversees a bad object relationship growing into a positive object relationship. These relationships cannot be confused with impulses that are instinct driven. Fairbairnian psychotherapy thus explores the nature of these inner relationships rather than impulses as ego structure supersedes impulse and instinct.

Fairbairn (1996a) identifies “the central ego,” a part of the self that can observe with some neutrality what is experienced. It is the part of an infant that relates to the (m)other’s breast (p. 89). Painful or traumatic experiences are repressed and internalized by the central ego as an object that is rejecting or bad. There is a “dynamic charge” in the central ego that allows the ego to split off and repress another part of the ego (p. 90).

Fairbairn (1996a) returns to Freud’s essay “Mourning and Melancholia” and Klein’s “depressive position” to argue that depression and mourning are not the suffering he most encounters as a clinician. Rather than depressed persons, he meets persons who are schizoid. Likewise, Fairbairn states that his clinical work shows that “*repression* originates primarily as a defense against ‘bad’ internalized objects (and not against ‘impulses’ whether incestuous in the genital sense or otherwise)” (p. 93, italics in original). It is not suffering under the superego but suffering under rejecting internalized objects. He identifies the dynamic of a “moral defense” wherein a child would rather identify with the bad internalized object (I am bad) than see the (m)other as bad, for care is still needed.

In a footnote, Fairbairn (1996a) argues that (symbolic) representations can only arise from defensive operations after a failed holding environment:

[It] is always ‘bad’ objects that are internalized in the first instance, since it is difficult to find any adequate motive for the internalization of objects which are satisfying and ‘good.’ Thus it would be a pointless procedure on the part of the infant to internalize the breast of a mother with whom he already had a perfect relationship. . . . According to this line of thought, it is only in so far as the mother’s breast fails to satisfy his physical and emotional needs and thus becomes a bad object that it becomes necessary for the infant to internalize it. (p. 93)

“Internalization,” here, should be understood as “structural internalization”; the split-off part is an element within the endopsychic structure. This internalization is different from the “non-structuring internalization” of good objects that does not become part of the ego’s or the self’s structure. Richard Rubens (1984) faults Fairbairn for not clearly differentiating between these two forms of internalization (p. 436).

Fairbairn (1996a) recognizes his theory holds not only “a multiplicity of egos” (p. 94), but is “inherently structural” and offers “a revised conception of psychical structure” (p. 95). He provides a dream of a woman who believed she is “frigid” even though “good” in many ways to show how she was attacking herself in the dream (p. 95). In the dream she is an actress on a stage, brutally attacked by another well-known actress in a famous building while her husband looks on, seemingly unable to help her. Attacking herself—the dreamer as “observing ego”—is less painful than expressing aggression toward her mother, father, and husband. Dreams, Fairbairn writes, are “dramatizations or ‘shorts’

(in a cinematographic sense) of situations existing in inner reality.... Situations depicted in dreams represent relationships existing between endopsychic structures” (pp. 99–100). Although the dream exposes the central ego and the rejecting part, Fairbairn imagines that a third part of the endopsychic structure would have manifested if the dreamer did not wake up.

Still working on the dream, Fairbairn (1996a) then identifies the three ego structures depicted in the diagram above. These ego structures make up the self, each with its own objects it relates to:

The structures are (1) the observing ego or ‘I’, (2) the attacked ego, and (3) the attacking ego. The object structures are (1) the dreamer’s husband as an observing object, (2) the attacked object, and (3) the attacking object. This leads us to make a second observation—that the ego structures naturally lend themselves to be paired off with the object structures. There are three such pairs: (1) the observing ego and the dreamer’s husband, who also figured as an observer, (2) the attacking ego and the attacking object representing her mother, and (3) the attacked ego and the attacked object representing her father. (p. 100)

It is these pairs that have been diagrammed above. Each ego structure has a specific object or objects it relates to as ego structures pair off with object structures.

Revisiting the split ego

Having faced painful experiences, an infant’s ego thus splits into three distinct egos, “a central ego and two other subsidiary egos which are both, relatively speaking, cut off from the central ego” (Fairbairn, 1996a, p. 101). The one ego, which is highly endowed with libidinal energy, Fairbairn calls the “libidinal ego” (p. 101). Fairbairn also refers to this part as the self’s “(internal) exciting object” (p. 104). The other ego is the “internal saboteur,” a part that “bears all the marks of being vindictive, rather than moral, and gives rise to an affect, not guilt, but plain anxiety” (p. 104). The internal saboteur, which Fairbairn also calls the antilibidinal ego and the inner critic, is aggressive and persecutes. As Celani (2010) writes, “[It] knows the truth about past angry and rejecting relational events within the family, and these mostly hidden perceptions provide the individual with an authentic perspective. Unfortunately, these truths are encountered in frightening, highly symbolized, and disruptive ways that tend to make them less credible to the individual” (p. 91).

With his endopsychic structure established, Fairbairn (1996a) returns in his paper to the dream of the actress being attacked to highlight the relationships between the self’s various parts. He notes that “unlike aggression, the libido is not at the disposal of the internal saboteur. On the contrary, we must regard it as being at the disposal of the libidinal ego” (p. 103). Seeing structure and energy as inseparable, Fairbairn shows how the central ego rejects both the internal saboteur and the libidinal ego while the critic and its object attack the libidinal ego and the libidinal object.

With his argument made, Fairbairn (1996a) returns in his paper to find similarities and differences between Freud’s topographical structure and his endopsychic structure. The central ego, we learn, is “fairly close” to Freud’s ego, though it does not evolve from the Id and is a dynamic structure from which other structures derive. Against his dynamic structure, Fairbairn sees Freud’s ego as being passive (p. 106). The libidinal ego is much like the Id, though it originates from the central ego and, like the central ego, is also dynamic in

nature—it can influence the self’s experience. The libidinal ego, though, is less organized compared to the central ego and more likely to have exciting objects. Unlike the Id, the libidinal ego is not a reservoir of impulses. Likewise, the internal saboteur has overtones of the superego, but as a dynamic structure it is also different. The biggest difference is that the former is devoid of morality (p. 107). It tells a person they are “bad,” not that they did something “bad.”

Fairbairn (1996a) names six conclusions to be made from his endopsychic structure: First, “the basic endopsychic situation” is that the ego is split, in three, each with objects the respective part relates to (p. 107). Second, psychopathology results from the (schizoid) interaction of the various parts. Third, the central ego can split due to aggression that is at the disposal of the central ego. Fourth, the subsidiary egos, being unconscious, are vulnerable to repression (p. 108). The fifth conclusion Fairbairn reaches is that repression of subsidiary objects supersedes the repression of the subsidiary egos. The final conclusion is that splitting of the ego into three parts and repression of the subsidiary egos by the central ego are “essentially the same phenomenon” (p. 108).

Having introduced his endopsychic structure, Fairbairn discusses its “origins” (p. 109). The first libidinal object is the (m)other’s breast, he contends, which, due to the impossibility of completely satisfying the infant, causes frustration and awakens aggression. The infant’s separation from the (m)other further fuels the aggression, which Fairbairn notes should not be confused with feeling ambivalent toward the (m)other. As such, those who read Fairbairn and other object relations theorists on this theme as mother blaming misrepresent the symbolic significance of internalization and the complexity of caring for an infant. Of course, Fairbairn’s location cannot be denied as he lived and practiced in a time when patriarchy remained very much in power. Splitting, Fairbairn continues, occurs as the infant realizes they cannot control their outer reality and internalizes the (m)other as both a “good” and a “bad” object: “[Unable to control his outer reality, an infant] accordingly follows the only path open to him and, since outer reality seems unyielding, he does his best to transfer the traumatic factor in the situation to the field of inner reality, within which he feels situations to be more under his control. This means that he internalizes his mother as a ‘bad’ object” (p. 110).

Summarizing his argument, Fairbairn (1996a) again states that an infant internalizes the bad object first as the infant tries to coerce m(other) to be perfectly satisfying. He states that language remains a problem, finding “satisfying” and “unsatisfying” objects a more apt description compared to “good” or “bad” objects (p. 111). The unsatisfying object not only frustrates, it also “tempts and allures” (p. 111). As the internal reality of the infant becomes unbearable, the infant uses a divide-and-conquer technique and “splits the internal bad object into two objects—(a) the needed or exciting object and (b) the frustrating or rejecting object; and then he represses both these objects (employing aggression, of course, as the dynamic of repression)” (p. 112).

The antilibidinal ego and the libidinal ego, the two pseudopodia—as subsidiary egos—now act as if they are the central ego. The divisions described then settle into a “structural pattern” that is “dynamic,” i.e., infused with libidinal energy that impacts the self, especially as the antilibidinal ego attacks the libidinal ego (Fairbairn, 1996a, p. 112). Shame, Fairbairn writes, lies behind this attack: “[T]he experience is one of shame over the display of needs which are disregarded or belittled. In virtue of these experiences of humiliation and shame [the infant] feels reduced to a state of worthlessness, destitution, of beggaredom” (p. 113). At a deeper level, Fairbairn concludes, the

shame feels like “the experience of disintegration and of imminent psychical death” (p. 113). The infant is left in a precarious place. If they express aggression, they can lose their good object, which can cause melancholia or depression. If they express unrequited libidinal need, however, they are threatened with the loss of their libido and the ego structure that constitutes the self, initiating a schizoid state.

In the remainder of the “Endopsychic Structure Considered in Terms of Object-Relationships,” Fairbairn (1996a) explores how depression, schizoid states, hysteria (or neurotic anxiety), and resistance set in when the dynamic structure of the self, especially the subsidiary egos, determines a person’s sense of self. He returns to Freud and revisits the Oedipal crisis to argue that he is continuing Freud’s analytic tradition but has moved into areas of human nature Freud may have anticipated but never explored. Rubens (1984), in turn, argues that Fairbairn abandoned Freud in ways not always recognized (p. 429).

Fairbairn (1996a) concludes his paper as “an explanatory system” (p. 128) by indicating the therapeutic significance of his endopsychic structure:

Thus I conceive it as among the most important functions of psychoanalytical therapy (a) to reduce the split of the original ego by restoring to the central ego a maximum of the territories ceded to the libidinal ego and the internal saboteur, and (b) to bring the exciting object and the rejecting object so far as possible together within the sphere of influence of the central ego. The extent to which such changes can be affected appears, however, to be strictly limited. In its economic aspect, by contrast, the basic endopsychic situation is capable of very extensive modification. In conformity with this fact, I conceive of another of the chief aims of psychoanalytic therapy to reduce to a minimum (a) the attachment of the subsidiary egos to their respective associated objects, (b) the aggression of the central ego towards the subsidiary egos and their objects, and (c) the aggression of the internal saboteur towards the libidinal ego and its object. (p. 130)

Fairbairn provides a hopeful view of personal transformation. The endopsychic structure remains, but the individual can transform the dynamism within the structure.

In his paper, Fairbairn outlines a theory of the self that Rubens (1984) described as “a living, growing, self-defining center which he [Fairbairn] viewed as the point of origin of human psychic process; and, it follows directly from this most basic of principles, that it is possible for such a self to have relationships with other human beings, even though they have not yet representationally differentiated as objects separate from the self” (p. 432). According to Rubens, Fairbairn’s argument that the structure of the ego “implies pathology and that wholeness and integration imply health is unique among psychoanalytic theories” (p. 438). The self, we learn, is “not reducible to a self-concept, or a self-representation, or a system of reflected appraisals.... [The self] has an expressive, experiencing existence separate from, and prior to, these relationships” (p. 438). Fairbairn’s structural model offers a vision of human personality as a related series of multiple selves where the central ego provides a sense of continuity and purpose (Celani, 2010, p. 51).

I next take this dynamic image of the self to King David as he finds himself pacing on the palace roof. The story of David *with* Bathsheba is as powerful as a manifest dream.

David's endopsychic structure

The person of David as we discover him with Bathsheba can be explored from many perspectives and received in many ways: the *political* (Cushman, 2006; Shimoff, 1993), the *historical* (Bailey, 1990), the *ethical* (Forsyth, 2011; Ludwig & Longenecker, 1993; Marcus, 1986; Stallard & Sanger, 2014; Weigle & Allen, 2017), the *theological* (Davidson, 2006), the *literary* (Firth, 2008; Grey, 2019; Kraus, 2013; Nicol, 1998; Perry & Sternberg, 1986), the *familial* (Zucker & Reiss, 2016), the *feminist* (Bach, 1997; Exum, 1996; Henderson, 2015), the *sexual* (Abasili, 2011; Guest, 2008; Nicol, 1997), and the *artistic* (Heppner, 2002; Van Seters, 2003; Vandergriff, 2002). More approaches can be identified, and one approach often draws upon another. In his book *David in Love and War*, Randall Bailey (1990) writes that attempts “to concentrate on the psychological motivations of the characters are predicated upon the reader’s speculation” (p. 83). I disagree with this viewpoint as the narrator gives us a clear glimpse into David’s life and the narrative can be read through a psychological lens.

Fairbairn’s contribution in conversation with biblical figures is not novel. Jesus as an ideal(ized) object that calls forth conversion, for example, has been explored by Lynn Paul (1999). Amnon’s rape of Tamar, which unfolds in the narrative that follows that of David with Bathsheba, can be seen as a response to unrequited love, a theme Fairbairn explored (Hicks et al., 2010, p. 142). Even though “David and Bathsheba” easily rolls off the tongue, I am interested in David’s inner world, his endopsychic structure; the David *with* Bathsheba. How can we think about David’s central, antilibidinal, and libidinal egos? What can we learn about his idealized, rejecting, and exciting objects? How did the various parts of his inner world relate to one another? These are just some of the questions to be explored.

David’s central ego and its idealized object, Nathan

Our narrative begins in a manner that implicates the king. In this narrative, David portrays a poorly developed, compromised central ego. This compromised ego can be recognized in at least four different ways. First, when other kings and men went warring, David stayed home. Though it was not uncommon for kings in the Ancient Near East to remain in their palaces when at war—soldiers die, after all, and kings knew this—the books of Samuel are clear that Israel’s kings “go out before us and lead our battles” (1 Samuel 8; 2 Samuel 8, NIV; Garsiel, 1993, p. 250). Meir Sternberg writes: “It therefore leaps to the eye that this is the first war in which David fails to lead the army” (as cited in Davidson, 2006, p. 83). David knew he was past his prime, that his days as king were numbered. Hirsch Cohen (1965) writes that David had a form of “retirement neurosis” as he was being forced “from the stage of destiny” (p. 146). David is fighting an unconscious internal war while others are fighting a conscious external war. Maybe he sensed his life force was slowly waning away. Or maybe he saw the strength in his sons and feared that they might lead a coup should he be away from the palace.

Second, we recognize David’s poorly developed central ego going to great lengths to cover his tracks. David knew what the prophet Nathan and God voiced toward the end of the narrative: What he was doing was wrong. A well-developed central ego is capable of ethical discernment. A mature ego has no need to hide its actions and can admit mistakes made. Likewise, a secure sense of self can engage in acts of reparation; it can ask

for forgiveness. Though David does show cunning creativity, even persistence, he chooses actions against not only his own best interest but also the interests of others. He functions independently; however, maturity, for Fairbairn, is measured by interdependence and the recognition that one lives best in a web of relationships.

A third indicator of David's poorly developed self can be seen in his act of mourning. When David hears from the prophet Nathan that the son Bathsheba carries will die, he fasts, petitions, and mourns. When the boy does die, David stops mourning and pragmatically goes on with his life as if nothing has happened (Clines, 1995, p. 230). David Bosworth (2011) sees David's mourning prior to the son's death as part of his supplication and "anticipatory mourning" (p. 693). He sees David as pious; he was hopeful and faithful but resilient in the face of loss. Bosworth's reading of David is gracious. Rather than piety, I see a weak self trying to manipulate reality. David was bargaining with God. His actions speak to a grandiosity and a sense of power out of touch with reality. David portrays manipulative shrewdness on the one hand—calling upon God to make a difference—while remaining an onlooker devoid of any emotion when the child died—displaying the traits of a schizoid person. The incongruence between the two reactions indicates David's internal ambivalence. In 1 Samuel 16:18, we discover that David was "intelligent in speech," that he had a way with words, which in turn discloses his comfort in the cognitive realms. David as an onlooker unable to *feel with* others is also seen in the traumatic event when Amnon rapes Tamar and distant anger is David's only response (2 Samuel 13:21). Tamar is left a devastated woman, but David does not respond as one would expect of a father and a king.

Our narrative does not provide us with enough data to argue that David was schizoid, but he certainly portrays schizoid traits in his inability to emotionally support Bathsheba in her loss and his instrumental use of emotions. Some might argue that the psalms ascribed to David show he was not schizoid. Still, David's schizoid traits might be recognized in his central ego resigning to his well-developed antilibidinal and libidinal egos, as I will argue shortly. David, like a schizoid person, could not engage the world on its own terms (Rosa, 2015, p. 505). Rather, he sought to create his own reality and was apathetic regarding the impact of his behavior on others.

A fourth and final indicator that David had a compromised central ego is his apparent inability to engage his idealized object(s). A well-developed central ego protects and seeks out the internal object relationship with the idealized object that comforts and informs the central ego. Fairbairn reminds us that our attachments to internal objects are the only reality we trust and know, even if the relationships cause challenges and difficulty in the external world. Earlier, Jonathan functioned as an idealized object. Here, David's idealized object is Nathan, a person he surprisingly does not seek out. Rather, he seems to avoid the wise man he trusted. Nathan was a prophet during the reigns of David and David's son Solomon. From the narrative, it is clear that a relationship of trust existed between David and Nathan or, at least, that David had assigned authority to the prophet. One imagines David seeking out Nathan's wisdom as he gets himself into ever-deepening deception and behavior he knows is wrong. David claims power and independence. Nathan appears, like a good therapist, to call on David to live and lead from his central ego and not his split-off parts. Though there seems to be initial awareness in David of his sinful ways as he responds to Nathan's rebuke, it seems as if the transformation is short-lived as the king who stays home turns into a father who remains distant while Tamar is raped. He is the king who remains distant as his sons Absalom and Amnon go to war on each other and plot against him.

Two additional possible idealized objects for David's central ego can be named, but neither support nor strengthen the ego. Some might argue that God is one of David's idealized

objects. The narrative does not support such an interpretation. Though God does make promises to David, David's experience of God is one of frustration, and God functions primarily as a libidinal object for David. The second possible idealized object might be the narrator. Though the narrator can play this role and function for the reader and the original listeners as they were told the narrative, David, of course, never internalized the narrator.

A brief look at David's central ego shows a man who, despite winning wars, is losing his inner battles. The strength of his antilibidinal and libidinal egos indicates a self whose needs, especially in infancy, were not adequately met. We can only imagine and make informed discernments about the failures in parental care David experienced in infancy.

David's antilibidinal ego and its object, Uriah

Our narrative tells us David got up from his couch and went to his palace roof, where he was pacing back and forth. Cohen (1965), reflecting on this opening scene, writes (p. 147):

As he walks back and forth, from one side of the roof top to the other, David's thoughts and fantasies are sharply focused on his "failing," his deficiency. Since we are already alerted to David's irritability with himself, we might find a hint (and just a hint) of confirmation in the writer's use of the reflexive form of the verb, to walk. His was not on a leisurely stroll, it seems to me, but rather a pacing back and forth, or a walking "to and fro" (2 Sam. 11 :12).

The text, as can be deduced from the Hebrew used, is clear that there was an energy within David. He was driven, but not by instinct or lustful passion. Rather, he was being punished by his antilibidinal ego. David "was no longer the lion-hearted military adventurer of derring-do whose strong arm had vanquished Goliath and who had later presented King Saul with a string of Philistine foreskins as the bride prize for Michal" (Garland & Garland, 2007, p. 154). We can hear David's inner critic: "David, shame on you for staying behind and not going off to war. Real men fight! Remember how you killed Goliath? Your days as king are numbered.... What do you think the soldiers and other kings are saying? They are laughing behind your back. You will be remembered as a weakling.... Look at how powerful Amnon and Absalom have become." The accusations, demeaning humiliation, and self-sabotage of the inner critic are relentless; the inner critic knows exactly how to diminish the central ego. As the inner critic circles themes of competence, control, and acceptance or belonging—themes prominent in cognitive behavioral therapy, too—David is internally unraveling.

Tormented by his internal saboteur, David paces on the palace roof. Fairbairn (1996a) teaches us that the antilibidinal ego is that part of the ego that knows "shame over the display of needs which are disregarded or belittled. In virtue of these experiences of humiliation and shame [the infant] feels reduced to a state of worthlessness, destitution, of beggary" (p. 113). It is David's inner shame, the real enemy he is fighting, that keeps him from experiencing outward shame as he violates God's laws, neglects his duties as a king, rapes Bathsheba, and kills Uriah and other soldiers (Abasili, 2011; Bailey, 1990, p. 88; Davidson, 2006). Celani (2010) writes that the antilibidinal ego has "purpose and direction, and consequently its antagonistic relationship to the internalized rejecting object is easily projected onto objects in external reality" (p. 88).

David was driven by his very active inner critic. It was the voice that had earlier whispered in his ears: "You better kill these lions and bears, else your father Jesse and your brothers will laugh at you. Shame on you for being scared!" Later David boasted about

his feats (1 Samuel 17:36). Bravery and disregard for the loss of one's life are but two defenses against the experience of shame. Fairbairn states the first rejecting object is the m(other's) breast that frustrates. David was the youngest of eight sons. Two sisters, Zeruiah and Abigail, are mentioned. Though Scripture does not name David's mother, the Talmud names her as Nitzzevet. David refers to her when he met with the King of Moab (1 Samuel 22:3–4). Given Nitzzevet's ten children, we can assume Nitzzevet's breast was worn out when David was born, that the breast frustrated David, which he internalized into his antilibidinal ego. Other frustrating objects are easily identified in David's life. It is Jesse, David's father, who tells him to watch the flock in humiliation while his brothers go off to fight for Saul (1 Samuel 17: 12). How many times did Jesse tell David: "Forget fighting for Saul. You are just a boy. Leave it to your big brothers. Go tend the flocks!" When Saul told David, "You are just a boy" (1 Samuel 17:33), Saul merely echoed words David had heard from an early age from his father Jesse and his older brothers.

Another rejecting object was David's older brother Eliab, who in angry jealousy blamed David for abandoning the flock to fight Goliath (1 Samuel 17:28). Eliab was concerned neither with the flock left behind nor with David's possible death. He protected his own compromised self. David's reaction is telling—"What did I do wrong this time?" (v. 29)—indicating he was often blamed and shamed, and possibly bullied too, by his older brother(s). Goliath also mirrors David's antilibidinal ego as he scoffs at David (v. 43). Patriarchy, steeped in hierarchy and seeing children as property, creates strong antilibidinal egos in all. In our narrative, the rejecting object, which coalesces around a breast that frustrated and others—a father and brothers—who belittled David, sublimates into the person of Uriah, the responsible adult and soldier.

The narrator portrays Uriah as the loyal, pious, moral soldier David cannot be. He was one of a group of thirty generals and soldiers who supported David's war efforts (2 Samuel 23: 23–39). If Uriah was a close associate of David, as can be safely assumed, the irony that David did not know Bathsheba's identity, or the fact that learning her identity did not dissuade him of his plans, looms large. David's attempts to coax Uriah into having sex with Bathsheba—something that should have been easy because Uriah came home from war and it is said that Bathsheba was beautiful—fails twice. Not even alcohol can get Uriah to transgress a "soldiers' oath" to abstain from sex during battle (Bailey, 1990, p. 96). Uriah's actions remind David of all the ways David has gotten himself lost. If Uriah knew what David was up to, as George Nicol (1998) argues, Uriah's emotional and physical hold on David would have increased exponentially (p. 130). Unconsciously Uriah's person takes David back to all the times David has been told he is worthless, the very shame-filled failure he feels he is. David killing Uriah thus has at least two purposes. First, it is to quiet his inner critic who constantly reminds him his days as king are numbered. The critic caused such anxiety within David that he paced on the palace roof as the heat of the day dissipated (Davidson, 2006, p. 85). The second reason for killing Uriah is obvious. David needed to hide his adulterous sexual relations with Bathsheba. Uriah, because he frustrates David, is David's rejecting object.

A superficial reading of David with Bathsheba may find that David was driven by lust or passion, thus his libidinal ego. Fairbairn's endopsychic structure reveals that it is the unidirectional *relationship* between his active antilibidinal ego and his weak central ego that drives David. It is the inner critic that first colors David's inner world and awakens his libidinal ego to come to his rescue.

David's libidinal ego and its objects, God and Bathsheba

Fairbairn's tripartite self finds David with a weak central ego and a powerful inner critic. David's antilibidinal ego, however, which is the first subego to form in infancy, is rivaled by his libidinal ego. This latter ego, Fairbairn shows, is the internalization of the (m)other who taunts with false promises, who can act seductively, who excites without satisfaction. It is a hopeful ego that remains immature and unrealistic as it seeks compensation for all the hurts the self has experienced. A clearer picture of David's infancy and childhood appears. Regarding the subegos, Celani (2010) writes:

[The] greater the deprivation of the child's legitimate needs, the greater his need for the libidinal ego's fantasy of a loving supportive object. A child living in a mostly rejecting environment will have a central ego that has not had enough interactional experiences with the ideal object to fully develop and mature. . . . A relationship with an impoverished ideal object has consequences for the developing child's central ego in that the central ego will remain immature and weak compared with the powerful split-off subegos. (p. 54)

As the inner critic sabotages David's well-being, the libidinal ego grows in power. *The libidinal ego, distant from the central ego as it is, follows no moral codes.* Faulting David for being immoral in his actions with Bathsheba only makes sense if one believes his central ego was in control and he carefully discerned his actions. Morality or ethical behavior is not associated with the libidinal ego. Rather, excitement, risk taking, adventure, and masochistic tendencies, but also ultimately a sense of remaining unsatisfied, color the libidinal ego.

The libidinal ego transgresses boundaries because it does not recognize them in the first place. Transgression, however, is not an optimal way to reflect on the libidinal ego's actions since it does not reflect, discern, or act in mindful ways. David's central ego knows that adultery is a "taboo of society and angered the gods" (Matthews, 2003, p. 27). His libidinal ego, however, does not recognize taboos and does not stop with adultery as he experiences the excitement of causing Uriah and other soldiers to be killed on the front line. While one could argue that David murders Uriah because David needs to cover his tracks, David's libidinal ego is not interested in covering tracks for it does not recognize any fault or tracks to cover. Rather, murder is the projection of the inner critic onto others that was enacted. The libidinal part of Fairbairn's tripartite self merely seeks excitement, which can join the murdering inner critic in action. Whereas David's inner critic torments him removed from any witnesses, his libidinal ego ensures that David experiences embodied satisfaction and that he remains the key actor in the narrative.

David's childhood and life show a boy and a man whose libidinal ego was well developed. It was his caretaker self as he protected his father's flock. It took him into countless battles, first with bears and lions and later with the Philistines, the Ammonites, and the Arameans. Clines writes that David's estimated body count is 140,000 men, a number that also indicates the level of aggression the antilibidinal ego can conjure (1995, p. 217). Though history writers in the court of David often embellished numbers such as these, the message is clear—David and his soldiers killed many enemies.

David's libidinal ego gets excited thinking of a sexual threesome. David has sex with Bathsheba and then voyeuristically imagines Uriah having sex with her too. Behind the excitement, however, is a poorly developed self that has finally caught up with David. Whereas the libidinal ego served David's foreign policy, it ruins his domestic policy

(Bailey, 1990, p. 90). Fighting, warring, conquering, claiming power over others, and penetrating served David well for much of his life, but as the monarchy settled and Israel needed David to be present in ways that build a new monarchy and nation, he could not deliver. Celani (2010) reminds us that the libidinal ego “creates the most obvious havoc in the lives of many patients” (p. 93). As our narrative unfolds, David experiences chaos and exposes his unmet childhood needs.

Two exciting objects are attached to David’s libidinal ego: God and Bathsheba. One might think that God is a preferred, idealized object for the central ego, but for David as he reached the final years of his life, God is attached to the libidinal ego. A person’s relationship with God is complex, and David’s relationship with his God is no different. On the one hand, God helps David to conquer enemies and David calls on God when facing Goliath (1 Samuel 17). On the other hand, God forbids David to build a temple, an experience that can only be internalized as shame by David (2 Samuel 7: 4). Furthermore, David unsuccessfully petitions God to save the life of his unborn son, as our narrative states. God is a withholding God.

These moments reflect the libidinal ego more so than the central ego. God infuses David with libidinal energy, yes, but God ultimately frustrates David, too. The David with Bathsheba narrative knows only failed promises. David is facing the end of his reign, and conquering enemies has lost its luster. Later, God allows Solomon to build the temple David wanted to build. Still, David keeps on returning to God for support, sympathy, love, and restoration, but they do not manifest for him or his family. The libidinal ego, Celani (2010) states, “believes that it will be the recipient of unlimited love and appreciation from the exciting object, and this compensatory fantasy keeps it stubbornly attached to the object.... The unrealistic hope and trust in the exciting part of the bad object then leads the person to make decisions that have absolutely no relation to reality and invariably are detrimental to the individual’s own best interests” (pp. 93–94).

Bathsheba is an obvious exciting object attached to the David’s libidinal ego. This ego sees Bathsheba as beautiful and seductive and disregards her exploitation; it denies David the awareness that he has many women in his life already. Clines (1995) calls David “a womanless male” as David never seems to enter into a relationship of mutuality with a woman (p. 225). The libidinal ego is not satisfied with the eight wives and ten concubines, alongside women of lesser rank, we know David had. Rather, David’s women, entangled with patriarchy, power, and David’s libidinal ego, reflect the women of an Oriental monarch who were mere possessions easily acquired and denied (Zucker & Reiss, 2016, p. 70).

The narrator, enticing us into a voyeuristic scene, tells us that Bathsheba is a “very beautiful” woman (2 Samuel 11:2). Alice Bach (1997) suggests readers of the narrative “assume the voyeuristic perspective of a spectator squinting at a keyhole” (p. 134). We join David in the male gaze (Jacobson, 2003, p. 409). Bathsheba is naked or partially clad:

Thinking about [the scene] requires of us to invade her privacy by undressing or dressing her mentally. The intimacy of washing herself is intensified by the fact that this is a ritual purification after her menstrual period, and this intimacy, along with the suggestion of nakedness, accentuates the body’s vulnerability to David’s and our gaze. A woman is touching herself and a man is watching. (Exum, 1996, p. 26)

The libidinal ego knows and seeks visual excitement. Beauty or nakedness, however, is not needed for the libidinal ego to assign significance to a person now rendered an object or part-object. The libidinal ego is “ferociously loyal” and “repeatedly returns to the exciting object” (Celani, 2010, p. 62). It is thus no surprise to learn that David not only pursues Bathsheba but goes to great lengths to first hide his relationship with her and then to

legitimize his affair. The libidinal ego, in attaching to its object, hopes that the central ego, castigated by the antilibidinal ego, will be bolstered or saved. David pursues Bathsheba and kills Uriah and other soldiers just to feel whole, to be someone in his own eyes. David's relationship with Bathsheba, if seen as his libidinal ego relating to its exciting object, is destined to disappoint. The brief moments of excitement and potency cannot strengthen a weak self. The narrator is clear that David was willing to walk away from Bathsheba if his plan of Uriah having sex with Bathsheba had succeeded.

Ogden (2010), who refers to the inner relationships within Fairbairn's endopsychic structure as "bonds of contempt" deepens our understanding of David with Bathsheba (p. 110). Contempt colors the relationship of the libidinal ego toward its exciting object. It is this contempt, David's ruthless aggression, that we see in him raping Bathsheba, which Cheryl Exum (1996) describes as the biblical equivalent of "wham, bam, thank you, ma'am" (p. 175). We also witness the contempt in David's indifference towards the death of his son (v. 27). Of course, we saw the same apathy earlier in his murder of Uriah, despite our knowing that David mourned the death of Saul, his enemy, and also the deaths of his grown sons (2 Samuel 1:17–27; 3:31–39; 13:31–36; 19:1–5). The libidinal ego seeks excitement beyond ethical discernment and knows disdain and rejection intimately, emotional experiences easily projected onto others.

Royal power and patriarchy, both factors in this narrative, are preceded by the power of the antilibidinal and libidinal egos, the latter active in David's life when he was yet a young shepherd boy. Adultery, rape, and murder only follow the loss of hope that is within David. Moreover, there is an additional layer to the demise of David's reign, the reality that he is aging and thus is facing his own mortality. He is facing old age and death with a weak self and without the hopeful fantasy of being restored to wholeness. His inner critic will not be silenced despite attempts at excitement by the libidinal ego. David is afraid of an intimate loneliness and isolation despite being surrounded by wives, children, servants, soldiers, and a nation that idealize him. David's weak central ego has never found a way to control the split-off antilibidinal and libidinal egos.

Based on Fairbairn's (1996a) depiction of the endopsychic structure, David's dynamic structure in the narrative can be diagrammed as shown in Fig. 2.

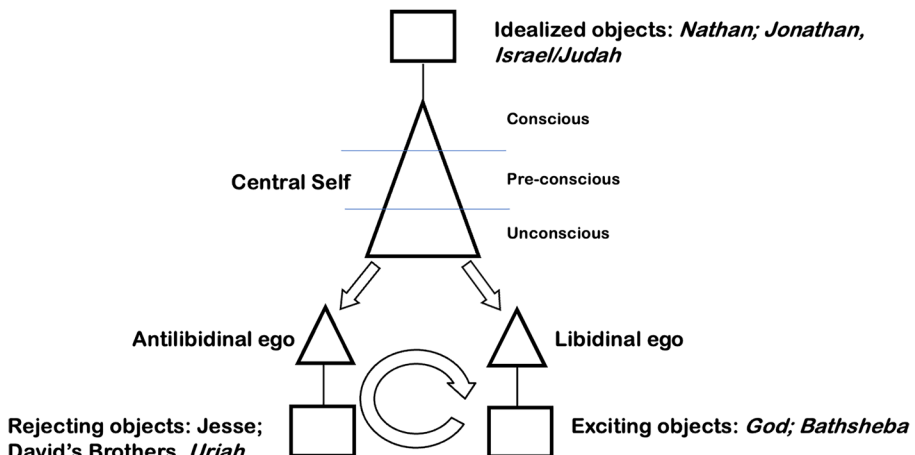


Fig. 2 David's endopsychic structure (Fairbairn, 1996a, p. 105)

Lessons for men and leaders

Conclusions can be drawn from David, a king who stayed home, the latter a metaphor of personal and professional negligence and not a reference to being in a position of power. These conclusions inform the evaluation of many a contemporary leader who leads with their antilibidinal and libidinal egos—who are Davids in disguise. Men seeking to live, relate, and lead from the central ego can learn from David. They should keep the following in mind:

- Being a man, as well as a leader, is about relationships, first with self, then with others.
- A man needs to remain mindful that he can live and lead from the central ego, the inner critic, or the libidinal ego. Most leaders, like David, oscillate between the inner critic and the exciting libidinal ego. Being mindful of how the self's three parts interact reflects emotional maturity.
- The central ego functions best when it engages both the inner critic and the exciting parts in dialogue and reigns in those parts.
- The exciting libidinal ego, which knows no moral code, inevitably leads a man into danger despite the promise of short-term excitement.
- When one gets anxious, one can expect first the inner critic to become active, followed by the libidinal ego seeking ways to enliven a man. Both parts are easily projected onto others, who then become either bad objects or objects of desire.
- A leader can modify the relationships between his central ego, inner critic, and libidinal ego but not the internal structure itself.
- Mature leaders know they cannot create or control their reality though they can shape reality through mindful responsiveness and by resisting reactivity—by living from their central ego.
- When a leader fails to show up as a full person and neglects personal and professional goals as well as the tasks of leadership, the inner critic and libidinal ego will become active while the leader's demise will ensue. The inner critic and the libidinal ego know shame well and will self-shame the central ego.
- Leaders who seek to cover their tracks are denying their central ego's attempts to guide with wisdom. The subsidiary egos will take control, with devastating effects.
- Mature leaders feel deeply and in ways that honor a situation's complexity. They resist apathy and reactivity.

David warns any man not to be a king that stays home when other kings are off fighting. That is, he warns against being a person who cannot manage internalized relationships and who neglects personal, familial, and professional duties and responsibilities.

Conclusion

The king stayed home. Despite seeking out Bathsheba and raping her, David is a castrated man, an impotent leader. "Castration," Fairbairn once remarked to fellow analyst Harry Guntrip, is "really symbolic of the total personality situation, feeling stopped from being oneself, fear of loss of individuality and personality" (as cited in Hughes, 1989, p. 111). Stuck between an aggressive inner critic and a powerful libidinal ego and receiving no

support from his weak central ego—the threesome of his endopsychic structure—David is a tragic figure. Though it seems as if David knows exactly what he is doing, he is a victim of preconscious and unconscious inner forces. A theological reading of 2 Samuel 11 may suggest that David fell from God’s grace due to his sin. Reading David with Bathsheba and Uriah through Fairbairn’s endopsychic structure reflects an internal struggle David had since childhood that reached a climax in his old age.

In this exploration of Fairbairn’s thought, I have argued that David, by his choices of staying home, seeking and raping Bathsheba, and killing Uriah, portrays aspects of a dynamic inner world that led David to his demise. David’s inner world not only directed his outer reality but also stood in the way of his effectively navigating external reality. His endopsychic structure invites us to revisit the other narratives created around his person as well as the psalms attributed to him, such as Psalm 50.

Educational theorist Marla Morris first ignited my curiosity on the dynamics around the king who stayed home. In her book *On Not Being Able to Play: Scholars, Musicians and the Crisis of Psyche*, Morris, who once imagined a career as a concert pianist, explores why musicians forget pieces of music under pressure and why writers experience writer’s block. Morris, we learn, would freeze or forget music during key auditions and moments, music she would have no difficulty performing in other contexts. The question that drives Morris (2009) is: “What do you do when you cannot do what you were called to do” (p. 3)? In her book, she draws on object-relations theorists such as Melanie Klein, D.W. Winnicott, Michael Eigen, Christopher Bollas, and Adam Phillips. She argues that the inability to play, especially for a musician who has spent thousands of hours practicing, is related to crises—“unconscious secrets”—experienced by the psyche. It tells of “what we have not become” (p. 26). Here, we have followed the path of Morris by exploring the “unconscious secrets” of King David through the lens of Fairbairn. I have shown that David’s demise was the result of inner battles he lost. David’s inner secrets are secrets no more as they are shared by many, if not most, men and by the majority of leaders.

Fairbairn once said: “I can’t think what could motivate any of us to become psychotherapists if we hadn’t got problems of our own” (as cited in Guntrip, 1975, p. 145). He also said that “what patients primarily want is salvation, rather than a cure” (as cited in Kernberg, 1998, p. 24). David’s problematic object relationships played a central role in his becoming a leader and foreshadowed his life journey. Salvation from those same relationships with internalized objects was what David sought when he was pacing on the palace roof. Most men may identify with David’s weak self, his aggressive inner critic, and his powerful libidinal ego. The dynamics of his inner structure did not serve David well, and neither will it serve men with similar inner dynamics. They can receive David’s demise as a warning and seek ways to build secure central egos with life-giving idealized objects. Men can make conscious their unconscious motivations. They can work toward achieving “a maximum synthesis of the structures into which the original ego has been split,” as Fairbairn (1958) identified the journey toward wholeness (p. 380).

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