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Women's Emotion, Community, and Politics: Interpreting Tears in Luke 23.27–31

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Abstract

The tears of the 'daughters of Jerusalem' in Luke 23.27–31 are often taken as a representation of pathos. However, women's public performance of lamentation serves several purposes in the biblical prophets and Greco-Roman historiography and rhetoric. Women are responsible for mourning rituals following a death to honour the deceased and their family. They express communal lament following defeat in war. Women use tears to protest political and legal situations, swaying public opinion and decisions. The rhetorical functions of women's mourning in antiquity offer valuable insight into the potential purposes of mourning in Luke 23.27–31. The women's initial display of tears honours Jesus. The disruption of the negative perception of Jesus at this point in the narrative suggests the women's tears may be political protest. The redirection of their tears to themselves and their children provides the audience with a model response to the destruction of Jerusalem. As in Jer 9.17–22, the mourning of Luke's 'daughters of Jerusalem' is prophetic.

Keywords: Luke 23.27–31; women in the Bible; emotion in the Bible; mourning; masculinity studies

1. Introduction

In the passion narrative in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' entry into and exit from Jerusalem are marked by tears. Jesus himself weeps over the city in Luke 19.41–4, in the narrative space between the triumph of his approach and his disruption of the temple service. His tears accompany a warning: Jerusalem's failure to surrender to him (to recognise 'the things of peace') will result in war. The city will be besieged and, reflecting the personification of Jerusalem as a mother in 13.34–5, she and her children will be dashed to the ground. As Jesus leaves the city to be crucified in 23.27–31, a group of women weep for him. Their tears draw a response from Jesus: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me. Instead, weep for yourselves and your children' (author's translation). As in 19.41–4, this lament represents a judgment on Jerusalem with the imagery of mothers and children. The motif of weeping provides a framework of judgment and destruction for the passion narrative.¹

Both scenes incorporate public displays of emotion. They are linked by a shared vocabulary (κλαίω, τέκνον); geography (the liminal space of Jerusalem's boundaries); and the implication of the wartime experience of women and children. Despite their literary and thematic parallels, however, the two scenes have often been read in distinctive

¹ See Caryn A. Reeder, *Gendering War and Peace in the Gospel of Luke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 172–3.

ways. Commentators describe Jesus' tears as prophetic.² J. Massyngbaerde Ford identifies Jesus with Jeremiah; as in Jer 8.18–9.1, Jesus' emotional response expresses his compassion for the victims of war.³ Placing the story in a Roman context, Shelly Matthews compares Jesus with the generals of historiographic legend, weeping for the destruction of cities they had themselves conquered.⁴ Finally, for Stephen Voorwinde and Rebekah Eklund, Jesus' tears in Luke 19.41–4 are messianic or even divine.⁵

Implicit in these interpretations is the question of the gendering of Jesus in Luke 19.41–4.⁶ Tears express a lack of control over one's own emotions; consequently, tears are a sign of weakness.⁷ The representation of tears or public weeping as undisciplined weakness parallels the construction of gender (in the ancient Greco-Roman world, and in the contemporary world of the interpreters): Tears are womanish, and so tears impugn the masculinity of the weeper. By identifying Jesus in Luke 19.41–4 with motifs of power or authority, he retains his masculinity despite his tears.

By contrast, interpreters most often find frailty and weakness in the women's tears. The primary lens for the interpretation of Luke 23.27–31 is the pathos of defeat. Luke's audience should feel sympathy and sorrow for the suffering of what Robert Tannehill calls the 'most defenseless and least guilty' residents of the city, the women and children.⁸ For Hans Conzelmann, the women and their tears are 'ineffectual' against men's actions. Even if echoes of Jeremiah's weeping women are heard in the scene, the women are not granted a prophetic role.⁹ Matthews argues that Jesus' rejection of the women's weeping removes their agency. Their contribution to Jesus' death (their mourning) is lost as they become little more than symbols of the destruction of the city. For Matthews, Luke's story represents the triumph of normative masculinity over the bodies of women.¹⁰

Recent work has offered more nuanced treatments of the question of masculinity in Luke 19.41–4.¹¹ Few interpreters challenge the standard interpretation of the women in

² Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (SP 3; Collegeville: Liturgical Press/Michael Glazier, 1991) 298; François Bovon, *Luke 3: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 19:28–24:53* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012) 17; Rebekah Eklund, *Jesus Wept: The Significance of Jesus' Laments in the New Testament* (LNTS 515; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015) 104.

³ J. Massyngbaerde Ford, *My Enemy Is My Guest: Jesus and Violence in Luke* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1984) 110. See also Robert C. Tannehill, *The Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 1 of *The Narrative Unity of Luke—Acts: A Literary Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986) 160; Stephen Voorwinde, *Jesus' Emotion in the Gospels* (London: Continuum, 2011) 140.

⁴ Shelly Matthews, 'The Weeping Jesus and the Daughters of Jerusalem. Gender and Conquest in Lukan Lament', in *Doing Gender – Doing Religion: Fallstudien zur Intersektionalität im frühen Judentum, Christentum und Islam* (ed. Ute E. Eisen, Christine Gerber, and Angela Standhartinger; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013) 381–403, esp. 386–93.

⁵ Stephen Voorwinde, 'Jesus' Tears – Human or Divine?' *Reformed Theological Review* 56 (1997) 68–81, here 73, 75; Eklund, *Jesus Wept*, 104–5, 108. See also David L. Tiede, *Prophecy and History in Luke—Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980) 78.

⁶ See Matthews, 'Weeping Jesus', 384–5.

⁷ Katherine M. Hockey, *The Role of Emotion in 1 Peter* (SNTS 173; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 23–4.

⁸ Tannehill, *Gospel According to Luke*, 165.

⁹ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; New York: Harper, 1960) 134; Jerome H. Neyrey, 'Jesus' Address to the Women of Jerusalem (Lk. 23.27–31) – A Prophetic Judgment Oracle', *NTS* 29 (1983) 74–86.

¹⁰ Matthews, 'Weeping Jesus', 399. See also Luis Menéndez Antuña, 'Male-Bonding, Female Vanishing. Representing Gendered Authority in Luke 23:26–24:53', *Early Christianity* 4 (2013) 490–506, esp. 493–5.

¹¹ See F. Scott Spencer, *Dancing Girls, Loose Ladies, and Women of the Cloth: The Women in Jesus' Life* (New York: Continuum, 2004) 129–30; and especially Brittany E. Wilson, 'Masculinity in Luke-Acts: The Lukan Jesus and Muscular Christianity', in *Luke-Acts* (ed. James P. Grimshaw; Texts@Contexts; London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019) 23–33, esp. 26–7, 30.

Luke 23.27–31.¹² To be sure, the standard interpretation reflects Greco-Roman critiques of mourning as a signifier of feminine weakness, but these analyses of Luke 23.27–31 do not fully engage the complexities of women’s emotion as public performance in biblical and Greco-Roman tradition. In this paper, I argue that the emotional display of the women in Luke 23.27–31 represents prophetic and political protest.

This interpretation of Luke’s ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ depends on several overlapping concerns. Recent work on women’s grief in Jeremiah represents such emotion as a communal response to trauma and an expression of prophetic moral outrage. This interpretation corresponds with women’s emotional agency in Greco-Roman rhetoric and historiography. It is women’s civic duty to mourn the dead (including the war dead), and women weaponise their mourning as political protest. In these contexts, Luke’s ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ model the desirable response to Jesus’ death for Luke’s audience. Their tears offer a protest against the injustice of Jesus’ death. Moreover, the women are given the prophetic responsibility of mourning the defeat of Jerusalem.

2. Public Emotion and Gender in Biblical and Greco-Roman Sources

Luke’s story of Jesus is set in Galilee and Judea. It reflects Jewish practices and traditions, and it imitates the style and vocabulary of the Septuagint.¹³ The representation of the weeping women of Jerusalem and the blessing on barrenness in 23.27–31 are influenced by Jer 9.17–22, Hos 9.10–17 and other biblical texts.¹⁴ The conceptual world of the Gospel also includes Greco-Roman social customs, cultural values and literary traditions.¹⁵ The use of Greco-Roman rhetorical devices, including vivid description and emotion, has particularly been noted in Luke’s passion story.¹⁶ The function of emotion in Greco-Roman literature and society offers a second important context for the interpretation of tears in 23.27–31.

These contexts matter because, as the scholarship on emotion in biblical literature indicates, the definition and enactment of emotion are culturally and socially determined.¹⁷ For Luke’s earliest audiences, the interpretation of women’s mourning in Luke 23.27–31 would be influenced by their knowledge of the rituals and expressions of mourning and by cultural commentary on (and critique of) women’s participation in mourning. Two contextual concerns are particularly important in reconstructing the possible social

¹² Sabine Demal, ‘Jesu Umgang mit Frauen nach dem Lukasevangelium’, *BN* 57 (1991) 41–95; and (briefly) Robyn J. Whitaker, ‘A Failed Spectacle: The Role of the Crowd in Luke 23’, *BibInt* 25 (2017) 399–416, here 407, are unusual in interpreting the women as active contributors to the narrative.

¹³ See Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997) 13; Loveday Alexander, *Acts in Its Ancient Literary Context: A Classicist Looks at the Acts of the Apostles* (Early Christianity in Context; LNTS 298; London: T&T Clark, 2005) 172.

¹⁴ Reeder, *War and Peace*, 171–4, 184–8.

¹⁵ Frederick W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age: A Commentary on St. Luke’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, rev. ed. 1988) 3–9; Brittany E. Wilson, *Unmanly Men: Refigurations of Masculinity in Luke-Acts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) 21–8.

¹⁶ E.g., Peter Rice, ‘The Rhetoric of Luke’s Passion: Luke’s Use of Common-place to Amplify the Guilt of Jerusalem’s Leaders in Jesus’ Death’, *BibInt* 21 (2013) 355–76; and Bart B. Bruehler, ‘EGLBS 2019 Presidential Address: Sight, Insight, and Heartsight: The Rhetoric and Affective Impact of Vividness in Luke’s Passion Narrative’, *Conversations with the Biblical World* 39 (2019) 1–26. Luke’s Gospel has more generally been compared with Greco-Roman historiography and biography; see Green, *Luke*, 4–6; Alexander, *Acts*, 18–19, 156–9.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Anke Inselmann, ‘Emotions and Passions in the New Testament: Methodological Issues’, *BibInt* 24 (2016) 536–54; F. Scott Spencer, ‘Getting a Feel for the “Mixed” and “Vexed” Study of Emotions in Biblical Literature’, in *Mixed Feelings and Vexed Passions: Exploring Emotions in Biblical Literature* (ed. F. Scott Spencer; RBS 90; Atlanta: SBL, 2017) 1–41, esp. 3–12; Hockey, *1 Peter*, 25–6, 32–4. Note that the current study is concerned with the practices of mourning in antiquity, not with the complex affective processes of grief.

and cultural representations of women's mourning in Luke's biblical and Greco-Roman contexts: emotion as a public display and the intersections of emotion with constructions of gender.

2.1 Public Emotion

In Luke 23:27–31, the women lament, beat their bodies and weep in the midst of the crowds following Jesus to his execution. This representation of mourning depicts public emotion, a display to be seen by others.¹⁸ In biblical and Greco-Roman texts, displays of emotion are used to accomplish particular purposes: to persuade, to unite the audience around a cause or to sway public opinion. Roman rhetorical manuals even include instructions on the use of public emotion.

Biblical texts do not have comparable instructions, but various texts narrate the uses of public emotion.¹⁹ In 2 Sam 1.1–27, mourning rituals and lamentations in public view indicate national loyalty.²⁰ Ezra uses his own performance of mourning to call his audience to action (Ezra 9.3–4).²¹ Displays of grief in Lam 2.10–12, 19–22 protest the destruction of Jerusalem and its residents to persuade God to act.²² Emotive descriptions and movements also feature in liturgical texts, allowing worshippers to embody a desired response.²³

In the Greco-Roman context, such displays of emotion offer an indication of identity, status and social location. They express cultural values, especially *pietas* and patriotism.²⁴ Rhetorical manuals include the arousal of emotion as a significant element in effective public speeches and courtroom arguments (Rhet. Her. 4.68–9; Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.1.11–30, 6.2.4–6).²⁵ Examples of such speeches litter Greco-Roman historiography (e.g., Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 6.66.3, 10.29.1; Livy 8.37.9–10, 35.34.7–8). Through performative readings of historiography, funeral speeches and monumental art, moreover, the general population learns who can properly express emotion, the acceptable range of emotional responses, the appropriate locations for emotional display, and the script to follow in expressing various emotions.²⁶

¹⁸ Robert A. Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (Classical Culture and Society; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 8, suggests approaching 'emotion' in an ancient text as the performance of a script of perception, evaluation, response and action.

¹⁹ Cf. Françoise Mirguet, 'What Is an "Emotion" in the Hebrew Bible? An Experience that Exceeds Most Contemporary Concepts', *BibInt* 24 (2016) 442–65, esp. 444, 463–4.

²⁰ E.g., David H. Jensen, *1 and 2 Samuel* (Belief; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2015) 174–6. See also Saul M. Olyan, *Biblical Mourning: Ritual and Social Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004) 52–3.

²¹ Angela Kim Harkins, 'The Pro-Social Role of Grief in Ezra's Penitential Prayer', *BibInt* 24 (2016) 466–91, esp. 486–90.

²² Tod Linafelt, *Surviving Lamentations: Catastrophe, Lament, and Protest in the Afterlife of a Biblical Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000) 50–6.

²³ See Susanne Gillmayr-Bucher, 'Body Images in the Psalms', *JSOT* 28 (2004) 301–26, esp. 325; Angela Kim Harkins, 'The Performative Reading of the Hodayot: The Arousal of Emotions and the Exegetical Generation of Texts', *JSP* 21 (2011) 55–71. Performance criticism in general draws attention to the emotive resonance of biblical texts; see especially Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003) 57–76.

²⁴ Darja Šterbenc Erker, 'Women's Tears in Ancient Roman Ritual', in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Thorsten Fögen; Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2009) 135–60, esp. 138–9. See also Johan Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*: Tears in Roman Political Culture' (PhD diss., Lund University, 2018) 55.

²⁵ See further Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 143–4.

²⁶ John Marincola, 'Ancient Audiences and Expectations', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (ed. Andrew Feldherr; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) 11–23, esp. 11–15. See also Ruth Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009) 18–24.

The rhetorical strategies for arousing emotion include vivid descriptions which invite the audience to visualise and experience the events for themselves.²⁷ *Ekphrasis* or *enargeia* incites the emotions a person would be presumed to experience in such a situation (Polybius 6.53.2–3; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lys.* 7; Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.2.29–32, 8.3.67–70). In addition, demonstrations of the desired emotions encourage imitation in the audience (Rhet. Her. 4.55; Cicero, *Or.* 2.188–9). This demonstration is made evident in a speaker's words, facial expressions and gestures, or in descriptions of emotive behaviours in a historiographic narrative (note Philo, *Legat.* 227–9, 243–4).²⁸

The use of emotion as a tool in persuasive speeches and historiography relies on a shared construction of particular emotions, which Ruth Webb calls the 'mimetic imagination'.²⁹ Speakers, historiographers and their audiences would be presumed to recognise particular tones of voice, facial expressions, postures and gestures as representative of a specific emotion. The situations described, the details highlighted, and the emotive models provided should lead to a common, predictable emotional response.³⁰ The audience's emotion in turn inspired practical action: judicial acquittal or condemnation, military support for besieged allies or aid following a natural disaster (note Thucydides 3.67.2; Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.1.11).

Luke's earliest audiences would likely have known of the public performance of emotion evident in biblical traditions, Roman rhetoric and historiography. As performance criticism of the New Testament suggests, they also may have participated in oral performances of biblical, historiographic or fictional narratives.³¹ Within these contexts, the representation of emotion in the passion story can be identified as an example of *ekphrasis*.³² The display of emotion from the 'daughters of Jerusalem' at Jesus' crucifixion instructs the Gospel's audience in how to interpret and respond to the scene. The repetition of mourning gestures by the crowd of onlookers in Luke 23.48 reinforces the message. The identity of the emoters in verses 27–31 – women – complicates the display, however. The audience's understanding of the display of emotion may also have been affected by the intersections of emotion with gender, status and social power in Greco-Roman sources.

2.2 Constructions of Gender and Public Emotion

In biblical traditions, emotional displays are not sharply gendered. Both men and women weep in public view. Men's expressions of emotion are not judged shameful or unmasculine (note, for instance, 1 Sam 30.3–6).³³ By contrast, gender (among other status markers) is an important feature of emotional displays in Greco-Roman sources. Emotionality becomes a venue for moulding and modelling Roman values and a key element in the separation of honourable and less honourable members of the emotional community from outsiders.³⁴

²⁷ Virgil's Aeneas, who weeps and laments as he views artistic representations of the destruction of Troy, exemplifies the expected response (*Aen.* 1.464–5, 485–7). See Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 8, 87–90.

²⁸ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 149.

²⁹ Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 21–4. See also Angelos Chaniotis, 'Empathy, Emotional Display, Theatricality, and Illusion in Hellenistic Historiography', in *Unveiling Emotions II: Emotions in Greece and Rome: Texts, Images, Material Culture* (ed. Angelos Chaniotis and Pierre Ducrey; Heidelberger althistorische Beiträge und epigraphische Studien 55; Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2018) 53–84, esp. 76–8.

³⁰ See also Webb, *Ekphrasis*, 107–10, 122–6.

³¹ Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel*, 37–46 (and throughout).

³² So Rice, 'Luke's Passion', 372. See also Bruehler, 'Sight, Insight, and Heartsight', 13–14, 20, 25.

³³ Paul A. Kruger, 'Emotions in the Hebrew Bible: A Few Observations on Prospects and Challenges', *OTE* 28 (2015) 395–420, here 414–15.

³⁴ Barbara H. Rosenwein, 'Worrying about Emotions in History', *American Historical Review* 107 (2002) 821–45, esp. 842; also Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 195–7.

Both rhetoric and historiography present particular models for the elite male. In Greco-Roman sources, men with social status, wealth and power display emotion as they weep, rage and rejoice. With respect to tears as a visible signifier of emotion, Quintilian upholds Cicero weeping in court as he adopts his client's persona for rhetors to imitate (*Inst.* 6.1.25–6). For Valerius Maximus, Marcellus' tears at the sight of the destruction of Syracuse following his capture of the city represent his exemplary mercy (5.1.4). Scipio's tears at his victory over Carthage mark his understanding of the ups and downs of history: the same defeat may one day come to Rome (Polybius 38.21.1–22.3).

As these examples indicate, tears are not unmasculine within the constructions of gender in antiquity. But by the late first century CE, to be truly masculine, the elite Roman man was expected to practice self-discipline and control. A man's emotional displays should be restrained and proper to the situation (e.g., Tacitus, *Agr.* 29).³⁵ Jesus' tears in Luke 19.41–4, narrated with a simple κλαίω, fit within the parameters of masculine emotion (notably, Jesus expresses less emotion than Polybius' Scipio or Plutarch's Marcellus).³⁶

Emotional restraint signifies manliness. By contrast, Roman authors construct women, in general, as too weak to control their own emotionality (e.g., Livy 3.48.8, 4.40.3; Seneca, *Helv.* 16.3, *Marc.* 1.1, 11.1). As Sarah Rey argues, social status intersects with gender in determining the appropriateness of public displays of emotion.³⁷ The displays of emotion by a Roman matron, the wife of an elite man, should follow the model of elite men. Seneca encourages elite women (including his own mother) to imitate manly self-control over their emotions. Women like Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, or Agrippina, wife of Germanicus, may lack true manliness, but Seneca praises them for restraining their grief like a *vir* (*Helv.* 16.3–7, *Marc.* 3.1–2, 16.1–4).³⁸

As Seneca's discussions of elite women's emotion indicate, however, even elite women could be accused of uncontrolled emotionality (see also Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 609E–F, 610C). In Roman rhetoric and narrative, the rest of the population – children, people of low social status, enslaved people and non-Romans – display a broader and more intense emotional range, expressed in a wider variety of locations and situations. Just as emotional restraint is honourable for the elite, so a lack of restraint visible in excessive weeping, cries or screams, groans or laughter in public view dishonours the non-elite.

On occasion, the experience and expression of emotion endanger both the emoters and their communities (e.g., Livy 3.68.8, 37.32.11–13). This danger is particularly evident when the emoters are women (both elite and non-elite). Livy reports that excessive joy for the return of sons, who had been reported as battle casualties, causes the deaths of several women in Rome (22.7.12–13). In explaining the strangeness of these deaths, Valerius Maximus concludes, 'they were women, so I am the less surprised' (9.12.2 (Bailey, LCL)). Second, women's displays of emotion can disrupt civic life. In another scene from Livy's *Histories*, news concerning Hannibal's invasion draws cries and lamentations from the women of Rome – noise which, Livy claims, 'deafened' the senators. They demanded that men shut their women up in their homes and keep them silent so that the senators could plan the city's defence (22.55.3–7).

³⁵ See further Sarah Rey, 'Roman Tears and their Impact: A Question of Gender?' *Clio* 41 (2015) 225–45, esp. 230–7; Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 44.

³⁶ Scipio's weeping over Carthage is described with δακρύω and 'clear' or public κλαίω in Polybius 38.22.1; and Plutarch, *Marc.* 19.1, attributes 'many tears' (πολὸν δακρῦσαι) to Marcellus at Syracuse.

³⁷ Rey, 'Roman Tears', 243.

³⁸ See also Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.1–6; Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 52–6.

Third, women's emotionality threatens masculinity. The lengthy narrative of the siege of Jotapata in Josephus's *Jewish War* includes a soundtrack of violence: the thuds of missiles, the groans of men injured in battle and the terrified screams of the women. At one point, General Josephus has the screaming, wailing women shut up in their homes lest their fear 'womanise', *θηλύνω*, the male defenders of the city (3.262–3).³⁹ The threat of women's uncontrolled emotion in the latter two type scenes supports Shelly Matthews's critique of Luke 23.27–31. In her interpretation of the scene, Jesus (a noble martyr) rejects the women's performance of their responsibility to mourn the dead.⁴⁰ The daughters of Jerusalem are properly reprimanded by the manly hero; their tears should not be used to inhibit Jesus' display of masculine discipline.

Such a reading, however, misses the significance of the location of emotion in bodies which do not belong to elite males. This significance is most clearly represented by the Roman matron. She is essentially honourable and virtuous. She should, according to elite men, imitate masculine self-control. But as a woman, socially constructed as lacking control, the matron retains the ability to enact emotion in a public setting without the dishonour of emasculation. Despite the danger of women's emotion, the matron and, by extension, women more generally become the appropriate agents of public emotion.⁴¹

3. The Functionality of Women's Tears

Public displays of emotion incorporate ritual movement. They are visible in houses, streets, and temples, and audible through public spaces like the Roman forum. While women and men perform mourning in biblical traditions, women take a primary role in scenes of war. This association carries over in the prophetic responsibility of weeping and lamentation as women's response to the destruction of war – an important context for Luke's 'daughters of Jerusalem'. In Greco-Roman sources, women, both the semi-masculine elite women and the uncontrolled, undisciplined women who lack status, are often the primary performers of emotion. They inhabit and display emotion to the audience within the narrative and outside the story (its readers and hearers).⁴² In the intersection of gender, social status and emotion, women enact public emotion on behalf of the people of Rome – a second important context for Luke's weeping women.

Women's public performances of weeping in biblical and Greco-Roman sources make use of mourning rituals. Men and women express grief in public and private funeral rites across the ancient Mediterranean contexts of Luke, as reflected in the mourning for children in 7.11–13 and 8.49–52 (see also Acts 8.2, 9.37–9). The function of public displays of mourning to call forth a response from onlookers is also explicitly named (Luke 7.32). The 'daughters of Jerusalem' likewise perform mourning. They could even be professional mourners, as some interpreters suggest (such an identification is not, however, demanded by the text).⁴³ The presence of mourners in a death scene honours the deceased.⁴⁴ In this sense, the women disrupt the opposition to Jesus by 'the people', *ὁ λαός*, in 23.13–25.

³⁹ Cf. Virgil, *Aen.* 9.498–502.

⁴⁰ Matthews, 'Weeping Jesus', 396.

⁴¹ See also Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 52–3.

⁴² Anthony Corbeil, *Nature Embodied: Gesture in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 68–9, 77; Dorota Dutsch, 'Nenia: Gender, Genre, and Lament in Ancient Rome', in *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (ed. Ann Suter; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 258–79; Erker, 'Women's Tears', 135–8.

⁴³ So Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke (X–XXIV): Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985) 1495; Danker, *Jesus*, 371.

⁴⁴ See Peter J. Scaer, *The Lukan Passion and the Praiseworthy Death* (New Testament Monographs 10; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005) 91–2, 112–16.

The representations of mourning in Luke's Gospel lack significant description. There is a funeral procession in 7.11–13, and mourners weep (κλαίω) and beat their bodies (κόπτω) in the home of a deceased child in 8.52. The description of the women weeping (κλαίω), lamenting (θρηνέω) and beating their bodies (κόπτω) in 23.27–8 provides the fullest representation of mourning rituals. These actions are common in biblical and Greco-Roman texts. Mourning in the Bible also includes special clothing; sitting on the ground; spreading ashes or dust on the head; and cutting hair and nails (e.g., Deut 21.12–13; 2 Sam 1.11–12; Job 1.20).⁴⁵ Reflecting the gendered dimensions of emotional displays in the Roman context, women's representations of grief are more significant and intense, depicted as noisier (with lamentation and wailing) and wetter (with continuous tears) than male mourning practices. They perform overtly physical displays: abusing their own bodies, assuming postures of mourning, tearing their hair and wearing clothing that indicates mourning (Seneca, *Tro.* 63–5, 83–94; Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 609B–610C; and Lucian, *Luct.* 12, 19).

The practices of women relatives of the deceased are echoed in the rituals of professional women mourners in biblical and Roman contexts.⁴⁶ Professional mourners perform carefully scripted mourning, with call-and-response lamentations, songs and wailing. Their displays encourage emotional responses from their audiences.⁴⁷ In Roman texts, these displays are associated with honour for the deceased and, by extension, the family through the performance of *pietas*. The displays also indicate the (realised or desired) social status of the family. In addition, Plutarch suggests, professional mourners provide an outlet for grief which should allow the bereaved to gain control over their own emotion (*Mor.* 657A; see also Diodorus Siculus 24/25.17).⁴⁸

Despite the association of mourning rituals with women in Roman sources, critiques of women's mourning for relatives also denigrate their performances as shameful, immoral (comparable to participation in the Bacchanalian cults) and potentially false, carried out to draw attention to the mourner rather than the deceased (Seneca, *Ep.* 63.13, *Marc.* 1.5–7; Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 609A–B, 609E–F). Plutarch accuses women of assaulting the bereaved with their own 'evil' mourning (*Cons. ux.* 610B–C). As in more general critiques of women's emotion, excessive, unrestrained mourning is described as weak, 'womanish' and consequently dishonourable (Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.48–58; Seneca, *Helv.* 16.2–3; Plutarch, *Cons. ux.* 608F).

Darja Erker draws particular attention to the uneasy social location of professional mourners; they were enslaved and freed women, people at the bottom of the social hierarchy with (according to Roman constructions of gender, status and emotion) little to no expectation of self-control. They perform a necessary task within a society which idealised the manly values of self-control and discipline, but precisely because of Roman constructions of masculinity, such public displays are sometimes identified as dangerous.⁴⁹

Importantly, however, these critiques exist alongside the continued presence and responsibility of women in mourning. Both elite women and professional mourners represent collective grief in their performance of mourning (note Cicero, *Tusc.* 2.50; Tacitus, *Germ.* 27.2).⁵⁰ Moreover, their mourning carries over into several interrelated

⁴⁵ See further Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 29–33.

⁴⁶ On professional women mourners in the Bible, see Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 49–51; L. Juliana Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners: The Image of the Wailing Woman as Symbol of Survival in a Traumatized World', *JFSR* 26 (2010) 63–77, here 67; and in Roman contexts, Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 72–7; Erker, 'Women's Tears', 138–43.

⁴⁷ Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 50; Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners', 67–71.

⁴⁸ See further Katariina Mustakallio, 'Grief and Mourning in the Roman Context: The Changing Sphere of Female Lamentation', in *Unveiling Emotions*, ed. Chaniotis and Ducrey, 237–50, esp. 241–2.

⁴⁹ Corbeill, *Nature Embodied*, 75–6; Erker, 'Women's Tears', 143, 147–8; Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 199.

⁵⁰ See also Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners', 70–1.

contexts in both biblical and Roman sources. In the biblical prophets, women voice the trauma of destruction and protest violence. In Roman sources, women's displays of fear and grief express the emotions of war on behalf of the general population, and their tears during times of war effect peace. Elite women also use lamentation to voice political protest. The functions of women's mourning in biblical and Roman traditions provide useful paradigms for interpreting Luke's 'daughters of Jerusalem'.

3.1 Prophetic Tears

The interaction between Jesus and the mourning women in Luke 23.27–9 is characterised by biblical imagery: the identification of the mourners as 'daughters of Jerusalem'; the quotation of Hos 10.8; and the unexpected blessing of infertility (see, for instance, Jer 16.1–4).⁵¹ In addition, the mourning of women in Jerusalem in Isaiah and, especially, Jeremiah provides important context for the tears of the 'daughters of Jerusalem'. These influences on Luke 23.27–9 suggest the weeping commanded by Jesus is, like his own tears on entering Jerusalem, prophetic.⁵²

The title 'daughters of Jerusalem' in Luke 23.28 echoes the personification of Jerusalem in the biblical prophets (Daughter Jerusalem and Daughter Zion in, for instance, Isa 1.8, 37.22; Jer 4.31, 6.23). The particular phrase 'daughters of Jerusalem' is found only in Song of Songs, but the 'daughters of Israel' weep for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in battle in 2 Sam 1.24, and the 'daughters of Zion' mourn and lament destroyed Jerusalem in Isa 3.16–26. As these texts suggest, women are the primary mourners in biblical scenes of war (note also Lam 2.18–20; Nah 2.7).⁵³ Developing this connection, in both Isaiah and Jeremiah, prophetic exhortations give women in Jerusalem the responsibility to weep for the destructive violence of war.

In Isa 3.16–26, the daughters of Zion face divine judgment. They are described as mourners (signified by their clothing, posture, baldness, and a lack of ornamentation).⁵⁴ While the symbolism of mourning relates most directly to the punishment of the women, there is also reference to the deaths of men in war. The women's mourning weaves together with that of personified Jerusalem ('her' gates mourn, and 'she' sits on the ground in a posture of mourning). A similar address to women in Isa 32.9–14 warns of destruction and loss. The women are commanded to mourn with partial nudity, sackcloth, and self-flagellation in response to the destruction of the city and the land.

The exhortations to weep in response to the destruction of war in Jeremiah are even more relevant for Luke 23.27–31. In Jer 6.21–6, Jerusalem (personified as Daughter Zion and 'daughter of my people') mourns as if for her only child in response to the danger of an invading army. Warnings of divine judgment represented by the violence of war cause God and/or the prophet to mourn in 8.18–9.1.⁵⁵ These tears are echoed in exhortations to weep and wail for Jerusalem and Judah (9.10–11), specifically directed to the women of Jerusalem in 9.17–22. These women, the professionals responsible for performing mourning, here call forth the tears of the audience (note 9.17–18).⁵⁶ They should teach

⁵¹ Reeder, *War and Peace*, 173, 207.

⁵² Johnson, *Gospel of Luke*, 15–21, explores Luke as a prophetic text (though in Luke 23.27–31, he identifies only Jesus' words, not the women's mourning, as prophetic).

⁵³ See Ekaterina Koslova, 'Women and Ancient Mortuary Culture(s)', *Covenant Quarterly* 72 (2014) 159–73, esp. 160; Reeder, *War and Peace*, 171–3.

⁵⁴ See further Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 102–3; J. J. M. Roberts, *First Isaiah* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015) 61–2.

⁵⁵ Kathleen O'Connor, *Jeremiah: Pain and Promise* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011) 61–5, addresses the slippage between referents in Jer 8.18–9.11.

⁵⁶ See Olyan, *Biblical Mourning*, 49–51; Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners', 67.

their daughters and neighbours to lament in response to the destruction of war, especially for the deaths of children and young men (9.20–1).

Kathleen O'Connor interprets the mourning of women in Jeremiah as a 'moral act', a necessary expression of humanity and community in the face of trauma.⁵⁷ L. Juliana Claassens similarly argues that the mourning women lead and guide a community's response to trauma. That is, Jeremiah's weeping women serve a therapeutic role.⁵⁸ Claassens also explicitly identifies the women's mourning in Jeremiah as a prophetic witness. Their tears force remembrance of the violent losses of war. By means of the public performance of mourning, they both challenge their community to recognise social injustice and enact resistance against the injustice of imperial conquest.⁵⁹

In a biblical context, then, the mourning of Luke's daughters of Jerusalem displays women's responsibility to acknowledge the trauma of war, violence and loss. The pairing of Jesus' own tearful outcry as he enters Jerusalem, and the command for the women to weep as he exits the city, frame three warnings concerning Jerusalem's fate with prophetic mourning (19.41–4; 21.20–4; 23.27–31). Assuming Luke's Gospel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the mourning in the narrative responds to the devastation of the historical defeat. The 'daughters of Jerusalem' offer a prophetic recognition of and response to loss, adding to the subtle imperial critique in, e.g., Luke 2.1–14, 5.29–32, 13.1–2, or 19.1–10.⁶⁰ Like Jeremiah's weeping women, the women's tears model the appropriate response to Jerusalem's destruction for the Gospel's audience.

3.2 Lamentation and War

The command for the women of Luke 23.27–31 to weep for themselves and their children in response to the threatened destruction of Jerusalem also has significant parallels to the representation of women as the primary performers of emotion in Greco-Roman narratives of war. In particular, interpreters note that the tears of Luke's women identify them as victims of the violence of war.⁶¹ But as with prophetic weeping in the Bible, women's displays of emotion in response to war also express and respond to trauma.

According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. Rom.* 6.51.2–3, and Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.67–70, women's weeping symbolises the pathos of defeat in order to arouse pity in the audience. That is, women are (only) vulnerable victims, not agents in their own right – an understanding which may undergird the interpretations of Luke 23.27–31 offered by Conzelmann and Matthews. Beyond the pathos of war narratives, though, the intersections of gender and emotion make women's displays of emotion socially acceptable. The centrality of courage in war in Roman constructions of masculinity corresponds with men's avoidance of displays of fear or grief (e.g., Livy 4.32.2–3, 25.37.10; Josephus, *J.W.* 3.263). Consequently, the responsibility for performing the emotions of war belongs to women.

In besieged cities, women express fear with shrieks and screams (Livy 2.33.7–8; Josephus, *J.W.* 3.248). Their supplication rituals in temples incorporate the clothing, gestures, and tears of mourning (Sallust, *Bell. cat.* 3.1–3; Livy 26.9.6–8).⁶² Weeping, lamenting women use their bodies and emotions to motivate their own armies to defend them, or to encourage invading armies to be merciful (Caesar, *Bell. civ.* 2.4, *Bell. gall.* 7.26; Tacitus, *Germ.* 7–8). Women warriors, military slaves, and camp followers display courage, vengeance

⁵⁷ O'Connor, *Jeremiah*, 68. See also Koslova, 'Mortuary Culture', 168.

⁵⁸ Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners', 68–71.

⁵⁹ Claassens, 'Calling the Keeners', 72–3.

⁶⁰ Cf. Ford, *My Enemy*, 3–4; Green, *Luke*, 58–9, 122–3; Reeder, *War and Peace*, 14–15.

⁶¹ Johnson, *Gospel of Luke*, 372; Brant Pitre, 'Blessing the Barren and Warning the Fecund: Jesus' Message for Women Concerning Pregnancy and Childbirth,' *JSNT* 81 (2001) 59–80, here 69–74; Reeder, *War and Peace*, 48–9.

⁶² See Erker, 'Women's Tears', 152–4.

and fear on the battlefield. Their screams provide a consistent soundtrack to war in Roman historiography (Livy 2.33.7–8, 5.2.11). Women lament defeat and mourn dead soldiers (Virgil, *Aen.* 2.486–90; Seneca, *Tro.* 63–65, 83–94; Livy 1.29.3–5, 5.40.2–4), and they also weep for their own enslavement following defeat (Diodorus Siculus 13.58; Livy 6.3.3–4).

In these stories, women's displays of fear, grief and joy during war provide essential outlets for communal trauma and stress. This suggestion, which echoes the proposals of Claassens and O'Connor, develops more particularly from the work of military historian John Keegan and classicist Lawrence Tritle. Keegan's seminal work protests the exclusion of emotion from the study of (and preparation for) war. He argues that an accurate military history must recognise the agency of emotion to motivate fighting, guide soldiers' decision-making and more.⁶³ Tritle likewise rejects any 'objective detachment' from the violence of war and the consequences of sustained violence for individuals and societies. He connects culture (in which he includes emotion) with violence and survival; the analysis of the emotions associated with violence and trauma are a necessary element of understanding the processes, memory and social construction of war.⁶⁴

Keegan addresses the emotional experience of soldiers whom he assumes to be male, and Tritle explicitly limits women to the emotions of fear and grief as they await news of the battlefield at home. In light of the functional role of women as bearers of emotion within Roman society, women's expression and performance of emotion in stories of war deserve further analysis. For instance, Tritle interprets the emotional displays associated with parades, triumphs and funerals as a transition for (male) soldiers from the harsh realities of enacting violence into the strictures of peaceful social existence.⁶⁵ A similar transitional space is provided by the women who mourn the dead and rejoice over returning soldiers (e.g., Livy 4.40.3, 22.7.6–7 and 12–13; Valerius Maximus 9.12.2; Plutarch, *Phil.* 21.4). Their displays of fearful worry, grief and joy provide a release for the social anxiety of war for soldiers and civilians within the story. They signify the tragedy and triumph of war to the audience of the narrative, allowing readers or hearers to engage and respond to the scene with their own emotions.⁶⁶

With respect to mourning, in particular, displays of grief from the women of a defeated people or city express the trauma of defeat. Women's work in this respect expands on their role in mourning more generally, though for the city or people as a whole rather than for a single individual or household (note Dionysius of Halicarnasus, *Hist. rom.* 2.35.2; Seneca, *Tro.* 63–66). In addition, scenes of women weeping with their children as they are led out of a captured city provoke responses of pity (Diodorus Siculus 20.15.4–5). Consequently, such scenes form part of appeals for military aid (Livy 29.17.16; Appian, *Bell. civ.* 5.2.12). The pity of the victors further recognises the traumatic violence of war, tinged with fear for the changeability of fortune (Plutarch, *Aem.* 33.3–4).

Even during the celebrated *pax Romana*, war was a constant threat. To pity the defeated is to recognise human fragility. The inclusion of performances of emotion from the defeated in historiography is arguably more about the victors than the defeated. The weeping, lamenting captive women are going to the slave markets, not to asylum. The audience weeps over them anyway; the emotive displays of the captives of war provide an outlet for the emotional distress of war, even for the victors.

⁶³ John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Penguin, 1976) 31–4.

⁶⁴ Lawrence A. Tritle, *From Melos to My Lai: War and Survival* (London: Routledge, 2000) 11, 34.

⁶⁵ Tritle, *Melos to My Lai*, 143–61, 189–91.

⁶⁶ Compare Jo-Ann Shelton, 'The Fall of Troy in Seneca's *Troades*', in *The Fall of Cities in the Mediterranean: Commemoration in Literature, Folk-Song, and Liturgy* (ed. Mary R. Bachvarova, Dorota Dutsch, and Ann Suter; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016) 183–211, esp. 191, 207.

Women's tears during war, then, might serve several purposes. Following Ruth Webb's mimetic imagination, the audiences of the scene (both within the narrative and outside it) are invited to mourn the war dead and to pity the defeated.⁶⁷ A display of emotion may challenge the aggressors to reconsider their actions, or encourage practical support from more powerful parties in the audience.⁶⁸ As such, the mourning of the defeated, particularly of women who are rarely given active roles in war narratives, questions the justice of acts of war. Women's tears are multivalent, and at least in narrative, they are effective.

Women's tears for themselves and their children in Luke 23.27–31 express the emotions of war: fear, grief and the trauma of violent loss. In so doing, the women's tears represent the devastation of defeat. More than a literary trope of war narratives, women's mourning provides an outlet for the trauma of war within the narrative and for its audiences. As the final reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel, the tears of the 'daughters of Jerusalem' reinforce the message of judgment, destruction and loss. Moreover, the instruction to the women to weep for themselves and their children provides the audience with a model for their own response to the destruction of Jerusalem.

3.3 Lamentation as Political Protest

While Jesus' words in Luke 23.28–31 associate the women's tears with the destruction of Jerusalem, the scene first introduces their mourning as a response to Jesus' execution. The intention of their mourning is unclear. The women are associated with the crowds who had just shouted for Jesus' condemnation (23.13–25), indicating for some interpreters that, despite their tears, these women are complicit in Jesus' death.⁶⁹ Other interpreters suggest it was common for mourning women to be part of the crowds observing an execution.⁷⁰ The latter suggestion can be sharpened with reference to women's use of mourning rituals as political protest in Roman contexts. In these performances, women's tears are instruments of social and legal power. Read in this context, the women of Luke 23.27 lament and beat their bodies to protest Jesus' execution.

In Roman historiography, women's performance of mourning as protest disrupts men's governance. At least sometimes, their emotional displays effectively garner support for the women's causes. Following the murder of Clodius Pulcher, for instance, his wife Fulvia laments and displays his wounds to visitors in their home. She and her daughter-in-law mourn in public view during the trial of the man accused of the murder. Comparable to the emotive rhetoric of a male speaker, the women's performance arouses an emotional response in the audience. The senators deciding the case condemn the accused (Asconius, *Commentary on Cicero's Pro Milone* 3, 10, 12).⁷¹ Elite women also used mourning to advocate for or against political decisions, as when Mark Antony's mother, wife, young son and friends convince the senators not to declare him the enemy of Rome (Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 3.51.211, 3.61.249). As Johan Vekselius argues, in these stories women weaponise emotion to engage in politics, an arena from which they were (at least formally) excluded.⁷²

Elite women's performance of emotion in contexts of war also extends to protest. The mothers of three hundred Carthaginian children handed over to Rome as hostages object

⁶⁷ Ann Suter, 'Tragic Tears and Gender', in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Fögen, 59–83, esp. 65, 81; Shelton, 'Fall of Troy', 191.

⁶⁸ Donald Lateiner, 'Tears and Crying in Hellenic Historiography: Dacryology from Herodotus to Polybius', in *Tears in the Graeco-Roman World*, ed. Fögen, 105–34, esp. 107.

⁶⁹ See e.g., Tiede, *Prophecy and History*, 113; Neyrey, 'Jesus' Address', 76–7.

⁷⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 863–4; Ford, *My Enemy*, 129.

⁷¹ See also Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.75, 2.77; Erker, 'Women's Tears', 144–7.

⁷² Vekselius, 'Weeping for the *res publica*', 75–82.

by conducting mourning rituals in the streets and at the harbour. When the Romans threaten war despite the hostages, the people of Carthage riot – and the mothers, ‘like avenging furies from a tragedy’, make loud, public accusations against the injustice (Appian, *Hist. rom.* 8.1.76.354–77.359, 8.1.92.432–93.439 (McGing, LCL)). Their public displays encourage Carthage to declare war against Rome.

In Rome itself, elite women’s tears and lamentation end war. Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ narrative of the war between the Romans and the Volscii (led by the Roman Coriolanus) emphasises women’s emotive power.⁷³ The women who ask Coriolanus’ mother, Veturia, for aid weep and lament until she agrees. The open display of emotion by Veturia and the other women before Coriolanus makes even the enemy soldiers pity them (note *Rom. Ant.* 8.39.2–5, 8.40.2–6, 8.45.1, 8.46.1, 8.54.1). In response to the women’s performance (and his mother’s argument), Coriolanus ends the war.

In these narratives, elite women participate in political and military decisions. In the courtroom, their tears replace verbal protests; in scenes of war, their tears accompany their words – but historiographers nonetheless emphasise women’s lamentation as the deciding factor in men’s plans.⁷⁴ For an audience primed to see political power in women’s tears, Luke’s ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ may well have been perceived as protestors. The women’s public lamentation adds emphasis to the theme of injustice represented by the repeated declarations of Jesus’ innocence through Luke’s passion narrative.⁷⁵

There is a noticeable shift in public opinion among the narrational audience of the crucifixion in the scenes following the women’s lamentation.⁷⁶ This group shouted for Jesus’ execution before Pilate: ‘Crucify him!’ (23.13–23). But by the end of the chapter, having witnessed the tears of the ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ and the death of Jesus, the same group expresses remorse, joining the women in their mourning gesture of beating their bodies (23.48).⁷⁷ Given the rhetorical power associated with women’s emotion in Roman sources, it is at least possible that the women’s display of mourning is intended to be a factor in the onlookers’ changing response.

4. The Tears of the Daughters of Jerusalem

In the biblical prophets, Greco-Roman rhetoric and historiography, the performance of mourning provided a means for women to contribute to and participate in society. These backgrounds allow space for recognising Luke’s ‘daughters of Jerusalem’ as active agents, performing emotion on behalf of the public, with the potential to effect change. In a narrative dominated by men, the women’s tears contribute to the audience’s interpretation of both Jesus’ death and the destruction of Jerusalem.

The vocabulary of Luke 23.27–8, *κόπτω*, *θρηνέω*, and *κλαίω*, identifies the women as mourners. Mourning for the dead was an important responsibility for women, particularly (given the intersections of gender and emotion) in a Roman context. The women of the family of the deceased expressed their loyalty and *pietas* through mourning rituals. Professional women mourners honoured the deceased and provided a cathartic emotional release for the family. In this context, the tears of the women in Luke 23.27 are an

⁷³ Erker, ‘Women’s Tears’, 149–52; Mustakallio, ‘Grief and Mourning’, 246.

⁷⁴ See Gary L. Ebersole, ‘The Function of Ritual Weeping Revisited: Affective Expression and Moral Discourse’, *HR* 39 (2000) 211–46, here 243–44; Mustakallio, ‘Grief and Mourning’, 247.

⁷⁵ Demal, ‘Jesu Umgang’, 80–1, makes a similar proposal concerning the women of Luke 23.27–31. On Luke’s theme of injustice, note Luke 23.4, 13–15, 22, 40–1, 47, and Green, *Luke*, 807, 827; Whitaker, ‘Spectacle’, 415.

⁷⁶ See Tannehill, *Gospel According to Luke*, 165.

⁷⁷ The vocabulary is different— *κόπτω* (along with *θρηνέω*) describes the women, while the crowd is described with *τύπτω τὰ στήθη*. Consequently, Whitaker, ‘Spectacle’, 407, 409, argues that the crowds in verse 48 only represent grief – not remorse.

expression of devotion to Jesus – a parallel to the tears of the woman who washes and anoints Jesus' feet in 7.37–8 (her actions are interpreted as a sign of her love in verse 47).⁷⁸

As mourners in the context of a public execution, the women's actions can also be interpreted as a protest. Jesus' innocence is declared by Pilate in Luke 23.4, 13–15, and 22; by another victim of crucifixion in 23.40–1; and by the centurion in 23.47. The women's mourning sits in the narrational centre of these proclamations. In this respect, the use of mourning as a protest by elite women in Roman historiography provides a useful comparison for Luke's 'daughters of Jerusalem'. It is notable that, as historiography indicates women's mourning effected political and military decisions, the actions of the women in Luke 23.27 are later mimicked in part by the crowds who had been implicated in Jesus' condemnation (verse 48). The mourning of the women is at least part of the shift in the crowd's response, and possibly a contributing factor to this shift.

Jesus tells the women not to weep for him, echoing his words to the widow in Nain and the mourners in the home of Jairus (Luke 7.13, 8.52). In the earlier stories, tears were unnecessary because of the impending resurrection of the two dead children. In 23.28, however, the women's tears for Jesus are redirected towards themselves and their children. The women's mourning symbolises the defeat of Jerusalem (as is emphasised by the blessing of infertility, an inversion of the association of fertility with peace in Luke 1–2).⁷⁹ Against a backdrop of war, the women weep as agents of public emotion. They express and protest the trauma of violence, specifically represented by women and children in Luke's warnings of Jerusalem's destruction (13.34–5, 19.41–4, 21.20–4, and 23.27–31).⁸⁰

The women's mourning and Jesus' warning in Luke 23.27–31 are interwoven with allusions to the biblical prophets. Luke's 'daughters of Jerusalem' represent the prophetic work of the women who weep for Jerusalem in Jer 9.17–22. Jeremiah's women mourn the destruction of war. They also teach others to lament. Luke's women perform the same task. Like the tears of Jesus in 19.41–4, the tears of the 'daughters of Jerusalem' signify prophetic judgment. Their lamentations also represent a prophetic protest against the injustices of war.

Luke's passion story is framed by an inclusio of prophetic judgment and grief in the tears of Jesus and the daughters of Jerusalem. The Gospel's audience in the late first century would have known that Jerusalem was destroyed in the First Jewish Revolt, and women and their children were killed, injured and enslaved. In historical context, then, the tears of the women model an expected response for the audience, one which by the values of ancient rhetoric and historiography, readers and hearers would be expected to grasp. They should also weep for Jerusalem, her daughters and their children.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

⁷⁸ See Charles H. Cosgrove, 'A Woman's Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the "Sinful Woman" in Luke 7.36–50', *JBL* 124 (2005), 675–92, esp. 688–91; Whitaker, 'Spectacle', 407.

⁷⁹ See further Reeder, *War and Peace*, 161–4, 184–8, 207–8.

⁸⁰ See Reeder, *War and Peace*, 195–200.