CHAPTER 4

Amnon’s Sin and Absalom’s Revenge

4.1 2 Samuel 13:1–39

4.1.1 2 Samuel 13:1–4

At the lower level of 13:1 the reader is told that Amnon fell in love with his half-sister Tamar. Being his sister, Tamar was not sexually available to Amnon. Moreover, in 13:2 the reader is made aware that Tamar is a virgin and therefore sexually unavailable to Amnon for a second reason. In 13:3 we are told that Amnon had a crafty friend called Jonadab, who asks Amnon why he looks so weak (13:4). Amnon responds to Jonadab that he loves Tamar, Absalom’s sister (13:4). The implicit message at the upper level of the narrative is that Amnon wished to have sex with Tamar. The opposition in the narrative emerges in the difference between what is said and what is meant. It is explicitly stated that Amnon loved Tamar and that she was a virgin—something which frustrated Amnon. However, there is an insinuation in the narrative that Amnon’s interest in his sister is morally unacceptable. This irony is covert and the ironic content is implied by the use of anomalous language together with allusions to the background story of David and Bathsheba.

Take for instance Amnon’s response to Jonadab, which is as follows:

(Amnon said to him, “I love Tamar, my brother Absalom’s sister.”)

The unusual word order mentions Tamar’s relationship with Absalom before the verb ראה. This word order then emphasizes Absalom’s relationship to Tamar or, in other words, repeats the understanding that Tamar belongs to Absalom. The emphasis is significant to the reader who remembers the rich man’s act of taking the lamb in Nathan’s Parable (2 Sam. 12:4), and God’s judgement against David for taking Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:9). The presence of אני in this section emphasizes Amnon and implies that Amnon is set to be the ‘taker’ in this instance.

At the upper level of the text the ironist insinuates that Amnon will make the same error as David (by having an illicit sexual encounter). The ironist also

1 Translation care of the NRS.
2 “love”.
draws attention to the possible consequences of this action. David, as the King of Israel was disobedient to the laws of Israel, and thereby, sinned against God, and threatened the order in Israel. The reader can now assume that Amnon, who is the next in line to the throne is about to do the same thing. In these terms Amnon is clearly the object of ironic attack. The mode of verbal irony is impersonal. The sub-category of impersonal irony is insinuation, as the ironist anticipates that Amnon is going to do something immoral as a consequence of his frustrated desire, especially when considered in the context of David’s sexual transgression in chapters 2 Samuel 11–12.

4.1.2 2 Samuel 13:5–7
At the lower level of 13:5 Jonadab tells Amnon to pretend to be sick in order that Amnon can get close to Tamar. In 13:6 Amnon enacts Jonadab’s plan, and in 13:7 David—believing Amnon to be sick—sends Tamar to Amnon’s house to prepare food for him. Our background knowledge (prior to the SN) is that David is extremely astute and not easily tricked. Accordingly, the irony of this incongruity is implied at the upper level of the narrative. David is the object of ironic attack and also the unknowing victim of the irony.

The grade of irony is covert, and is implied in the language in the passage. The different wording in the requests for Tamar to tend to Amnon are particularly relevant to the irony. Amnon’s implementation of Jonadab’s plan diverges from Jonadab’s original intention. Jonadab has in mind that Tamar and, for that matter, David be deceived. However, it is by no means clear that Jonadab envisages that Amnon rape Tamar, as in fact Amnon does. Jonadab’s outline of the plan is verbose and rich in sensual imagery (לעיני, אכל מידה), and he suggests that Amnon request of David that Tamar perform הבריה for him (13:5). It has been argued that הבריה is not merely food but a healing ritual which was carried out by women. This is consistent with the deception that Amnon is ill. Moreover, by adding the sensual allusions in his account of the healing ritual, Jonadab presents the plan as also involving a somewhat seductive aspect and in doing so he manifests a degree of subtlety and sophistication. However, Amnon fails to grasp the subtlety. Amnon’s request to David is inappropriate and potentially counter-productive. His communication is coarse and carries a sexual connotation that nearly gives the game away (13:6). Amnon does not

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3 Phillips, “Another Look at Adultery,” 3–25.
4 “In my sight” “Eat them from her hand”.
5 Adrien Janis Bledstein, “Was Habbirya a Healing Ritual Performed by a Woman in King David’s House?” Biblical Research 38 (1992), 15–31. Bledstein writes that the definite article indicates the name of the ritual and the name of the food offering, 16.
ask for הבירה which may be hearty or heart-shaped cakes. There is a sexual connotation to the word לבבות. On the other hand, David merely instructs Tamar to prepare הבירה for Amnon, which suggests that David has missed the sexual overtones in Amnon's request (13:7).

David’s words to Tamar begin with לכי which is a royal order (13:7). This royal command gives effect to Amnon's deception of Tamar and is given without insight or due consideration. Accordingly, David is presented as a fool. The familiar word שלך precedes David’s foolish command (13:7) and, thereby, connects this event with David’s other transgressions (2 Sam. 11:1, 3, 4, 6, 14)—transgressions in which David is shown to be a king who does not make commands with good judgement.

The mode of verbal irony is impersonal irony. The sub-category is the pretended defence of the victim since David is deceived in the narrative, and the ironist pretends to defend David’s foolishness by presenting him as being at the mercy of a conspirator, namely Jonadab, who is חכם מאד. David’s foolishness is then in stark contrast to the wisdom or craftiness of Jonadab who created the ruse. Mark Gray stresses this obliviousness of David when he suggests, “... David is either presented as innocent to the point of gross naivety or blind to a degree that stretches credulity.” McCarter merely suggests, “... there is no violence or vengeance in him, but he is carelessly compliant (13:7).” It is expected of the king that he be astute and judicious and certainly not careless. Given that a reasonable person would be expected to see through the deception, the defence of David is merely pretended. In this category, according to Muecke, the victim of irony is ‘defended’ in the ironist’s faux-support. On my revised analysis of Muecke, the object of ironic attack—who in this case is also an unknowing victim—is defended in the ironist’s faux-support. The effect of this, is to point to David’s extreme foolishness. The opposition in this sub-category then, is that the unknowing victim is being defended at the lower level, and criticized pejoratively at the upper level.

6 McCarter Jr., *II Samuel*, 322.
7 Mark Gray, “Amnon: a chip off the Old Block? Rhetorical Strategy 13.7–15 the Rape of Tamar and the Humiliation of the Poor,” *JSOT* 77 (1998), 43.
8 Ibid.
9 “Very wise”. The word חכם can mean wise or crafty. It is traditionally translated to mean crafty, as craftiness is not dependent on morality. It may be argued that this designation of Jonadab as wise is ironic, given that his plan has disastrous results for the royal family.
10 Ibid.
11 McCarter Jr., *II Samuel*, 327.
12 Muecke, *The Compass of Irony*, 73.
4.1.3 **2 Samuel 13:8–9**

At the lower level of 13:8 Tamar goes to Amnon's house and bakes cakes for him. In 13:9 Amnon refuses to eat the cakes and sends everybody except for Tamar out of his house. At the upper level the ironist implies that Amnon is about to mistreat Tamar, and cross the boundaries of acceptable social standards in Israel during this period. Moreover, this passage contrasts Tamar's genuine act of hospitality with Amnon's lack of חסד.

There is an opposition in the narrative between what is said and what is meant. The author gives a detailed explicit account of Tamar's labours and contrasts them with Amnon's abrupt action of sending away everyone but Tamar. The author does not explicitly say that Tamar is innocent and Amnon morally culpable; nevertheless, this is implied. The ironic content is that Amnon is about to violate hospitality laws and harm Tamar, notwithstanding her conscientious compliance with these laws in Amnon's interest. Amnon is the object of ironic attack. The grade of irony is covert and is, therefore, conveyed through the language used and the background information provided in the text.

As far as the language is concerned, 13:8–9 follows the same pattern of verbosity and then curtness as has already been described in verses 11:1 et al. To begin with, the wordiness of 13:8–9a can be found in the belaboured description of Tamar's food preparation. Bar-Efrat observes,

> It should be noted, however, that the narrator presents events to us relatively slowly (again, thereby heightening the tension): details are recorded to such an extent that instead of 'and she kneaded the dough' we find, 'And she took dough and kneaded it', and instead of 'and she emptied the pan out before him' we read, 'And she took the pan and emptied it out before him'.

This verbosity creates the image of Tamar labouring to prepare food for Amnon. This image is in contrast with the image of Amnon who is presented as lounging around and feigning illness (13:8a). The prolonged effort that Tamar puts into food preparation is wasted as Amnon refuses to eat (13:9). There is also an implication that Tamar's conscientious efforts to benefit Amnon are also to be wasted, albeit in a far more serious sense since he is about to cause her great harm.

The curtness is found in the indicting sentence, הוציאו כל אישׁ מעלי (13:9b) (And every man went out from him). Given what the reader already knows

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13 Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, 256.
14 Author's translation.
of Amnon's strong sexual desire toward Tamar (13:1–2), and his plan (expressed earlier with sexual overtones) to get Tamar into his house (13:6), Amnon's request to be left alone with Tamar creates suspicion. The curt sentence in this linguistic context together with the background knowledge of his plan generate the implication that he is about to do Tamar harm. So, we have an example of the sub-category of insinuation. The reader expects Amnon to harm Tamar, because of what the reader has learned of Amnon's character, and because we are now at the stage of Amnon's plan where he intends to engage in sexual intercourse with her (presumably whether she consents to it or not).

Furthermore, the insinuation that Amnon is going to harm Tamar links Amnon further with David, and David's transgressions. For instance, in 2 Samuel 12:12 Yahweh protests that David has sinned in secret, e.g. with respect to Bathsheba. In the context of the knowledge of David's secret sin and the insinuation that Amnon is about to harm Tamar—and do so in secret, since having commanded others to leave the house, he and Tamar are alone (13:9b)—the reader anticipates that Amnon will make a similar error to the one made by his father. This anticipation is strengthened by the presence of the superfluous report in the verse that everybody followed the prince's order and left the chamber (13:9c). This episode also foreshadows the ire of Yahweh in relation to Amnon, given Yahweh's ire in relation to David. The content of the irony is Amnon's violation of Tamar's hospitality, in the context of her provision of hospitality to him, along with the insinuation that Amnon is about to harm Tamar in secret.

Of note, although Tamar is 'tricked' she is not the unknowing victim of verbal irony (as David was in the previous section), as Tamar is not 'confidently' unaware of what is going on. Or in other words, there is no hubris in Tamar's character at this stage of the narrative.

4.1.4 2 Samuel 13:10–11

At the lower level of 13:10 Amnon asks Tamar to bring him the cakes she has made. In 13:11 Amnon restrains Tamar and tells her to lie with him. At the upper level there is an implication that he is about to rape his own sister. While there is an explicit reference to the family relationship between Amnon and Tamar, the use of anomalous language adds emphasis. In 13:10 it states that Tamar brings the cakes to אֲמוֹן אֱלֹהִי אָחָה.15 In 13:11 Amnon says, בָּאוּ שֹׁכֵב בְּעֵמִי אָחָתי.16 At this point a further implication at the upper level of the narrative is that it is the Prince of Israel that is about to commit his heinous act of raping his own

15 “Amnon her brother”.

16 “Come lie with me, my sister.”
sister. Such an act is of great significance since it threatens all of Israel. For Amnon has proven that he is not interested in upholding the laws which protect Israel yet he is next in line to be king. Moreover, he has no concern for his own sister. It follows that he cannot be trusted to be a just king for the rest of the community.

There is an incongruity between the levels. At the lower level Tamar is handing out cakes and being told to lie down with Amnon in what is a seemingly banal episode. However, at the upper level it is implied that the Prince of Israel is about to rape his own sister which is an evil act of profound significance. The ironist feigns innocence of the significance of Amnon’s act by merely describing the handing out of cakes and emphasizing the family relationship while not explicitly stating that Amnon is about to rape his sister, much less condemning him for this act. However, the ironist is actually implying that there is about to be a rape and that Amnon should be condemned for this. Amnon is the object of ironic attack. The grade of irony is covert and, therefore, uncovered by recourse to the language and background information in the text. The mode of verbal irony is impersonal, and the sub-category of impersonal irony is understatement.

Of particular interest is the understatement of Amnon’s action of restraining Tamar and telling her to lie with him given it is, after all, a rape. This understating of the event is facilitated by the prior somewhat repetitive discussion of the trivial matter of the preparation of cakes. The use of these rhetorical devices continues the pattern of verbosity followed by a curt statement (see 11:1). The verbosity also draws attention to the well-intentioned and conscientious labour of Tamar, and the contrasting lack of חסד in Amnon. The verbosity in this section is in 13:10–11a, and curt language is in 13:11b:

בואי שכבי עמי אחותי

(Come lie with me, my sister.)

The repetition of the yod at the end of each of these words produces a rhythm which emphasizes each word in this highly significant single sentence and, thereby, emphasises what the sentence implies—that Amnon is about to rape Tamar.

17 Translation care of the KJV.
18 Of note, Mark Gray suggests that Amnon’s decision not to eat the cakes that Tamar made for him (13:9, 11), can be contrasted with David’s decision to fast for the life of the illegitimate child born from his union with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:17). For Gray, David’s decision to fast is honourable, whereas, Amnon’s reasons for fasting are deceitful. This proposition suggests that Amnon was more corrupted than David (Gray, “Amnon: a chip off the Old Virginia Miller - 9789004411722
Downloaded from Brill.com04/27/2021 02:49:33PM via free access
The message of Tamar’s words in 13:12–13b is overt. Tamar’s plea for Amnon not to rape her is immediately apprehended and forceful, as would be expected. This is evident by the number of negations which appear in 13:12. For instance, the wordsี้ או לא appear a total of four times in this verse. Moreover, it is made evident in Tamar’s response to Amnon that what Amnon is intending to do, namely, rape Tamar is a sin, and contrary to the social customs of the day. This warning is evident in the following verses:

לא יעשה כן בארץ ישראל לא תעשה את ה dünya אמתה
(13:12)  
(... no such thing should be done in Israel, do not do this sacriledge).19

ואני אנה אוליך את חרפתי
(13:13)  
(And where could I take me shame?)20

Tamar’s direct moral criticism of Amnon strengthens the notion of the ironist’s implied criticism in the previous sections relating to this rape. However, despite the clarity and force of Tamar’s pleas for Amnon not to rape her, the nature of Tamar’s explicitly proposed solution to her predicament is problematic. Note that her predicament is as follows. She is about to be raped by her brother. However, according to most biblical scholars her brother cannot provide restitution by marrying her since marriage between siblings is forbidden. Moreover, no-one else will marry her because she has been raped. Accordingly, she faces a bleak future. Her own explicitly proposed solution to this predicament is problematic. For instance, in 13:13c Tamar begs Amnon to talk to the king as she is convinced that the king will permit a marriage between the two. However, this is against the laws which prohibit incest (Lev. 18:9, 11, 20:17 and Deut. 27:22). Upon saying this, it is worth noting that this is an area of contentious debate. The major concerns are outlined in McCarter’s four propositions below.

(1) The laws of Lev. 18:9, 11 were not in effect in the time of David. In this case Tamar’s words are a forthright appeal for reason, and Aminon’s crime consists ‘not in casting his eyes on his half-sister, but by violating her without having contracted a marriage and contracting no

19 Author’s translation.
20 Author’s translation.
marriage after violating her’ (Daube 1947:79). (2) The laws were in effect but not recognized in Jerusalem. In this case Tamar’s words are, as in the first case, a sincere appeal, and Aminon’s crime rape, not incest (Conroy 1978:17–18 n.3) ... (3) The laws were in effect in Jerusalem, but their purpose was not to regulate marriage but to prevent casual intercourse with women a man could expect to encounter in his household. In this case Tamar’s words are again an appeal for reason, and Aminon is guilty of violating the laws of Lev 18 but, because he could not have married her, not of committing incest (Phillips 1975:239) (4) The laws were in full effect. In this case Tamar’s words, unless she is temporizing, imply that David would have been willing to permit the marriage despite its illegality, and Aminon is guilty of both rape and incest.21

All of the examples discussed can be divided into two sets of interpretations, (1) that marriage between siblings was legal, and (2) that it was not. The content of the narrative provides strong evidence in favour of (2), i.e. that marriage between siblings was not legal. First, Jonadab—who is a wise man—devises a plan to deceive the King in order to enable Amnon to express his love for his sister, Tamar, who is also the King’s daughter. Why would wise Jonabad recommend such a devious and potentially dangerous course of action if sexual relations and marriage between siblings was not forbidden? Second, why does Amnon not express his love for Tamar openly and directly, if sexual relations and marriage between siblings was not forbidden?

Let us assume, then, that marriage between siblings is unlawful. In this scenario, Tamar knows that Amnon knows not only that incest is a crime, but also that he would not be able to make restitution for his crime of raping Tamar by means of marriage to her (Deut. 22:28–29), for she also knows that he knows that marriage between siblings is unlawful.22 The question that now arises is why Tamar proposes marriage to Amnon as the solution, given that marriage between siblings, and, therefore, an ongoing incestuous relationship involving procreation, is unlawful. Tamar not only strongly recommends marriage as the solution but chastises Amnon for disregarding the prohibition against

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21 McCarter Jr., II Samuel, 323–324. Note, McCarter suggests that the spelling אמיןון in 2 Sam 13:20 points to the translation Aminon. McCarter argues that “defective spelling,” אמינון has led to the popular translation Amnon. I follow the translation Amnon as this translation is generally accepted in scholarship.

22 I note that the other elements of the restitution which would be applicable if Amnon were to rape Tamar are that he must pay a large bride price, and relinquish the right to divorce the her (Deut. 22:28–29).
rape. Indeed, as I argue below, she claims his action amounts to sacrilege. The upshot of this is that Tamar urges Amnon to choose unlawful marriage over unlawful rape, i.e. an ongoing incestuous relationship involving procreation over a one-off forcible act of incest. However, in Israel during this period—we must now assume—an ongoing incestuous relationship involving procreation is regarded as morally worse than a one-off forcible act of incest. Thus, ironically, Tamar is oblivious to the fact that in reprimanding Amnon for his imminent unlawful action she is simultaneously proposing an alternative course of action that is also unlawful—indeed a course of action that is regarded as a more serious offence. Moreover, her solution would involve the complicity of the King.

The scenario is consistent with Muecke’s sub-category of verbal irony, pretended defence of the victim. At the lower (explicit) level of the narrative Tamar chastises Amnon for forcing himself upon her. Also, at the lower level she offers a solution to the problem, namely, marriage between siblings—an unlawful course of action. At the upper (implicit) level it is implied that Tamar herself is prepared to disregard the law and have others, notably the King, disregard the law. Thus, the conflict in the narrative is between, on the one hand, Tamar presenting herself as a righteous person who is about to be wronged and, on the other, the unrighteous course of action that she proposes in order to avert the wrong. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that Tamar is about to be wronged, she is the object of ironic attack. Moreover, she is also an unknowing victim of the irony. This is an instance of pretended defence of the victim, since the ironist pretends to be characterising Tamar as a righteous person while in fact drawing attention to her lack of righteousness. I note that this interpretation is challenging as it is critical of Tamar’s response to her rapist whilst she is in the process of being raped. However, the crude and grotesque nature of this interpretation is consistent with satire. Indeed, grotesqueries are non-essential features of satire.

Also, of note in this section is the emphasis on the word נבלה. In 13:12 Tamar warns Amnon not to be a נבלה. This mention of the נבלה leads onto Tamar’s rhetorical question whereby Tamar repeats the word נבלה. In 13:13 Tamar warns Amnon once again not to be one of the הנבלים בישריאל. The word נבלה in isolation is ordinarily translated ‘folly.’ Better still, the word נבלה is considered ‘sacrilege,’ which points to a transgression which destroys existing relationships and order.23 The נבלה applies to a person who is not in the right relationship with God in his thoughts and actions, with the consequence that the disadvantaged suffer since the fool disregards the interests of the community (Isa. 32:6).

23 McCarter Jr., II Samuel, 322–323.
This kind of person relates to ‘Nabal,’ who rejected important social norms and paid the price of his life for his foolishness (1 Sam. 25:2–44).

It was claimed in my interpretation of Nathan’s Parable that the analogy of Nathan’s Parable to the story of David and Nabal allowed for a nuanced interpretation of the analogy of David with the rich man in Nathan’s Parable. In my interpretation, David was not only pejoratively criticized for taking Bathsheba and having Uriah killed, but also for his violation of hospitality customs. I now suggest that the story of David and Nabal is alluded to in the Amnon/Tamar episode. Certainly, Tamar’s plea to Amnon not to rape her is reminiscent of Abigail’s plea to David in 1 Sam. 25:25 not to kill Nabal. In 1 Sam. 25:25 the word נבל is mentioned twice and the word נבלת is mentioned once.

Given this allusion to Nabal, and the parallels between Amnon and David as transgressors,24 arguably Amnon is condemned alongside David, not only because Amnon’s transgression was preordained as a consequence of David’s transgressions (12:11) but also because Amnon is a transgressor in his own right and, as such, condemned by God (as David was). This connection between Amnon and David is implied by virtue of Amnon being connected to “the rich man” in Nathan’s Parable. For both the rich man and Amnon have breached hospitality customs (12:7). For his part Amnon violates Tamar’s hospitality. In addition, both the rich man and Amnon take another man’s ‘property’, for instance, the lamb in the case of the rich man, Tamar in the case of Amnon. Crucially, the rich man is condemned by God for his transgressions. Therefore, by implication, Amnon is also condemned by God. This aligns Amnon with David as a transgressor condemned by God. And, of course, Amnon is aligned with David by virtue of serial transgressors of God’s laws.

4.1.6 2 Samuel 13:14
The information in 13:14 is clear, namely, Amnon rapes Tamar. However, given all of the detail which has been presented in previous verses regarding Jonadab’s plan (13:3–7), Tamar’s preparation of the food (13:8), and Tamar’s plea to Amnon (13:12–13), the account of Amnon’s rape of Tamar is all too brief. Thereby, the verbal irony in this instance is covert, impersonal irony that uses the sub-category understatement. The principal object of ironic attack

24 Moreover, there is a similarity in the law which David transgressed, and the laws which pertain to virgins. For example, the laws which discuss sexual transgressions that involve adultery, and sex with virgins are found in Deut. 22:13–30. It could be suggested that this cluster of laws are concerned with sexual purity. The maintenance of sexual purity in ancient Israel was important as it was believed to keep order in families and keep evil out of the greater society. J. Harold Ellens, Sex in the Bible. A New Consideration (London, Praeger Publications, 2006), 71.
is Amnon. The incongruity in the narrative is the brevity of the report of the rape—an extremely important event—in the context of the detailed and lengthy recording of less significant events. Understatement emphasizes the pejorative criticism of Amnon by the ironist that is implicitly communicated at the upper level of the narrative. The brevity of the report of the rape surprises the reader, causes a re-rereading and, thereby, emphasises the damning nature of the information.

Regarding the understated language it is worth noting the extent of the transgressions which are contained in this brief verse. For instance, Amnon has just committed rape and incest, and possibly shown contempt for an important sacred rite, if Bledstein’s suggestion that Tamar was doing הָבְרִיָּהּ is believed. Therefore, it would be expected that this event would be spoken of in much greater detail.

4.1.7 2 Samuel 13:15
The irony which is specific to this narrative is that of misrepresentation or false statement. Muecke notes that this form of impersonal, verbal irony is evident when a person asserts something which is known to be false, but relies on the reader’s prior knowledge of what is written in the text in order to convey the contradiction. At the lower level we are told of Amnon’s change of feelings for Tamar (13:15). Yet, most scholars interpret this verse as evidence that Amnon did not love Tamar at all and that he was only struck by lustful feelings for her. Given the turn of events, including the rape, it might be judicious to hold that Amnon certainly did not love Tamar. However, that is no reason to interpret אהבה as ‘lust’ (as the SBL NRSV Bible does). At the upper level the word ‘love’ is used as a misrepresentation, which ridicules Amnon’s declaration that he loved Tamar (13:4). The opposition in the narrative is between the explicit message that Amnon’s love turned to hatred and the implied truth that Amnon never really loved Tamar. Rape is not an act of love. Amnon is then the object of the ironic attack here. Amnon’s hatred of Tamar is emphasized in the repetition of the word שנאה, and the adjective [מאָד] (13:15).28

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25 Bledstein, “Was Habbirya a Healing Ritual Performed by a Woman in King David’s House?” 31.
26 Muecke, The Compass of Irony, 73.
27 Gray, “Amnon: a chip off the Old Block? Rhetorical Strategy 13.7–15 the Rape of Tamar and the Humiliation of the Poor,” 50.
28 “Very great hatred”. Bar-Efrat, Narrative Art in the Bible, 266.
4.1.8 2 Samuel 13:17–19

At the lower level of 13:17 Amnon calls a servant and commands him to lock Tamar out of the house. In 13:18 the reader is told of the royal virgin's robe that Tamar was wearing. In 13:19 Tamar intentionally tears the robe, puts ashes on her head and weeps. At the upper level of the narrative the ironist emphasises Tamar's new status, i.e. that she is no longer a prized royal virgin but rather an unwanted victim of incestuous rape. The incongruity in the narrative is between the violation, discarding and humiliation of the prized royal virgin, on the one hand, and on the other, the unnecessary and belaboured description of Tamar's robe.

As mentioned, the irony is emphasized in the unnecessary description of Tamar's robe. At the lower level the mention of Tamar's robe is purely informative as it merely tells us she was wearing the robe that royal virgins wore. Yet, the reader already knows who Tamar is, because of all of the family references in the story. Therefore, the emphasis on the royal robe is unnecessary unless this mention is to stress Tamar's royal virginity before her act of tearing the robe signifying that she is no longer a virgin.

The grade of verbal irony is covert. The mode of irony is impersonal, and the dominant sub-category of impersonal irony is overstatement. The overstatement consists of the detailed account of Tamar's robe. Amnon is the object of attack since not only has Amnon raped his sister, but also a royal virgin. The ironic content is that one of the most prized royal virgins has been raped by her own brother, summarily discarded and publicly humiliated. Tamar has now become a woman with no chance of marrying or having children. As Anderson argues, Tamar is described as mourning as though she is a widow.29

A further point to be made is that Amnon makes his crime a public affair by sending Tamar from his house. This reminds the reader of Yahweh's claim that although David sinned in secret, Yahweh would make David's punishment clearly visible to all (12:12). So, there is an implied connection between Amnon's publicly known sins and David's sins and subsequent punishment.

4.1.9 2 Samuel 13:20

At the lower level of 13:20 Absalom asks Tamar if Amnon has been with her, and Absalom encourages Tamar to be silent about the rape. Tamar remains a desolate woman in Absalom's house. At the upper level of the narrative Absalom is expressing his outrage. He is asking a rhetorical question. The opposition in the narrative concerns the difference between what is said and what is meant in Absalom's rhetorical question. What Absalom says is, “Has Amnon your

29 Anderson, WBC, Vol. n. 2 Samuel, 175.
brother been with you?” However, this is not in essence a request for information. Rather Absalom is expressing his outrage, albeit implicitly.

The grade of verbal irony is overt as it is immediately apparent that Absalom is not asking Tamar a straightforward question. The mode of verbal irony is impersonal, and the primary sub-category of impersonal irony, as mentioned, is the rhetorical question. The rhetorical question is in 13:20a when Absalom asks Tamar,

"האמינון אחיך היה עמך (Has Amnon your brother been with you?)" 30

The reader knows that this is a rhetorical question, as Absalom does not wait for Tamar’s affirmation before giving her advice. Furthermore, the use of a rhetorical question and the allusions to Amnon as her brother (Amnon is spoken of as Tamar’s brother two times (13:20)), highlight two possible criticisms of Amnon, which have been discussed throughout this chapter. The first possible criticism is the transgression of incest, and the second is the harm done by Amnon to the family order—a most egregious crime. (It may also be the case that both of these criticisms are being alluded to). Whichever of these criticisms of Amnon is being made, he is the object of ironic attack.31

4.1.10 2 Samuel 13:21–22

Irony is not readily apparent in this passage. However, a commentary is needed to inform the discussion of irony detected in future passages. In 13:21 David is portrayed as being very angry when he hears what has happened. In 13:22 the narrator informs us that Absalom hates Amnon for raping Tamar. At first sight these responses appear to be appropriate. However, neither of these responses is truly appropriate. In the case of David, his angry response to the rape is appropriate. However, it is not appropriate that this is his sole response to the rape. Importantly, David does not punish Amnon for his crime. Given that David is the King of Israel, it is his responsibility to administer the law including in relation to the transgressions of Amnon.

30  Author’s translation.
31  Another possible interpretation of the irony in this passage has an insinuation as the sub-category. The insinuation is found in 13:20b when Absalom cautions Tamar to be silent for the time being. This sentence alludes to further action; the insinuation suggests that something bad will happen. The ironist implies that Absalom will be the next royal member to act unlawfully.
In the case of Absalom, his hatred of Amnon is unlawful. In Leviticus 19:17 it states,

לא־תשׂנא את־אחיך בלבבך.

Therefore, in hating Amnon Absalom is failing to comply with the law. Of note, there is some dispute concerning whether or not the laws of Leviticus were operative in the time of David. This is not problematic for the interpretation of irony in this passage. We can assume that if the law was not operative at the time that it was later created from a social custom that was in force at the time. For instance, we know that Absalom knows that he should not hate his brother in his heart because of his comment to Tamar in 13:20 ie. “He is your brother; do not take this to heart.” Furthermore, it may be the case that the SN was written much later than the events it describes occurred. In this case, the laws of Leviticus would have been in force, and certainly applicable in a retrospective telling of events.

Both the King of Israel and the Prince of Israel act contrary to their responsibilities. For instance, David does not administer the law as he should, and Absalom does not follow the law, as he should. David’s response to the crime is too weak, as he does not punish Amnon. On the other hand, Absalom’s response is too strong as he has hatred for his brother (even if we may understand this reaction). Both responses are contrary to the law, the function of which is to preserve social order. Ideally Amnon should be appropriately punished and, as a consequence, Absalom’s hatred would be unwarranted. As a result, social order would be preserved.

An important point to be stressed here is that not only are the laws being flouted, but a situation has been created in which it is extremely difficult to comply with all the relevant laws, even if they wanted to. This poses a particularly grave threat to social order. Let me explain. The difficulty for David in terms of Amnon’s punishment, is that in the circumstances the relevant laws are in conflict. For example, as mentioned previously, the punishment for rape according to Deuteronomy 22:28–29 is that the rapist must marry the victim and never divorce the victim. However, this law cannot be enforced in the case of Amnon and Tamar as they are siblings. Moreover, if David were to administer the punishment for incest, Amnon and Tamar would both be exiled (Lev. 18:29) which would be extremely unfair to Tamar. However, in order to preserve social order David must do something to punish Amnon. In not doing anything David has allowed hatred to remain in Absalom’s heart. This is significant since, as we have seen, Absalom’s hatred for his brother is contrary to the laws.

32 “You shall not hate your brother in your heart ...” Translation care of RSV.
4.1.11  2 Samuel 13:23–26a
At the lower level of 13:23–24 Absalom invites the king and his sons to a sheep-shearing festival. In 13:25 David tells Absalom that the king and his servants would be burdensome to Absalom. In 13:26 Absalom asks if Amnon can go to the sheep-shearing festival alone. At the upper level there is an insinuation that Absalom is about to harm, indeed, kill Amnon, particularly in the context of our background knowledge that Absalom hates Amnon. The opposition in the narrative concerns the difference between what is explicitly presented in the text and what is implied. Moreover, it is implied that Absalom believes he is acting righteously by exacting revenge for Amnon’s rape of Tamar. Here there is the irony of Absalom being about to commit an even greater crime, namely murder, to revenge Tamar’s rape. Absalom is the object of these ironic attacks.

The grade of verbal irony is covert as it is not immediately apparent, and is conveyed by the language in the context of our knowledge of the background information provided in the text. As far as the language is concerned, it is possible to separate this passage into two sections which fit the pattern of irony which was described in reference to 11:1. If so the two sections could be marked as 13:23–25 (verbose section) and 13:26a (concise section). In this case, אתנו אמנון אחי ילך נא (13:26a)
(... please let my brother go with us.)

emphasizes Absalom’s intention to get Amnon to the festival and, thereby, render him vulnerable. This in turn generates the insinuation that Absalom is going to harm Amnon.

As far as the background information is concerned, it may be suggested that the mention of the sheep-shearing festival in 13:23–24 alludes to the story of Nabal (1 Sam. 25:4). This connection has run throughout the narrative (2 Sam. 12:1–6; 13:12–14), and when it appears, it signifies wrongdoing, in particular, the breach of hospitality customs. Thereby, it would be consistent if this motif continued to signify wrongdoing in the case of Absalom. To be more precise, the allusion to Nabal would appear to indicate a violation of hospitality customs. For instance, Nabal did not offer hospitality to David when he should have (1 Sam. 25:5–11), David provided Uriah with hospitality, but for his own manipulative purposes (2 Sam. 11:6–14), Amnon requested Tamar’s hospitality in order to take advantage of her (2 Sam. 13:8–15), and similarly, it would seem that Absalom was offering tainted hospitality. Given the remark in 13:22...
that Absalom hated Amnon, it would seem unlikely that Absalom would want to celebrate with Amnon. Thereby, the irony in this passage is an insinuation, since the reader assumes that Absalom is going to harm Amnon on the back of Absalom's invitation to Amnon.

However, the claim that Absalom wished Amnon to attend the festival alone is not without debate. Scholars have suggested that Absalom's motive for inviting the king and his sons to the festivities was to stage a challenge to the throne. The evidence for this proposition is as follows: David is spoken of excessively as the 'king' (13:23–24), which may indicate that this interaction with David was political rather than family oriented. Moreover, past stories of rape in the Hebrew Bible indicate that there is a strong connection between rape and escalating political tension (Gen. 34, Judg. 19). Yet, it is also possible that Absalom did not expect the king to go to the celebration, but rather created a devious plan to ensure that Amnon (as the crown prince), would go in place of David. This proposition (which is consistent with what is argued in this section) indicates that the focus of Absalom's attention was to have Amnon come to the festivities alone. This insinuation builds on the insinuation in 13:20, when Absalom tells Tamar to be quiet for the time being. Thereby, the narrator at the upper level of the narrative hints that Absalom is being deceptive, and using hospitality under false pretences, not unlike David (2 Sam. 11:13). This view of the matter is confirmed in 13:32 when Jonadab says to David that Amnon was killed because he raped Tamar.

4.1.12 2 Samuel 13:26b–27

In discussing 13:26b, it is necessary to re-iterate that the impersonal ironist is not a character in the narrative, but rather the author or the narrator. However, the ironist's criticism and persona are manifest in the speech and actions of the characters, regardless of the moral standing of these characters. Thereby, in 13:26b the ironic criticism is contained in the rhetorical question that David asks Absalom, namely, why should Amnon go with Absalom. Yet, this does not mean, as Ridout suggests, that the rhetorical question implies that David knows what Absalom's intention is. There are two levels in the text. The lower level of the narrative is the situation as it is explicitly presented. From the perspective of the character of David, the question is a straightforward question. This is later confirmed by the narrative which strongly implies that David was

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34 Gunn and Fewell, Narrative in the Hebrew Bible, 150–151.
35 Baldwin, 1 and 2 Samuel, 250.
36 Ridout, “Prose Composition Techniques in the Succession Narrative (2 Sam 7, 9–20; 1 Kgs 1–2),” 147.
not aware of Absalom's intentions (13:36). (Making David the unknowing victim of irony in this instance). However, the ironist's persona is also evident in David's question and is, thereby, critical of Absalom. This penetrating question points back to the insinuation in the previous sections. The rhetorical question, לָמָּה לָדֶךָ עַמֶּךָ asked in this context and with reference to the impersonal ironist is an indicting remark, since it is not a request for information, but rather a challenge to Absalom's intentions. The answer to the question, given the insinuation in the previous section, must be that Absalom wishes to harm Amnon. The ironist is then critical of Absalom's intentions which are driven by hatred (13:22) and not by good judgement, or חָסֵד.

4.1.13 2 Samuel 13:28
At the lower level of 13:28 Absalom tells his servants to kill Amnon when Amnon is drunk and when Absalom gives the command to kill him. Absalom also asks the rhetorical question, “Have I not commanded you?” At the upper level Absalom's rhetorical question, taken in conjunction with his admonition to the soldiers to be valiant, is used in order to reassure the soldiers who are to kill Amnon that Absalom is taking responsibility for the killing and that the killing is righteous. On the basis of background knowledge, we know that the killing is unlawful and, therefore, not righteous. Absalom in effect makes a confident declaration that the killing is righteous because he says so. However, ironically, this confident declaration is false and, therefore, Absalom is far from being the kind of person whose commands are necessarily righteous. So, he is the object of his own ironic attack and he indicts himself in asking the rhetorical question,

(... fear not; have I not commanded you?)38

The grade of verbal irony is covert, as it is not immediately apparent and is dependent upon certain background knowledge of the text. Moreover, the irony is the irony of self-betrayal and Absalom is a victim of the irony since he almost certainly is unaware of it because of his hubris.

In 13:28 Absalom's manipulation of Amnon is in some ways reminiscent of David's attempt to make Uriah pliable with alcohol and festive fare (11:13).

37  “Why should he go with you?”
38  Author's translation.
However, there is a marked difference in the moral characters of Uriah and Amnon. As far as the narrative is concerned, Uriah would appear to be beyond criticism, whereas Amnon is guilty of raping Tamar. Yet, despite the differences in their moral characters, they share something in common, namely, Uriah and Amnon are both killed unlawfully.

Yet, is it fair to suggest that Amnon's murder was an unlawful killing? Because there is no law governing restitution in cases of rape by a sibling, the proper recompense for Tamar's rape is unknown. It can be assumed that David's decision not to punish Amnon and, thereby, provide justice for Tamar, leaves Absalom hungry for blood vengeance. However, Absalom's decision to take blood vengeance is unlawful as the law in Leviticus 19:18 states that vengeance should not be taken against the בני עמך.

Moreover, acts of blood vengeance were thought to have ceased when the monarchy became responsible for administering justice. However, since David did not administer justice as he should have, the question arises as to whether or not it was then rightful for Absalom to seek blood vengeance. A discussion of Amnon's offence is necessary to try to adjudicate this matter. If Amnon's act is just considered as an act of rape, then it is a relatively minor offense (Deut. 22:28–29), and in having Amnon executed, Absalom would be in the wrong. If Amnon's act is taken to be the more serious offence of incest then the punishment is that both participants in the act i.e. Amnon and Tamar, be exiled (Lev. 18:29). Therefore, Absalom is not legally permitted to take Amnon's life, and the implied criticism in this passage is that Absalom has broken the laws which relate to unlawful killing (Exod. 20:13, Deut. 5:17).

As we saw above, the rhetorical question, הלוא כי אנכי צויתי אתכם (13:28b) is the indicting question. Absalom is now responsible for an illegal execution, much in the same way that David was responsible for killing Uriah by commanding others to kill him (11:15). The connection with Uriah, together with the allusion to Nabal in 13:23, now point to Nathan's Parable. As we have seen, the rich man in Nathan's Parable is analogous to Nabal and to David (2 Sam. 12:1–7). The following passage (12:8–14) explicitly describes God's adverse assessment and punishment of David's actions in the narrative. Being explicit, the criticism anchors the implied criticism of David. However,
this explicit criticism taken in conjunction with the parallels drawn between David, on the one hand, and on the other, Amnon and Absalom (via Nathan’s Parable etc.), also add weight to the implied criticism of Amnon and Absalom. In summary, there are multiple parallels between David, on the one hand, and on the other, Amnon and Absalom, from which conclusions can be drawn with respect to the interpretation of the text. Specifically, the text implies that not only David, but also Amnon and Absalom, have broken God’s laws and, as a consequence, will suffer God’s adverse judgement and be punished. David is analogous to the rich man in Nathan’s Parable, who offered hospitality without חסד (2 Sam. 12:7). David is also judged for taking Bathsheba, and having Uriah killed (2 Sam. 9). Amnon, who Tamar cautions will become the נבילה (, 2 Sam. 13:13) might also be considered as “the man” in Nathan’s Parable as he approaches hospitality without חסד, and he can be judged along with David for taking a woman who belongs to another man. Absalom, is similarly “the man” in Nathan’s Parable as he offers hospitality without חסד, and can be judged according to God’s judgment because he unjustly orders the execution of another (13:28). Of particular interest, is the knowledge that David has been granted a special concession for his sins. For the judgement of death that he explicitly passes on the rich man in Nathan’s parable, and unwittingly on himself (2 Sam. 12:5), is transferred onto the child resulting from his first encounter with Bathsheba (2 Sam 21:14). However, this is not the case with Amnon and Absalom as they have not been granted any special concessions for their sins.

In the light of this implied criticism of the key members of the monarchy, David and his sons, we can infer that the text is pointing to deep-seated corruption in the institution of the monarchy. There is a further point to be made here in relation to verbal irony. The Israelites expected the royal family to uphold God’s laws; this is the most important function of the monarchy. As it turns out, ironically, the monarchy far from upholding the law is undermining it. At this juncture it is helpful to outline the laws concerning the installation of a king and the rules which govern the office of a king. Deuteronomy 17:18–20 state:

When he has taken the throne of his kingdom, he shall have a copy of this law written for him in the presence of the levitical priests. It shall remain with him and he shall read in it all the days of his life, so that he may learn to face the lord his God, diligently observing all the words of this law and these statutes, neither exalting himself above other members of the community nor turning aside from the commandment, either to the left or to the right, so that he and his descendants may reign over his kingdom of Israel.
4.1.14 2 Samuel 13:29
13:29 explicitly states quite concisely that Absalom’s servants killed Amnon in accordance with Absalom’s command. The other major transgressions in the SN thus far, including David laying with Bathsheba (11:4), Uriah’s death (11:17b), and the rape of Tamar (13:29), have similarly been reported in clear and concise language. I have made the case that these latter verses are examples of ironic understatement. If so, the understatement serves to trivialise an event which is of great importance, and therefore complies with the traditional view of irony whereby the truth is found in the opposite of what is presented. Hence, if an event is understated, then it is of great importance. The sting of the irony is found in the act of trivialising catastrophic events. 13:29 is also an example of ironic understatement since, as noted, an event of great importance, the killing of Amnon, is reported in unduly concise, indeed curt, terms.

The understated catastrophic events in all these verses are not only devastating for the individuals involved, they also question the integrity of the House of David. Of the greatest importance in these transgressions is the disregard which David, Amnon, and Absalom all show to the laws, especially in regard to the expectation that the Israelites had of the monarchy as they are outlined in Deuteronomy 17:14–20. Therefore, the object of ironic attack is the corrupt monarchy.

4.1.15 2 Samuel 13:30–33
At the lower level of 13:30 David hears a report that all of his sons are dead. In 13:31 David and his servants tear their robes. In 13:32–33 Jonadab tells David that only Amnon is dead, and that his murder was conceived because Amnon raped Tamar. At the upper level of the narrative the ironist implies by the use of unusual language and innuendo that David is a fool for thinking that all his sons are dead rather than merely thinking Amnon is dead. He would have inferred the latter if he had understood the hatred that Absalom had for Amnon but David was oblivious to this. The opposition in the narrative is between Jonadab’s perceptiveness and David’s lack thereof. Ironically, although David as the king is meant to be wise, and as a father ought to understand his own sons, David is the unknowing fool.

The grade of verbal irony is covert as it is not immediately apparent, and is implied in the language and background knowledge. 13:30–33b comprises two instances of the pattern of verbose language followed immediately by concise, indeed curt, language. The first instance is 13:30–32a. In 13:30–32a the verbosity is a detailed description of the report that all of David’s sons have been killed etc.; the curt remark is,42 כי-אמנון לבדו מת (13:32ab). 13:32ab emphasizes

42 “… for Amnon alone is dead.” Author’s translation.
Absalom’s act of unlawful killing, and the reason for Absalom’s murderous act, which is Amnon’s unlawful sexual transgression. The second instance is 13:32b–33b. The verbosity consists in Jonadab’s description of Absalom’s motives etc. The curt remark is once again, “Amnon alone is dead”. This pattern of verbose and curt language is the same as, can be found in 11:1 et al.

The mode of verbal irony is impersonal and the sub-category is innuendo. The innuendo is that David is a fool for not realising that Amnon alone is dead. The knowledge that Amnon alone is dead can be assumed to be important as it is repeated. In the second verbose section Jonadab explains to David that Absalom had been planning to kill Amnon since the time of Tamar’s rape. This observation contrasts Jonadab’s wisdom with David’s foolishness, strengthening the idea that David is the object of ironic attack. Moreover, as Jonadab is חכם it may be assumed that his observations are trustworthy, which seems to discount the theory that Absalom sought to kill Amnon in order to take the throne, as has been suggested. Instead, the knowledge of the motives of Absalom’s execution of Amnon highlight the ironist’s criticisms throughout the narrative that David does not administer justice effectively. It is reasonable to assume that Absalom executed Amnon because of the hatred he felt for him after the rape of Tamar (13:22), and that David could have calmed Absalom’s hatred, if he had punished Amnon. If David followed the punishment for incest in Leviticus 18:29 Amnon would have been expelled from the community and it is reasonable to assume that Amnon would still be alive, and Absalom would not be responsible for the unlawful killing of Amnon. Having said this, there is no fair solution in the law for Tamar’s position for she would also have been exiled according to Leviticus 18:29. Notwithstanding the unfairness of exiling Tamar, the outcome of exile for both Amnon and Tamar seems preferable

Andrew Hill suggests that Absalom intended to kill Amnon so that he would be the next in line to the throne, and that Jonadab assisted him with this conspiracy. “A Jonadab Connection in the Absalom Conspiracy?” *JETS* 30, no. 4 (1987), 387–390. There is merit to this argument given that Absalom does challenge David’s Kingship later on in the story. However, this interpretation requires a retrospective analysis of the text, and may miss the incidents which build to create the desire in Absalom to attempt to take the throne. Gunn suggests that Absalom killed Amnon in order to progress in line to the throne. Gunn argues that Absalom’s ambition is the theme of the narrative as the focus of the stories concern kingship and succession, and thereby, it might be deduced that Absalom’s intention is to secure the throne. *Narrative Art in the Hebrew Bible*, 151. On the other hand, McKane suggests that although there is a focus on succession in the narrative, there is no indication in the text that Absalom killed Amnon in order to become first in line to the throne. McKane rather, points out that the focus of the narrative is that David did not punish Amnon (McKane, *I & II Samuel: Introduction and Commentary*, 242–243). Trible suggests that Absalom’s motive for killing Amnon was to avenge the rape of Tamar. Absalom’s intentions might then be discerned in the naming, and the sole mention of, Absalom’s daughter, Tamar (Trible, *Texts of Terror*, 55).
to the actual course of events involving, as it did, Absalom’s killing of Amnon and, thus keeping evil in Israel. It may also be argued that Tamar may have been able to remain in Jerusalem. It might also be argued that Tamar herself is not without moral taint since, as we saw above, she did recommend an unlawful course of action to Amnon, namely, that they should get the king to marry them. This interpretation is consistent with the overriding criticism in the narrative of all of the members of the royal household.

4.1.16 2 Samuel 13:34–36
13:34–36 do not readily show signs of irony, however, they do resolve some controversies in the previous commentary. The passage opens with the comment that Absalom had fled (13:34). 13:35 confirms Jonadab’s prediction in 13:33, that it was, indeed, only Amnon who was killed. These verses confirm the view that the execution of Amnon was not lawful and that his intention at this point was not to secure the throne but rather to avenge Tamar’s rape.

Notwithstanding the above, it may be argued that there is some irony. For there is an element of overstatement in this section. In 13:34 it is stated that the young boy noticed the arrival of a group of people, 13:35 states that it is the king’s sons, minus Amnon, who have returned and in 13:36 the king’s sons arrive. This overstatement not only highlights Amnon’s death, but also Jonadab’s wisdom, and in contrast, David’s foolishness. David is, thereby, the object of ironic attack since he was previously tricked by Absalom into letting Amnon go to the sheep-shearing festival (13:24–27), and only now is aware of the consequences of this because Jonadab makes him aware (13:35). At the upper level of the narrative the ironist’s ongoing pejorative criticism of David now has even greater weight.

4.1.17 2 Samuel 13:37–39
These verses have a transitional role. 13:37 and 13:38 repeat the fact that Absalom fled. (This was also mentioned in 13:34.) It can therefore be assumed that this piece of information is significant. The significance may relate to the punishment for unlawful murder, ie. that Absalom did not want to be put to death. For instance, Leviticus 24:17 calls for the murderer to be put to death. In this narrative it is also apparently, albeit ambiguously, reported that the hostility between David and Absalom abated after David had mourned the death of Amnon (13:39). I return to this controversy in the next chapter.

4.1.18 Summary of 2 Samuel 13:1–39
In the opening verses of this chapter (13:1–2), there is an insinuation that Amnon will act as David had done and commit a sexual transgression. 13:3–4 is an amplification of the verbal irony in the previous section; as such, it serves
to emphasize Amnon's sexual desire for his sister. This irony concerns the laws which prohibit incest. The ironist's implied pejorative criticism of Amnon rests in part on allusions to David's untoward actions. Specifically, parallels are drawn between Amnon's intentions and David's actions in chapters 11 and 12. This connection between the criticism of David, and the criticism of Amnon is exploited further in 13:5–7 where David is tricked by Amnon into sending Tamar to offer hospitality to him. The sub-category of verbal irony in this section is pretended defence of the victim. In 13:8–9 there is an insinuation that Amnon is going to rape Tamar. In 13:10–11 Amnon refuses Tamar's offer of hospitality (the irony in this section is understatement) and in 13:12–13 he rapes her. At this point in the narrative Tamar is an object of ironic attack for recommending an unlawful solution to her predicament. The sub-category of verbal irony is pretended defence of the victim. Of greater importance is the implied pejorative criticism of Amnon. Amnon is shown to be the object of ironic attack and he is called the נбавל. This strong reference to Nabal and Nathan's Parable, shows the strength of the ironist's criticism, which is conveyed in Nathan's Parable, in reference to David. The criticism in this section is brought out by the use of a rhetorical question and pretended ignorance (13:13). The rape of Tamar in 13:14 is spoken of succinctly, and might otherwise, be described as ironic understatement. 13:15–16 involves an amplification of the verbal irony in the previous section, and an ironic misrepresentation—since Amnon does not 'love' Tamar.

In 13:17–19 Amnon is pejoratively and implicitly criticised because he raped a royal virgin. The verbal irony in this section is overstatement. Moreover, the public display of Amnon's sins alludes to God's judgement upon David (2 Sam. 12:12). In 13:20 Amnon is criticised further by way of a rhetorical question. 13:21–22 put forth two criticisms, the first criticism is that David did not punish Amnon, the second criticism is that Absalom is guilty of hating his brother. 13:23–26a insinuate that Absalom is about to commit murder. 13:26b–27 build on the insinuation in the previous section by way of a rhetorical question which challenges Absalom's intentions. In 13:28 Absalom acts not unlike David, and uses hospitality as a means of obtaining an illicit end. This criticism emerges by way of a rhetorical question.

13:29 emphasizes the unlawful killing of Amnon by way of understated language. In 13:30–33 the verbal irony is an innuendo that David is a fool since he did not realise that Absalom had hatred in his heart for Amnon. 13:34–36 presents an overstatement which similarly presents David as a fool. There is no discernible irony in 13:37–39.