Biblical Women and the Use of Allure: Video by Ralph Williams

Recurring themes:

* Silent spots in the Bible are filled in by male commentators
* Complex lives of complex people
* The rationality of men versus the passion of women
* The woman as a site of male desire / the woman who elicits desires (allure) / the woman as a victim of male desire and violence
* Is this what the woman wanted?
* Female silence
* Women as the **site** of male desire (note: not sight)
* Most ideas from the Bible are commentary and NOT IN THE TEXT (EX: *Paradise Lost*)

7 Main Points

1. Eve
2. Leading Women
3. Tamar: Desire by the Roadside and Justice
4. Lust on a Rooftop
5. A Woman Wise in Words and Strong in Deeds: Judith
6. Esther, Ishtar and the Cost of Loss
7. Salome: The Beauty of the Young and Desire of the Old

Eve

* Eve is a subservient to Adam, yet Adam listens to her and eats the fruit: Milton suggests it is because of her beauty (allure)
* Where is Adam during the conversation?
  + Male commentators suggest he elsewhere, the text suggests he is there listening
  + If he is there, why does he not intervene? Who is really subservient?
* Why does Eve have allure if the Bible does not comment on her beauty?
  + Because of male commentators filling in the silent spots.
* The connection between Eve and Evil (the use of names)

Leading Women

* Rachel: Jacob wants Rachel but is tricked into marrying Leah
  + After stealing artifacts, she uses her menstruation to hide her deed
  + A way men are drawn to, then averse to female sexuality
* Dinah: Is raped and avenged yet has no say in any of the events
  + First she is raped
    - Points out many male commentators try and say she lured him; he points the text clearly says otherwise
  + Her brothers then take revenge and kill her new husband and his people
    - What if she did not want her new husband dead?
  + The point is: we never know because Dinah is never given a voice, her sexuality is used for male pleasure then male revenge
    - Her body is used an excuse for male disobedience

Tamar: Desire by the Roadside and Justice

* Issues of Assimilation
* The story of Judah’s three sons: Er, Onan, and Shelah
* Tamar wants a son so she tricks Judah into impregnating her and once the townspeople call her a whore, she brings out Judah’s ring and staff
  + Judah’s response: she is more just than I
* Tamar is more just because she is getting the baby she is owed by the family while Judah is attempting to denying her
* Questions: Is all women want through sex a child? Do they seek no pleasure through sexual encounters? Are men nearly an instrument in their desire to conceive?
* Tamar’s bloodline runs down to King David and Jesus

Lust on a Rooftop

* The story of Bathsheba on the rooftop
* A woman of male desire / violence (since her husband died)
* Main question: did she want any of this?

A Woman Wise in Words and Strong in Deed: Judith

* Jerusalem is surrounded by Assyrian army and the men in Jerusalem are going to give up but Judith arrives
* Judith is a widow who is pious to the faith and tells the men not to question God she will take care of things
  + She prays to God and asks for help, as he owes her for deeds done against Dinah
* She leaves the city and due to her **allure,** she ends up in the general’s tent where her and her hand maid kill him
  + She does not need to sleep with him in order to defeat him she uses her allure and sexuality against him without giving in to his desires
* She is a powerful character because there are so many stories of women being abused in the Bible but she uses her female prowess to avenge those women

Esther, Ishtar and the Costing of Loss

* The Persian King throws two banquet feast a total of 187 days
  + Demands his wife Queen Vashti show her beauty but she denies
  + He makes a a decree all men are masters of their home so women can not disobey them then tries to find the most beautiful virgin in the land
  + Esther hides her Jewish background and becomes in the new Queen based on **beauty and allure**
  + There is tension between Mordecai (Esther’s cousin) and Haman (the King’s official)
  + Haman enacts a decree to kill all Jews but through an ironic turn of events Esther (with the help of Mordecai) turn Haman’s plan against him and save all of the Jews

Salome

* Salome enticing all of the old men at a party (including the king) with a dance
* The King in return tells her he will do anything to have her
  + She asks her mother what to do and she replies: Get John the Baptist’s head
  + The decree is issued and followed through thus John the Baptist’s head was served on a plate

Personal Note:

The setup of the presentation suggests the feminine allure, though harmful, can be used as a tool of power and manipulation. Women that start the Bible as weak rise to use their objectification against the very men that objectify them.